



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## My Skin Was My Jail Cell by Dee Miller

*"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well." (Psalm 139:14)*

Outside looking in, I had an idyllic childhood: two older brothers, a stay-at-home mom, and a dad with a good job. I lived in a small town with my best friend just out the back door. I was fortunate to grow up in an era where we could play outside or go to the pool all by ourselves. Now let me take you for a tour inside the house, and open the doors to the secrets that lie inside.

My mom didn't want a girl that looked like her. When I see old photographs of her, it could be me and vice-versa. Mom was completely involved in her sons' lives by being their Cub Scout den mother, and head cheerleader at all their games. Then I came along and cramped her style. To make things worse, I refused to sleep at night. Eventually mom's good nature was gone towards me. Spanks on the bottom started coming without warning, and quickly escalated into abuse.

One Saturday morning, I snuck into my brothers' room to steal a toy to play with. This didn't go over well, and they entered my bedroom to retaliate. They had seen Mom's abuse escalate and had begun to hit me without correction. This particular morning, war was declared. Throughout my life, I have heard time and time again how wonderful it must have been to grow up with two built-in protectors. I cringed every time I heard that. From the outside my life appeared idyllic, but sadly, it was anything but.

After several minutes, my bedroom door opened: there was Mom. *Would this be the moment her heart would soften towards me?* The boys were ordered out of the room. To my disappointment, Mom was going to finish what the boys had started. She was quick to point out that if I'd been born male, she wouldn't be dealing with this. These words were literally beaten into me. Is it any wonder that I became Trans?

Each year, I became more and more of a tomboy. I had a hard exterior that wouldn't let anyone in close. I felt I couldn't trust anyone. If I felt I had let you get too close, I would create a conflict so that I could walk away. Yet, I longed to have a family that I could belong to. I'm certain I've left many people in my wake scratching their heads.



Dee is part of  
PF's Taking  
Back Ground  
discipleship  
program.

My fantasy life was to become a man, but I didn't know how to make that happen. I hid that desire in my heart until I met a woman that I didn't think I could live without. All of a sudden, I saw the family I had always wanted within my reach. She was the first person I let in intimately. I shared my desire to become a man, and proposed marriage. In a whirlwind, we moved to a city where I believed I could begin the transition to male.

The rules to transitioning were different in those days. It was a much slower process. I'm grateful for that—it gave God time to work on my hard heart. My dream was to get married, for my wife to give birth to kids, and we would have the American dream of family. Yet, my family dream was not God's design for family. Eventually, God had His way in my romantic relationship, and we ended. Ironically, my girlfriend was a proclaimed Christian who was active in her church when we met. In my desperation to keep her around, I went to church.

I was contacted by a man at the church named Mark. After several phone calls and many months went by, I found myself in a tight spot. Out of desperation, I ended up meeting Mark face-to-face for the first time, and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. It was a glorious moment to be accepted in God's family. *"...you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, 'Abba, Father.'" (Romans 8:15)*

Finally, the family that I had always been looking for! A place of acceptance. God didn't care that I had changed my outside to look like a man—He was after my heart. Still, I felt that I needed to tell Mark who I really was. To this day, I am grateful for how Mark graciously handled finding out I was a woman presenting as a man. Mark was a seasoned Christian ready to handle the truth. His response is something I pray everyone can give: "I can't tell you what to do. You need to go pray and ask God what you should do."

Obviously, God told me that He wanted me to return to the way He created me to be: female. *"In the image*

*of God he created them; male and female he created them."* (Genesis 1:27) Changing my outside was easy compared to everything else God asked me to do along the way. Renewing my mind was a different battle (Romans 12:1-2), a more difficult transformation: Learning God's ways by reading His Word daily, all to build endurance to handle the battles that came with changing. I never forgot that moment of being welcomed into God's family—that overwhelming love and sense of belonging stuck with me and pushed me to want to continue changing. (Romans 5:2-3)



*Dee as a little girl at Christmas.*

The more time I spent with God, I realized that He had created me for a purpose; it was His design that I be female. I wasn't sure what that meant, but as He surrounded me with wonderful female friendships, I slowly put barriers down and began to share my story with them. I gradually let the trauma pain go and picked up the joy of the Lord. I stud-

ied what Biblical love wasn't, so I could correct myself into becoming more like Jesus in my behaviors. I no longer wanted to push people away.

I joined the PF TBG Zoom class in 2022. Here, I found another extended family! Taking Back Ground is an incredible opportunity to sit with believers who share similar backgrounds. The curriculum takes a hard look at root causes for the transgender desires I had, and where I could still have vulnerabilities. Deeper understanding has been a true gift. PF has been a place where I can be transparent without fear of judgment. More than that, it's a place where I can be called out if I am lying to myself and don't realize it. The TBG retreat is an amazing opportunity that pushed me to seek God as to what I needed to still surrender. The Surrender Service took my walk with God to a deeper level that was life-changing.

My skin is still my jail cell, but only temporarily, until it's replaced by my heavenly body: *"We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing."* (2 Cor. 5:2) Until then, I've never been more at peace with being created female as I continue to grow in my understanding of the purpose God created me for.

## A Year of Hope (Part 3 of 6): Running the Race Together by Leah King

In this six-part series, we are highlighting different parts of Portland Fellowship that offer hope for healing and relational wholeness in Jesus Christ. For context, please read Parts 1 & 2: [www.portlandfellowship.com/articles/hope.pdf](http://www.portlandfellowship.com/articles/hope.pdf)

*“And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:12)*



Have you ever run a race? The months leading up to the race involve a lot of determination, rigorous training, and long solo runs as you teach your body to come into submission to the goal of running a specific distance.

Some of these training days feel like they are never going to end. You can only be amazed by so many trees when you have seen them twelve-to-fifteen times. It gets boring, and you can not only lose focus, but also lose the drive you had in the first place to train for such a race. Somedays, your run feels like it flew by; on others, however, all you think about is how slow you're running, how sore you will feel, and the discouragement haunts you.

I remember when I was training for my first half marathon, there were days that my time was so slow that at some point my goal was just to finish the run, even if that meant I had to walk parts of it. They were lonely runs, but it was still worth it. Interestingly, on the days I trained with others, time flew by, I went further, and I felt great. When the race day arrived, I was nervous that I would have a bad run for my final run of the training season. To my surprise, I ran faster than I ever had until...well, until I fell. It was so discouraging. What blew my mind, though, was that until that fall, I was running faster than I ever had. This wasn't because I was a faster runner, but because I had people running with me who had the same goal in mind, to run well and finish strong. We did it together. We knew the goal, and we knew it was worth all the training we had endured up to this point.

Like I said, as well as I was running in my first half marathon, I did eventually trip, causing me to slow down significantly and feel so defeated. Yet, I was never alone. There were people who were running next to me who stopped, helped me back on my feet, and finished with me. We made it! It wasn't easy and it wasn't pain free, but we finished, and there was so much joy in that finish. In fact, there was so much joy that I kept training for more races! I no longer "hoped" I could run a race, but I knew that I could because God had placed people to run with me.

I cannot think of better imagery for what it is like to participate in the Taking Back Ground discipleship program at Portland Fellowship. There is a common goal to run well and finish strong because of the only true hope that is found in Jesus. For example, in TBG, as we looked back and addressed hurt from the past, I wasn't afraid of the pain I might face by examining my life, because I knew the people walking with me at PF were not going to leave me in my pain, but instead help me find healing in Jesus. By walking through TBG as a group, there is encouragement to run well, to keep seeking Jesus as you work through the relational wounds of your past. When there are hard days ("slow runs"), or maybe even a fall, the brothers and sisters running with you are there to help you back up and keep you on track to finish this race well. They help keep you focused on the right prize: the upward call of Christ. (Phil. 3:14) They help you keep your hope in Jesus and not grow sick from putting your hope in the lesser things of this world. (Prov. 13:12)

The support found in Taking Back Ground at Portland Fellowship gives hope to those wanting to follow Jesus in relational healing and live a surrendered life to Christ. By having in-house and online support groups for this program, participants are able to run well, and often go further in their surrender and pursuit of Jesus than they ever dreamed possible. Why? Because, "...though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken". (Ecc. 4:12) TBG provides the foundation for believers to join together and not be broken, because of the hope in Jesus Christ that they pursue as a group.

For more information and registration for Taking Back Ground: [www.takingbackground.com](http://www.takingbackground.com)

## May - June Calendar & Services

tuesdays in may

### Taking Back Ground

PF's intensive discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction.

\*For both Zoom and in-house.  
6-8:30 p.m. PST

tuesdays in may

### Hope Group

Discipleship for friends & family of LGBTQ-identified loved ones.

\*For both Zoom and in-house.  
6-8:30 p.m. PST

may 4

### Restored Book Release

TBG alumnus Leslie Anderson's book will be available on Amazon on 5/4.

may 21

### TBG Graduation

Leaders, participants, friends & family celebrate the Taking Back Ground participants who are completing the 2-year discipleship program.

june 21 & 22

### HOPE 2024 Conference

Restored Hope Network's annual conference, featuring teachings, workshops, testimonies & worship.  
[www.restoredhopenetwork.org](http://www.restoredhopenetwork.org)

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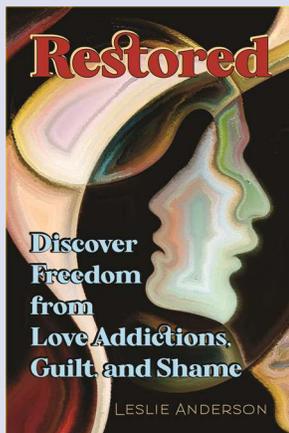
### Additional Updates:

[www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)

### Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

## Upcoming Book Launch: Restored



We are excited to announce that on May 4th, one of our TBG alumnus, Leslie, is publishing her very first book, *Restored: Breaking Free from Love Addictions, Guilt, and Shame*.

Leslie Anderson walked through the doors of Portland Fellowship thirty-five years ago in a swirl of emotions. She

had gambled much—husband, children, Christian family, and friends—on another woman. Now she was hopeful, excited—thrilled, even!—to be finally leaving that thirteen-year same-sex relationship to again follow Jesus, but also anxious and uncertain. She wondered, “Can I be faithful to Him? What will my life be like?”

Leslie and her partner had led a good life: professional jobs, lovely home, many friends. However, these could not stave off her growing disillusionment with the relationship and with her gay church and community. Leslie wanted out, and Jesus whispered sweetly in her ear, but—addicted to love—she felt powerless. At last, she gave her life to Him, and saw how the Good Shepherd cared for her in good times and bad.

In *Restored: Breaking Free from Love Addictions, Guilt, and Shame*, Leslie provides a road map for others to find freedom through ministries like Portland Fellowship, the Bible, and the input of fellow believers. Whatever type of addiction (a legitimate need met in an illegitimate way) you may have, Jesus, your Good Shepherd, will set you free and take good care of you. Leslie wants you to know it is worth it—you won't regret following Him!

*Restored* will be released and available for purchase on May 4th on Amazon.



**PORTLAND**  
fellowship

The Fellowship Message is a monthly publication of Portland Fellowship, a ministry proclaiming freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ.

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