



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

March / April volume 28 number 2

Finishing Strong by Mike

I grew up in the '60s & '70s in Perth, Australia. My parents provided a Catholic education for me. In those early convent school years, the Nuns taught us Jesus and Bible stories that really captured my heart. I have no doubt that I encountered something of God in these formative years.

However, when I was nine, my happy childhood wheels were about to fall off when it became evident that my mother was an alcoholic. My world fell apart and my childhood innocence was lost. I felt incredibly angry towards her and extremely sad. I also began to feel angry towards my father, who seemed at a loss about what to do. He was a gentle and passive man—not one to be proactive. Sadly, I began to reject him as a father, and in a sense tried to be a father to myself. A terrible mistake.

When I was about eleven, I remember a neighbourhood friend asking me to get naked with him. I actually didn't have much desire to do so, and had a strong sense in my conscience that this was not right. After some persuading from my friend, I gave in to him. Whilst it wasn't sexual, I nonetheless opened a door for the enemy to come in. As puberty began to kick in, I became desirous to engage in more of this activity. Eventually my friend "found girls" and was no longer interested, while I started to engage in fantasizing about naked men and masturbation. It became a sort of comfort and escapism from my childhood pain and frustration.

My first encounter of acting out sexually was with a school friend when I was thirteen. This experience left me feeling incredibly guilty and ashamed. I could not believe that something that I desired so much could leave me feeling this way. Soon after, I began to make lots of friends with girls and have quite a few boy-girl relationships in the next couple of years. These were great and healthy experiences. However, I was aware deep down that my sexual orientation was much stronger towards men. On top of this, I started to become the victim of bullying by many of my peers at school for being a "poof" (a derogatory term for a homosexual).

After I finished school, I left Perth to work in the country. In desperation, I "tried out" with a girl my age, only for it to be a dismal failure. Again, I was left feeling very depressed and wondered whether there was any hope for me. My sexual fantasies about men and masturbation became increasingly life-absorbing. I was constantly thinking and fantasizing about sexual experiences with men. Yet, I continued to live in secret about this whilst maintaining a straight outward life. I was



Mike is a pastor in Australia and worked through PF's Taking Back Ground books.

involved in quite a few sporting interests, and that was not a fraternity you ever wanted to be found out in, particularly in regional (rural) Australia!

I was really frustrated on one hand in not being able to live out my homosexual desires. I seriously believe that God, for reasons only known to Him, kept me from entering this lifestyle in a more dangerous way. And yet, these desires were not something I necessarily wanted. I had an innate sense that it was wrong, and I wanted desperately to be heterosexual. I was caught in a love-and-hate war with homosexuality.

Just after I turned twenty-one, something amazing happened. Through a work colleague, I met a guy called Dave, who was a Christian. I hadn't really met anyone Christian before, let alone someone my age. I was immediately drawn to him. He was completely different from anyone else I had ever met. He had a purity, peace and joy that so attracted me, yet not in a lustful way. He was just too pure. By God's grace, he became a genuine friend.

Not long after this, I was transferred back to Perth where I caught up with an old school friend who, for the first time, I sexually propositioned. He politely refused, and I was left feeling very ashamed and so desperately lost. I actually made a call to a 24/7 Helpline to talk about my struggle. This was the first time I had opened up to anyone. I was calling from a public phone box and finished the call when someone approached it. Around the same time, my friend Dave caught up with me and invited me to come to his church youth group one Friday night. Because Dave was such a good friend I was ready to go to something that interested him. That night, on hearing the words, "You are either for Christ or against Him," like a drowning man, my whole life flashed before my eyes. I was taken back to my early Catholic days where Jesus had really meant something to me. I quietly decided that I was for Christ that night.

Little did I know how powerful that decision would be. The next morning, I experienced peace beyond understanding. I was completely delivered from a horrendous addiction to masturbation and sexual fantasies, amongst other issues. God was real, the Bible made sense. I was truly born again. I loved church, the people, and most of all, God. I also began having healthy friendships with men, too. What joy!



Right from the outset, I believe God gave me faith to believe that I would go on and marry healthily. My minister and his wife were extremely helpful and showed a lot of "tough love" towards me. They counseled me of the need to repent from all self-pity in my life. This was a significant turning point for me.

Prior to meeting Jenny (who would become my wife), it seemed like God took me through a test where I was quite unexpectedly, propositioned by a very likable good-looking old male school friend. Thankfully, by God's grace, I turned it down, which was extremely important for me, but also acted as a real witness to this friend, who commented afterward on just how real my faith was! I was so blessed to meet Jenny, now my wife for over thirty-

five years. She was so accepting, gracious, kind, and patient through our courtship and early days of marriage. I am totally amazed at God's goodness to me—we have two adult children both serving the Lord (by God's grace) and now a delightful granddaughter.

Fast forward twenty-five-plus years of living in victory, I found myself having some struggles with lust and this easy access on the internet to harmful images. I recognised very early on that this had the capacity to destroy me—as John Owen the great Puritan had put it, "Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you." I was surprised how tough the battle was, and I knew I had to "leave no stone uncovered" to live victoriously.

It was during this time that I found Portland Fellowship. The testimonies, resources, and the Taking Back Ground program were incredibly helpful—biblical, robust, and extremely thorough in explaining how these addictions develop. I became aware of things about myself that I had not previously realized. The chapter on Narcissism was gold! Repentance, forgiveness, and dealing with all these issues were pivotal for me.

After forty-plus years now of following the Lord, I recognise more than ever the need to be constantly vigilant, lest the enemy get a foothold. As Galatians 5:1 reminds us, "Stand fast in the liberty which Christ has made us free and be not entangled with a yoke of bondage." As I enter the latter part of my life, I absolutely want to finish strong. (2Tim. 4:7-8)

A Year of Hope (Part 2 of 6): The Comfort in Community 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 Part I: www.portlandfellowship.com/articles/hope.pdf

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)



Have you ever heard the saying, “To go quick, go alone, but to go far, go together”? I cannot tell you how many times in life I have realized this to be true, especially in walking with a loved one who has walked away from the Lord and embraced an LGBTQ identity. When you try to navigate the reality of a loved one’s choice to live life in opposition to God’s design all by yourself, you may quickly gain some understanding, but the longevity of standing firm on God’s truth will often begin to weigh down on you.

When I reflect on the long journey of walking with my LGBTQ-identified loved ones and praying for them to come to Jesus, I think of Luke 5:17-26. The lame man could do nothing to get to Jesus, but his friends could. Together they picked up his mat and carried him to Jesus. If only one of them had taken him, the paralyzed man may have been able to get to the crowd faster, but by all of his friends taking him, they were able to get the lame man directly to Jesus. I imagine that having to lower him down the roof took longer, but ultimately got him closer. Actually, this placed him right in front of Jesus, and because of his friends’ faith, the lame man was healed and their sins were forgiven.

This is what the Hope Group at Portland Fellowship is like. It provides a place for friends and family to learn they don’t have to carry the weight of their loved ones alone. It’s a group of people who are going through the same thing as you. They can help carry your loved one in prayer to Jesus, and when needed, carry you, too. Hope Group is a place where ground is claimed in your loved one’s life for the Kingdom, spiritual ground that may not have been covered by you alone, yet is now possible because you are navigating this journey with others. (Matthew 18:18-20)

When it comes to fighting in faith for our loved ones, and navigating our own journey with them as they are wrestling with their sexual distortions, we are called to bear each other’s burdens and to comfort one another (Galatians 6:2). I have learned over the years that being in spaces like Hope Group empowers me to continue the long journey of keeping hope as I walk with my wayward loved ones. In the moments I can’t get up to carry my loved ones in prayer to the Lord, and I begin to despair, people in the Hope Group are there to encourage me and carry both me and my loved ones to Jesus. Praise God!

If you find yourself in a similar place of growing weary in the long journey of walking with your loved one, I encourage you to reach out to Portland Fellowship to connect with the Hope Group, or a local group near you. There are faithful, loving people who can encourage you, equip you, and come alongside you as you wait upon the Lord to bring your loved one back to Himself.

“...but those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

March - April Calendar & Services

march 8-10

TBG Retreat

PF's annual retreat for Taking Back Ground leaders & participants. This is a powerful opportunity for participants to lay down and surrender things that have held them captive to sexual brokenness, and leave with a deeper freedom in Christ.

tuesdays in april

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 april

Hope Group

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

**For both Zoom and in-house.*

6-8 p.m. PST

april 20

Cole Graduation

Our newest staff support member, Cole, graduates from Western Seminary with his M.A. in Biblical & Theological Studies. Congratulations, Cole!

Follow us!

Get updates and inspirational resources on social media.

***Facebook & Instagram:**

@portlandfellowship

***Twitter:** @PTLDFellowship

Additional Updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com

Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

HOPE 2024 RHN Conference



This year's Restored Hope Network conference is HOPE 2024: *Leaning into Jesus Together*. As a member ministry of RHN, we here at Portland Fellowship invite you to join us for this special in-person conference in Rocklin, CA, June 21-22, 2024.

HOPE 2024 will address same-sex attraction and transgenderism from a transformational perspective. Come hear biblical and relevant teachings, workshops, and inspiring life stories, all bathed in powerful times of worship.

Some of the HOPE 2024 speakers and topics include:

- **Sam Andreades**—Theology of Gender
- **Caitlin Zick**—Identity in Christ
- **Ken Williams**—CHANGED Movement/Transformation for Same-Sex Attraction
- **Melinda Patrick**—Parents' Response to their LGBTQ-Identified Child
- **Michael Laidlaw, MD**—Edocrinology and Best-Practices for Transgender Patients

For more information and registration, please visit: www.restoredhopenetwork.org



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

MINISTRY TEAM

Jason Thompson
Executive Director

Patrick Silvis
Program Manager

KathyGrace Duncan
Women & Transgender Ministry

Roy Graves
Multimedia Coordinator

Liisa Bradshaw
Friends & Family Ministry

Cole Atkinson
Ministry Support

The Fellowship Message is sent free upon request. (An annual donation of \$15 is appreciated to cover printing and postage costs.) No part of this newsletter may be reproduced or reprinted without permission.

post office box 14841

portland, oregon 97293

phone: 503-235-6364

email: pf@portlandfellowship.com

web: portlandfellowship.com

FB/IG: @portlandfellowship

Portland Fellowship is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) nondenominational organization. We are exclusively supported through private donations, support services and offerings.