



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

march/april 2002 volume 7, number 2

"Anchored in the Cross" by Morgan Davis

Freedom from homosexuality is real. I bear witness of this truth in my own life.

As early as I can remember I idolized other boys. I was fascinated at their ability to fit in and appear normal. Feeling like an outsider, I adopted the label of "other." I felt "other" than male or boy. I didn't identify myself as female, but just seemed sure I was somehow different than the rest of the guys. I was "other." As years went by, my internal obsession with my own gender turned sexual. Needing to connect relationally with other boys my age was a normal developmental stage. Yet, the shame of feeling "other" kept me at bay. My aloofness even brought more shame my way, since these peers noticed my distance from them. Not fitting in brings opportunities to acquire more labels. So the shame in me grew as well as isolation. I needed to find a way to fit in.

By high school I had adapted well, socially. Intuitively I found a way to cope with the self hatred and shame inside. I became the image of what I perceived others would accept. I became "good". Author Andy Comiskey writes, "Shame makes us want to hide who we are. We see ourselves deficient in our real selves making it imperative to conceal the defects, often behind veneers of a false "goodness." These false selves, which require considerable energy to maintain, consist of a collection of placating, people-pleasing behaviors designed to evoke admiration, sympathy and perceptions of like-ability. The downside of this perpetual smokescreen is that others can never meet us in our places of greatest need. Believing those parts of our real self will immediately elicit rejection, we cut off from them, so that it becomes overwhelmingly painful to deal with these areas. It is akin to ignoring a cancer that is growing inside us, for fear of the pain of treatment. Untreated, shame will kill.

I entered college with the hope of snapping out this inner conflict. I dated women, yet I had so little to offer relationally. My true interest was in a special male friend. And before long, this relationship turned very emotionally dependent and finally sexual. Horrified of what was happening, I ended the friendship, covered in shame. Unable to confess the confusion of my gender identity and homosexual feelings, I began living a double life. Keeping my outward image pleasing to family and friends, I silently harbored emotionally dependent and sexual relationships with other men. Eventually I was convinced my internal needs could only be met through illicit sex. I quickly became addicted to the rush of feeling good and being wanted through sex. This lifestyle continued for five years.

After college God gave me a gift, a trusted friend. His vulnerability and transparency cut through my layers of shame and defensiveness. One day he asked me if I thought I was gay. After the blood drained from my face, he understood the profound nature of his question. No one had ever asked. Believing his trustworthiness, I was honest. This quickly led me in a direction of hope. I entered therapy.

The counseling went on for about six months. Significant inroads were made and I experienced great intimacy with Christ. My therapist's insight brought to light great brokenness in my family relationships. My inability to emotionally connect with my father, even though his physical presence was available to me, created deep wounds of abandonment and feelings of shame as his son. My identification with my mother became my sole emotional outlet, confusing my identity as a man. I felt like an extension of her. Finally being able to clearly see these vexing deceptions for what they were gave me new vision for change. Quietly, healing began.

God gave me another gift...Karen. We were married two years later. During our engagement I briefly shared my past homosexual struggles and failures. Still steeped in shame, I was unable and unwilling to talk about it. I allowed no time for questions--ever. So, we went down the aisle hoping for the best and believing the past was truly behind us...or, behind me.

The strains of marriage brought great insecurity to me. I began to see such deficiencies in me as a husband and as a man. In fear of true intimacy with Karen, I looked for something to ease the pain. And within our first year of marriage I began seeking illicit gay relationships and acting out sexually with other men. This addiction continued for six years.



Morgan Davis has faithfully served Portland Fellowship for five years, as one of the teachers in the Taking Back Ground program.

Believing I had no choices, the shame kept me from confessing my sin. Not wanting to devastate Karen and others, a new dual life seemed acceptable...at least to me. Considering my past, I knew I could pull it off.

I tried many ways to sanitize my sin. For starters, I went into full-time youth outreach ministry. And secondly, we began a family. Keeping the appearance of health was my ultimate goal. For years on end I was convinced I could stop this destructive behavior. As long as I felt sure I could pull it all together in a moments notice, I found some bit of solace. As long as I could stay one step ahead of being exposed or uncovered, I believed I could survive. Whenever the condemning voice of my mind would heap shame and guilt, I would fight depression and suicidal options on my own. I cried out to God time and again. But I could not trust Him anymore. I had fallen back into hopelessness and sin. Aloneness was all I felt. Internal wrath became my companion and I honestly believed I had to make it on my own. And the more years I tried, the more years I failed.

In the midst of this chaos, however, God's presence was evident. I see this now.

About the time our second child arrived, my heart began to change. My ministry focus took a turn toward "the city." I was now involved with urban ministry. In serving the obviously poor kids under my care, my understanding and experience of God expanded greatly. God's heart for the poor gave me hope. My friendships deepened and became more and more authentic. Even though this intimacy frightened me, I was attracted to the hope of being known and accepted. For me, hanging out with co-laborers who loved and served the poor made me feel as though I could trust these folks with my own depravity.

Slowly I began to trust - to trust God, to trust Karen.

The brokenness became more acute in me and I began to make bolder moves to ease the pain and conflict within. It almost seemed that any step I made toward opening myself up to God was met with greater attack from the enemy. Even so, seeing Jesus' love for the poor affected me deeply and I had a small hope that Jesus could reach me.

The summer of '95 my prayer life changed dramatically. Prayers like: "your will be done in my life, Lord" and, "do whatever it takes in me, Jesus" had never been spoken before. They frightened me. They were too costly. But the stakes for my life and marriage were higher. I needed Jesus, desperately.

That fall I entered seminary. The focus of the first class was "community." Required reading included the book Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Needing to complete the book, I told Karen I was going to study at the library. In truth I was "going out." In the midst of this sinful behavior I became frightened. My eyes were

opened for an instant and I saw myself spiraling out of control and going to new depths to ease my pain and loneliness. Yet, in my spirit I knew the Lord was calling out to me. Something was different. It was as if I could actually hear the voice of God, "Will you stop running?"

Later that evening I went to a coffee shop and pulled out the Bonhoeffer book. The last chapter began, "He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone." Tears began to fall as I read—a lot of tears. Never before had I felt so alone. The text continued, "Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him." The chapter then unveils the need and power of confession. It was as if I had never heard this truth before and again my spirit heard the Lord's voice, "Will you stop hiding?"

That night, by the grace of God, I made a call to a dear friend and I confessed my sin and brokenness to him. Jesus was with me. I was encouraged to talk with Karen and the next day my confession to her changed our lives forever. Exposed before her, my illusory and perfected image died.

Our friends surrounded us and we were directed to seek help through The Portland Fellowship. I never knew such an organization existed. I had been down this healing road before, yet alone. But this time was different. The Lord's faithfulness to Karen and me was

present through our community. We were loved and supported. These friends understood brokenness and sin. They were not afraid of the mess that laid before them.

Karen and I were blessed with opportunities to receive healing. Our counsel was to seek healing for ourselves first, then, in time, seek healing for our marriage. Everything seemed to get worse before it got better. Much confession and forgiveness was extended. The Lord's protection and provision was evident and His healing hand was, and continues to be, upon us.

The truth I learned about my homosexual affections has helped me immensely. I understand the woundedness and pain. But in the end, knowing Jesus has brought the healing of my soul.

Today, establishing the cross of Jesus is central to my life. By this I mean that only through "death" at the cross can God raise up what is pleasing to Him. Experiencing the cross of Jesus begins with confession—the ultimate death of sin and shame. God can only raise from the dead that which has died. The cross of Jesus bids us to die to the sin we bear, to the outward images we create. Bonhoeffer says, "we experience the cross of Jesus as our rescue and salvation. The old man dies, but it is God who has conquered him. Now we share in the resurrection of Christ and new life."

God blessed us with two more children. That makes four! Karen and I now stand side by side, serving the church by offering hope of relational and sexual healing. In Revelation, John writes: now with Christ enthroned with the Father... "He is releasing a crystal stream, the water of life flowing" for all who hunger and thirst. And Ezekiel states, "that where that river flows, everything will live." May we continue to remember that this truth remains anchored in the cross.



Claire (9)
Sam (5)

Me
Karen

Quinn (7)
Luke (3)

Homosexuality: A Compassionate Response

April 26-27, 2002

Sunset Presbyterian Church

Equip Yourself to Effectively Reach Homosexuals with the Truth of Jesus

One of the greatest challenges facing Christians in today's post-modern world involves learning to speak God's truth on difficult topics with love and compassion. Homosexuality is one such issue that frequently generates a passionate response among Christians and nonbelievers alike. Sadly, a passion for God's truth on this subject doesn't always translate into a compassionate response toward those who deal with same-sex attractions in our families, churches, neighborhoods, and workplaces. The result is often judgment, alienation, and further rejection for the homosexual—leaving them even less receptive to the gospel of Christ.

As part of our mission to better equip Christians to reach the gay community with the message of hope found only in a personal relationship with Jesus, Portland Fellowship is pleased to sponsor *Homosexuality: A Compassionate Response*, April 26-27, 2002, featuring Dan Allender, Ph.D., as the keynote speaker. Dan is a well-known author, speaker, and counselor, traveling extensively to share his unique perspectives on sexual abuse recovery, love and forgiveness, homosexuality, and other related topics. He currently serves as President and Professor of Counseling at Mars Hill Graduate School at Western Seminary in Seattle, and has written many books, including *The Wounded Heart* and *The Healing Path*.

In addition to Dr. Allender, another outstanding conference speaker will be

Anita Worthen, staff member with New Hope Ministries in San Rafael, California, and co-author of *Someone I Love is Gay*. Anita Worthen has worked extensively with support groups for parents of children struggling with homosexuality and has ministered alongside her husband, Frank, on four continents as a counselor and teacher.

By attending this conference, you will learn how to more effectively respond in both truth and love to those who self-identify as gay or lesbian in your life. In addition to Dr. Allender and Anita Worthen, you will hear from an outstanding panel of speakers on such topics as:

- **Root causes of homosexuality**
- **Biblical teaching on homosexuality**
- **Responding to pro-gay biblical, scientific, & cultural claims**
- **Healing for the homosexual**
- **Witnessing Christ's love in a "politically correct" culture**

Homosexuality: A Compassionate Response will be held at Sunset Presbyterian Church, located at 14986 NW Cornell Road in Portland. The registration fee is \$45. To request conference brochures or to register by phone, call the Portland Fellowship office at 503/235-6364. **Make Plans Now to Attend PF's Spring Conference! See you in April!**

Well done, Good and Faithful Servants

The upper room comes to completion

A special thanks to all who have contributed to this project

As we reach the tailend of our remodel project, there are many people we need to acknowledge and thank for their generous participation in seeing the Upper Room become a reality.

- Dan Young of Oregon Business Architecture. Thanks Dan for the great design and for working with the city to get the changes we needed to do the remodel.
- Thank you Kevin Florence for your help in getting the wiring started.
- Dan with Mates Electrical- thanks for being flexible with us and all the extras we needed done.
- Thanks Jim & Integrity Plumbing for donating a portion of your costs to keep us near to budget.
- Jim Burton – thanks for getting our furnace done and then your hard work getting the upstairs painted.
- Yuri & your crew- you are the men when it comes to getting the job done. The sheet rocking and refinished hardwood floors turned out great.
- Thank you Robb Moser with Craftsmen for Christ. I appreciated all your help in getting the materials we needed.
- Colin Halstead, you were an immense help in getting us good deals on lighting and plumbing fixtures. Thanks. We love your choices for us.
- Thanks Jason Wood for the helping getting good carpet and for installing it for us for free.
- Jim Deming with Ornamental Ironworks. Thanks for donating a lot of your cost to get our handrails in.
- Thank you Bob Eckstrom of the Doorworks for reconfiguring our doors and donating your labor.
- Thanks Mike and Dick Baker for getting us framed in upstairs. Thanks Dick for your help on the deck and with the windows.
- Ed Robinson with Triple R Home Repair. We thank you for donating a lot of your time to help Phil get things finished.
- To Steve A., Jody and Raelyn C., Andrew & Nancy, Mark M., John W., and especially Chris S. and John G. Thanks for all your sweat and labor in doing the many project necessary to complete the remodel.
- Also thanks to our interns Kermit, Drew, Ellen, Willis and Katie who all pitched in to get things done and who were more than patient with us as this project kept dragging on.
- Thanks to the M.J. Murdock Trust for funding half the project and to our Founder's Fellowship who came through to match the grant money.

As you can see, it took many people to make the Upper Room come together. Our goal was to provide a community environment for learning and laboring and this has definitely knit us together. It will be exciting to see how God uses this program to increase the effectiveness in reaching individuals with the hope found in Jesus Christ.

march-april calendar & services

march 5,12,19, 26

Open Group Meetings

Every third month we offer Tuesday evenings as a place to drop in for encouragement, support or to learn more about Portland Fellowship, *Tuesday evenings 7 p.m.*

march 15-17

Fellowship Retreat

Annual retreat for all alumni and current participants of the TBG program. Call office to reserve your place ASAP.

april 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Taking Back Ground

Support Group for men and women struggling with unwanted homosexuality. Worship, teaching, and small group interaction. *Tuesday evenings 7 p.m.*

march 7,14, 28

april 4,11, 25

Leadership Development

The interns of Portland Fellowship participate in weekly meetings covering topics concerning ministry. These classes are open to the public. If interested in participating in these classes, contact the office.

march 8

april 12

Family and Friends Group

If you have a loved one involved in homosexuality, please join us for encouragement, prayer, and support. Second Friday of each month. 7 p.m.

april 26, 27

Dan Allender Conference

See page 3 for details. Brochure will be sent out soon.

Counseling, Speaking Engagements, and Youth Support

Can be arranged through the office.

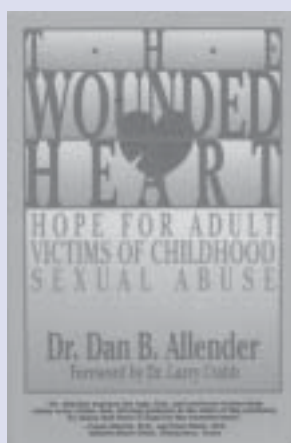
prayer and thanksgiving

Please pray for the men and women who will be attending the Fellowship Retreat, that they will be encouraged, refreshed, and blessed.

Praise God for the ongoing financial support to Portland Fellowship. Your gifts allow us to serve in powerful ways.

Pray for the continued organizing and planning of the conference *Homosexuality: A Compassionate Response*. Pray that those who need to hear this message will be able to attend.

We thank the teachers and small group leaders of the Taking Back Ground program. You help make the program a life-changing experience for so many.



Last month we previewed Dr. Dan Allender's book, *The Healing Path*. This month we would like to inform you of another great book by Dr. Allender.

The Wounded Heart is an intensely personal and specific look at this most "soul deadening" form of abuse. Personal because it may be affecting you, your spouse, a close friend or neighbor, or someone you know well at church. And specific because it goes well beyond the general issues and solutions discussed in other books.

Dr. Allender's book reaches deep into the wounded heart of someone you know, exploring the secret lament of the soul damaged by sexual abuse -- and laying hold of the hope buried there by the One whose unstained image we all bear.

youth program continues to develop...

Intern Drew Berryessa, traveled to Minnesota to continue in the ReachTruth Internet support program for youth. Each lesson offered on this program has a five minute sketch that corresponds to the lesson. Drew, along with Exodus Youth advisory team member Nate Oyloe filmed 10 of the 20 sketches. ReachTruth.com is slowly forming and when finished will be a one-of-a-kind program helping teens from around the world find freedom from their unwanted same sex attractions.



P O R T L A N D

f e l l o w s h i p

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

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