



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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"Finding my Place" by Katie Wood

No matter how many friends I have, or how many people I can share my inmost thoughts with, there has always been a time in my relationships where I feel I have the right to say, "I don't really fit in here, do I?"

No matter how many people have said they loved me, I have always found a way to prove them wrong. I have forever known the ache of not belonging, and to my surprise, I haven't been the only one fighting for my freedom. If it were up to me, I would put a tattoo that stretched across my forehead reading, "Don't even try – I don't belong here, and I don't belong with you." Deep down, I have always felt disconnected from the world, my world. From as early as I can remember, I failed to make a good connection with the people around me, namely, my family.

My parents got their boy nearly two years ahead of their girl, and they were hoping for the ideal big-brother-looks-out-for-little-sister relationship. My brother was a typical rough and tough boy, and they had hoped for a delicate and feminine new baby girl. But they soon found out that the word "delicate" wasn't in my vocabulary. I gravitated toward my brother's toys, even though I had my own. I preferred his kind of play, his friends, his gender more than my own. I was... a tomboy. I hated dresses and feminine clothing, I wanted nothing to do with barrettes or hairbrushes and I liked competition. I was not the prissy or frilly little girl I thought my parents were hoping for. I say that because they were always trying to get me into dresses, and wanting me to play with dolls. But I just didn't want to. I felt like a bad daughter because I didn't follow the stereotype, but my strong will would not allow me to be something I felt I wasn't. And this was only first grade.

It was right around this time that I met Adam. He was on the coed basketball team, and as friends we spent time together outside of sports. I soon found myself role playing with him things he had seen at home – sexual things no child should see. Adam innocently introduced my body to the world of sexual activity. This continued until he moved away in the third grade, but it didn't end there. Something very hard to suppress had been awakened inside this little girl, and once Adam was out of the picture, I learned that my tiny town had no shortage of boys who would be interested in what I had been experiencing. Looking back, I realize that these situations left me "branded", and I believe that boys could see in me a victim before they ever spoke to me. Needless to say, I became a magnet for trouble. I went from one boy to the next through grade school and into middle school looking for acceptance, but ending up with only physical attention, with some of the encounters not being by choice. I quickly surmised that any boy who was interested in me, wasn't really interested in *me*, but rather in my body, which only made me feel disconnected from my peers.

After countless run-ins with males, and no real positive results, I decided as a 7th grader that I needed to stay away from them. Boys were problematic any way you sliced it, and if I stayed away from them I should be okay. Since the beginning of my life, I had been raised in a Christian home, and I had a strong sense of conviction and the Holy Spirit. I knew right from wrong, and I wanted to be proactive about it when I had the choice. So I made an inner vow to never touch a boy again, until I was married to one.

Most of my friends early on had been boys because of my tomboyishness. I had some girl friends, but the relationships never went too deep. If I was now going to cross boys off of my relational list, all I would be left



Katie Wood is an Alumni of the [Taking Back Ground](#) program. She has served as a small group leader since September 2000 and participated in the first year's Upper Room Leadership program.

with was girls. With my background of having many boyfriends, it never crossed my mind that someday I could fall in love with a girl.

Because of my abstention from sexual activity all through high school, yet having found no real solution to my need, when I graduated I realized I had a problem. The only outlet I could think of to solve the problem was pornography. So I took this newfound baggage with me to Bible college, knowing ahead of time that there would be no place to store it.

I soon discarded the porn, but knowing I would have to replace it with something else. Within six months I was sleeping with my friend. I didn't know how it had happened or why. All I knew was that I finally *felt* the kind of acceptance I'd been looking for, but I also felt overwhelming conviction. This was my most confusing time. I wanted to stop, but it was so new, and it felt so right. I thank God for the people he placed in my life at Multnomah, like my RA Brooke, and my friends Heidi, Emiko, Christa, Grace, and Pami that first tumultuous year, and in the years to come Heather, Tabitha, Sonny, Marcia, Sonja, Brooke Allison and Celina who all showed me support (sometimes despite the odds), and provided me with a safe place to talk. (Yes, I *am* a name dropper! These people deserve a lot more credit and recognition than I can afford them here, but I want to try.)

I didn't question whether homosexuality was right or wrong. I knew it was sinful, but what I didn't know was how to get out. I didn't even know how I'd gotten in. I ended up getting suspended from Bible College, and taking my problems to a new christian liberal arts college, where I found a new girlfriend, but also a lot of godly support. As I struggled through being in love and examining the steps leading up to it, I was also getting professional counsel from the college, accountability from my RD, and again, receiving heaps and mounds of support from committed friends. My suite mates Amy and Lydia were a haven, and would let me express my struggles without making me feel awkward about it. Talking it out became the most normal thing in the world. Also my friends Jen, Brynn, Jenna and Jen Sco were just listening ears when I needed to voice my pain or thoughts. My time at Cornerstone College was one of the most healing I've spent among believers. It was also at Cornerstone that I met Kristal, who would be a friend for all seasons, that would walk intimately with me through not only the summer sunshine, but also the dead of winter and the springtime's of growth. Without these friends along the journey, I would not be where I am today, or who I am. Cornerstone was one year of my life, but it was a year that would forever alter the way I view myself and the world around me – for the better.

"I don't belong. I don't fit in. You don't really love me." Whether these were expressed verbally or not, they were my core values. No matter how much I received from God or others,

I could not let myself believe that it was really true, that people actually loved me and wanted me around. Even when I felt I earned someone's affection or deserved it, I still would not let myself believe it was genuine. But all of that began to change as I met and grew to love the people I've mentioned. Also, being away from my family while I was at Cornerstone in Michigan, helped me begin to see just how much they did love the person I am becoming, frilly and prissy or not. (Thanks Mom, Dad, Jason & Megan!)

My life has begun to be much more about gratitude and blessings than anything else. For so long I was blinded to what I had, to what I'd been given. I was searching so hard for the perfect place, where I could be myself, unedited, uncut. I was looking for the perfect love, with no strings and no takebacks, and I didn't want to settle for anything less. I was longing for a person to be all of these things for me, looking for the face to put with the description. But Jesus was the only Name that even came close. As much as I love my family and friends, and as much as they've done for me, they can't be all I need. There is an end to human resource, and I wear them out with my intensity

and my love of depth. Heck, I wear myself out! But Jesus' hands never reach capacity, and His feet never have too many people crowded around them. I can always go, day or night, put together or disheveled, toting baggage or light with joy. He wants to be with me, and I always have so much to tell him. I could bend a human ear, but I would only just get started and then someone would need a break. Jesus doesn't take coffee, cigarette or lunch breaks. And I love him for it.

In learning to be grateful for what I've been given in Christ and in human relationships, I've also had to trod the long and lonely road of forgiveness. For the longest blissful time, I was on the receiving end, just reaping and reaping the fruits of labor I had never really sown. God provided for me and protected me when I needed it most, and once my need lessened, He gave me some responsibility. I am still in the beginning stages of learning what it means to forgive. Being misunderstood is hard enough, but being the wounder instead of the wounded is a harder lot to bear responsibly. Learning to say "I'm sorry" and genuinely mean it does not come by me naturally. I still find myself feeling at times like I've taken so much crap, that I deserve to dish out a little, without consequence. But it isn't so. God calls us all to love with 1 Corinthians 13 love, regardless of the past or how we feel. This is my aim. God continues to bring new challenges in relationship, and new healing right along with it.

My prayer is that I will be faithful with what I've been given, and that God will pour patience over the heads of the folks I'm rubbing shoulders with. It's a long journey yet, and I don't know what's ahead. All I can do is walk forward in the truth – that I *do* belong, right here, and right now.



A few friends that helped me get through some of my most difficult times.

the challenges and blessings of leadership development

As the first "Upper Room Leadership Development Program" comes to a close, we stop to look back at some of the challenges and blessings that have come about through this new ministry. As a staff, we were challenged by the ongoing remodeling of the third floor, we were stretched in teaching and utilizing the interns in the office, and we were blessed by getting to know five people that we believe God will use in different and incredible ways.

For you as our readers, to get an idea of how this past year went, we have asked the interns to share briefly how God has used the Upper Room program to impact their lives. Here is what they each had to say:



kermit: This past year has been a time of "equipping" for me. When I made the decision to sell my house and move across the country to Portland to be a part of the Upper Room Leadership Development Program, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. In fact, to simply state that this year has been one in which Yahweh has "stretched me" would be an understatement. Whether it has been adapting to a new and transitory living environment, adjusting to life on the west coast, contributing to the "Taking Back Ground" leadership team, pursuing my seminary studies, interacting with my fellow interns, or soaking up the outstanding leadership training presentations, I have been challenged on many levels. Moreover, I have learned a great deal "behind the scenes" about para-church ministry while working with Phil and the staff at PF, and I feel confident that I will be able to apply this valuable information to a variety of ministry settings down the road.

willis: This past year I learned the discipline and need for mentorship. I learned that mentorship is learning to understand a leader's heart, not simply looking at the method that one follows. Through my mentorship with Phil, I came to understand how God can use me in spite of my own weaknesses. The Taking Back Ground program has been a wonderful opportunity for me to witness first-hand the need for worship. I've seen how worship is a powerful pipeline of healing not only in my own life but for those who come here who are struggling with sexual sin. I also know that I could not be as effective as God made me without the support of my local church body. Integration with the body of Christ is essential in my path to relational wholeness and leadership success. Overall, it has been a challenging and spiritually strengthening year, and I praise God for the work he has done in my life through PF.



drew: Wow, what a year. I will admit that walking into the Upper Room program, I had a lot of preconceived notions as to what I was going to experience and learn. I can honestly say that I got a whole lot more than I bargained for. The Upper Room program provided me with a very honest and practical look at para-church ministry that has been more than valuable. The training was relevant, and the hands-on work invaluable, but more importantly, the "fish bowl" that the other interns and I were in, created some of the most dynamic moments for me. Walking through our struggles, our fears, our diverse personalities, and a myriad of other experiences created an environment for me where God has been free to refine my character and draw me into a deeper dependency on him. Holistically, the Upper Room has been a catalyst in my spiritual life that has and will continue to profoundly change me!

ellen: Seven months full of information about how a ministry operates has been invaluable to me, and we still have two months left! I would say that the most important element I learned was seeing integrity, faithfulness, and trust in God's sovereignty lived out! By far the biggest lesson for me was to see God provide for me better than I can provide for myself. Pride made this a very difficult lesson for me to learn in the first five months of this incredible opportunity I was so blessed to be a part of. He showed me how if I trust in Him He will provide for me in all areas of my life emotionally, physically, financially, if only I trust Him. An enormous lesson. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5,6).



katie: Being a part of the Upper Room Program has been a blessing - and an unexpected one. I joined the program later than everyone else, and had my doubts about being able to weave into the already existing fabric of the relationships that had been established between interns and staff. But to my surprise, I belong. I am a member of a team that is constantly being challenged to grow, equipped to serve, and sent out into the world to speak the truth. This has been a small taste of what I believe is to come in relationships, in ministry on the mission field, and in my love life with the Lord. God's hand is obviously on Portland Fellowship, and I'm privileged to be a part of all this.

frieda, the boxer: I had no idea where my master was taking me when we drove from Washington DC to Portland last summer. Now I feel like I'm truly bi-coastal! Even though I'm mean to other dogs, I love people and enjoy being the PF house mascot. Every week after the TBG group meets, I get to greet everybody and search the house for any leftover food. I'll eat anything! I also love it when Drew plays really rough with me and when my master goes away and Ellen takes care of me. She is really sweet and isn't boring like my master who studies all the time. He feeds me popcorn, though, and takes me for walks on Mt. Tabor, so I guess I'll keep him.



Portland Fellowship is now taking applications for the 2002-2003 Leadership Training year. Please call the office or go on-line to learn more about this life-changing program. Spots are limited, please get your application in soon!

march-april calendar & services

may 4-5

**Journey with the Spirit
Conference** *Lake City, MN*
Speaker: Jason Thompson

may 19-20

Canby Alliance Church
Speaker: Phil Hobizal

may 23

Fundraiser *Boise Idaho*
Speaker: Phil Hobizal

may 2,9,23,30

Leadership Development

The interns of PF participate in weekly meetings covering topics concerning ministry. Topics include: Leadership Development; Transparency/Accountability; Evangelism. These classes are open to the public. If interested contact the office.

may 7, 14, 21, 28

Taking Back Ground

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

may 10; june 14

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.

June 4, 11, 18, 25

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.

Counseling, Speaking Engagements, and Youth Support

Can be arranged through the office.

sponsoring youth to exodus conference

The annual Exodus N.A. Conference is being held this year in Wheaton IL, July 31-August 4. We are excited to announce that this year Exodus Youth, a division of Exodus North America, has the opportunity of helping students under 25 to attend the conference through a partial scholarship. If you are interested in attending but can not fully afford it, log on to the website www.exodusyouth.net for details.



requests and prayer

As we continue to grow, we are in need of equipment for next year's intern program. To have them actively involved in our on-line ministry, we need two computers. Because of our technical advances in ministry, we will need modern computers that can handle the vision. If you are wanting to upgrade, now is a great time to donate your (slightly older computer) to Portland Fellowship. Of course you are welcome to donate money that will allow us to buy this needed equipment.

Pray as the staff reviews upcoming applications for the next Upper Room Leadership Training program. Space is currently open for four live-in participants. See website and link to "Interns" for more details.

The summer months for most nonprofit ministries tend to be financially straining. We ask for your prayers for continued support through churches and individuals who believe in what we do.



pf on the web

The Portland Fellowship website continues to be a very powerful resource for people seeking information about freedom from homosexuality. Many times we get concerned family and friends asking about the ministry. They say

they don't think their loved ones who struggle with this issue are ready to meet with someone, or even call on the phone. The website gives them a safe place to learn about the ministry, read powerful testimonies, and even read our newsletter on-line!

We were ready for a big change in the appearance and the usability of our site, and now it is completed. We invite you, if you are on-line, to check out the new site. To do so, go to www.portlandfellowship.com

For those who would like to support the work we do, you have the opportunity of doing so on-line. We have a secure server that will keep all of your information safe!



PORTLAND

fellowship

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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