



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

september/october 2002 volume 7, number 5

"Lost and Confused" by Ellen Wainwright

I always wanted horses. My dream as a child was to have a house in the country with lots of animals and land I could call my very own. If I only had these things.... Then I'd be happy!

In 1996 I was standing on my back porch looking over my 20-acre hobby farm. I bought the farm with a friend, Joan, and her four children in 1991. I had a dog, a cat, three chickens, a rooster, as many as five horses at one time, and the cutest little pigmy goat you could imagine called Gabby. My dream had come true. I had everything I ever wanted. So why was I looking for someplace to tie the rope? It had to be someplace the neighbors across the street could not see me. I couldn't do it in the house for fear that Joan or the kids might find me. How horrible that would be! I had a wonderful friend in Joan. Most people go their entire life without knowing a friend like Joan. Yet my loneliness was consuming my every thought. I had a hollow empty feeling I couldn't shake. Alcohol, drugs and sex were only a momentary release. Nothing would fill the huge void I felt inside.

My family would never turn their back on me if I needed them. They were just a phone call away – though I did not call, I didn't ask, I never learned to share my pain. Instead, I learned to hide pain and anger. Growing up in a dysfunctional home of alcohol addiction and co-dependency, we learned to hide feelings and tuck them away and pretend everything was just fine. I even hid my pain from myself. I was totally confused and perplexed as to why I felt so useless and meaningless. Why can't I follow through with anything! The pain was so intense and I had no idea why. Even worse, I was tired of trying to figure out why.

The closest ambulance to my home in Merrill, MI was at least twenty minutes away. I could call them and tell them there is a body out in the barn. As soon as I call I would go out to the barn. The rope would be set, all I would do is stack up the hay and jump! Since my pain was starting to consume everyone around me, I'd be doing them all a favor. I had it planned to the very last minute. It was about 15 minutes before I was going to make the phone call to the ambulance when God made it clear He had a different plan. He sent Joan home early that day. In fact, in the twenty years I'd known Joan, she had never come home early from her annual trip up north. Since I had no intension of being interrupted, I had planned this suicide an entire day before she was to get home. God brought her home not two or three hours early but an entire day. Wow... praise God! I did not tell Joan what she had just kept me from doing. I got up from the kitchen chair and walked out to the back yard. I looked up to the sky, raised my hands in the air and cried, "Lord help me, 'cause I am lost." Immediately I had a moment of clarity. Enough to realize my thinking was all messed up. I walked back into the house and began to call counseling centers until I found one that would get me in that week. A difficult task the week before Christmas!

Mercifully, God has delivered me from so many bad habits and addictions. Alcohol and crack cocaine controlled my life. I had a void in my life and I tried to fill that void with everything imaginable. Drugs didn't work except as a temporary numbing of the emotions. Sex became yet another addiction included in the long list of attempts to fill the emptiness. I continued to look to other people for my happiness, never understanding why that void could not be filled. Looking back I can see so clearly all the ways God was directing my path during this recovery process. In my twenty years of using, one could say I had a Ph.D. in addictions and treatment. I had been in six treatment programs and had four drunk driving tickets. All my adult life I questioned my recklessness and destructive behavior. At times I even felt invincible.



Ellen Wainwright participated in the 2001-02 Upper Room Program. After graduating, she moved back to Saginaw, MI where she hopes to begin a ministry similar to Portland Fellowship.

Through the direction of a truly wonderful staff at Insight Recovery Center in Saginaw, MI, I got the answers to all my baffling questions. Renee Wells, my therapist, earned my trust with incredible patience and a truly caring nature that could be seen and felt as I poured out my soul to her. I was learning so much about myself and getting so many answers but I continued to relapse. I would always go back to what was most comfortable for me. Learning about my past was very painful and the need to relieve the pain was more than I could battle. I had been in and out of a treatment center during the two years Renee and I had been talking. It was very clear that I needed a long-term program. I had no idea why at the time, but I was insistent on the program being a Christian-based program. T.E.E.N. Challenge was my first attempt. This was a year-long commitment. I was there only four days when I walked away. My brother lived only a short distance away so it was easy to walk to his house. I made two more attempts with T.E.E.N. Challenge. They even sent me to a location out of town the last time thinking it would be more difficult for me to walk away.

While I wanted a Christian program, I didn't think much of their views on homosexuality. As a matter of fact I was pretty angry about the beliefs these Christians held. A seed was planted, though, and I received enough of God that I knew I wanted more. I wanted to learn more! I prayed and prayed for a couple of weeks that the Lord would reveal to me if my homosexuality was wrong, and if so, why? Typical addict that I was, I gave Him a couple weeks to answer my prayer and when I didn't hear anything I decided to leave T.E.E.N. Challenge. On the bus ride home I again began to pray that the Lord would show me another way to learn about Him. I entered a discipleship program offered at the City Of Saginaw Rescue Mission. It was there that I was able to daily immerse myself in Scripture. As a result, questions I had about my homosexuality since I was 17 years old began to be answered. I can't put into words the incredible sense of freedom I felt to finally have a clear understanding of my misconceptions surrounding my homosexuality – love vs. lust, attraction vs. desire, and lifestyle vs. perversion. This is where Jesus was really introduced to me, and I owe my life to those who supported that Rescue Mission.

I had stopped talking with my therapist when I entered T.E.E.N. Challenge but after about six months in the program at the Rescue Mission I asked if I could begin to talk with Renee again. They asked me if Renee was a Christian. I said, "I don't now but she seems like a Christian." As it turned out, she was a Christian. I mention this only to show how God's divine direction was with me throughout this entire recovery process from the day I called out to Him. I can see this so clearly now.

I relapsed yet again when I was close to graduating the discipleship program. I was very upset, but thankfully these Christians did not give up on me. I could not believe it! When I admitted I had

relapsed I expected disappointment; what I got was love and praise for coming forth with the truth. I really wanted to make this work but how could I relapse after all I had learned? I was confused and ready to give up on myself. I prayed fervently to the Lord about staying in the program. To stay was incredibly humbling because I had to go back to the very beginning of the program again. What the Lord revealed to me was not what I wanted to hear. I had a secret that no one knew about me. Not even Joan, my best friend of 20 years. God was calling me to the truth and to a level of honesty I never would have reached had I not been studying His word. I had a secret the enemy had me convinced I'd never be able to talk about. God made it clear to me that I might never stay sober if I chose not to expose this secret. I had to talk about it. My secret involved compulsive masturbation and sexual issues related to sexual

addiction. The shame was so deep; I could barely get the words out. As difficult as it was for me it was worth it because exposing the secret set me FREE! I was full of shame, but through this process of disclosure, God's grace began to literally pour out on me and I was truly SET FREE!

It is so obvious, as I look back now, how God prepared me during those four years to embrace honesty and to grow in understanding of him. In placing me on the solid rock of Jesus, God opened my eyes and faithfully answered my prayers in his perfect timing. First he sent me to Renee at Insight Recovery Center to show



A powerful learning experience at PF with my fellow interns:
Kermit, Katie, Willis, myself, and Drew

how the sexual abuse at age six affected my entire personality and vitality and how the dysfunction in my home affected my perception of women and men. Then He sent me to the Empowerment Program at the Rescue Mission in Saginaw where I was able to concentrate completely on God's word. In short, all my needs were provided for. Through two years of lessons I began to work through areas of pride in my life while learning what submission means and how to walk in humility. What an incredible journey!

That day back on my farm when I was ready to take my own life I cried out to Jesus. He held on to me and never let go. As part of my journey to greater healing and restoration, I began to look for groups in my area for people who struggle with same-sex attractions. I was surprised to find none. Ultimately, I had to go to Grand Rapids, MI which was three hours away to find an Exodus-affiliated group. When I arrived and sat down, the leader of the group was handing out information about the Upper Room leadership development program offered by Portland Fellowship. Immediately I knew it was God's will for me. This program has been a tremendous blessing for me and I am excited to see where God will lead me next. I hope to begin a similar ministry in my area in Saginaw, MI. Please pray that the Lord would help me to gather the necessary resources needed to begin this type of ministry in my home town. God bless you all and thank you for taking the time to read my story.

taking back ground - now available for purchase

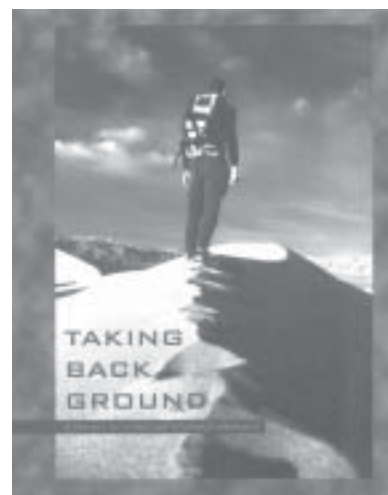
After many years of teaching the material, the *Taking Back Ground* program is now available as a powerful new workbook. This program has encouraged hundreds of men and women over the past 7 years, and now we look forward to the material being sent around the world with the hopes of helping others find true direction in their healing journey.

Taking Back Ground is one of Portland Fellowship's primary services. Each year over 50 men and women participate Tuesday evenings in a time of worship, teaching, and small group interaction. The worship is a powerful experience in which all the participants can freely come before God. Many have shared that they have not been able to worship as freely as they do on Tuesday nights at Portland Fellowship. The teachings consist of lessons that help participants grow closer to God as they begin to understand their true nature in Christ. The small group time allows the participants to share struggles and victories in a non-judgmental encouraging environment. When first starting *Taking Back Ground*, participants sometimes feel nervous and unsure. But soon they find it to be a safe, supportive, and encouraging place.

Chris, a graduate of the *Taking Back Ground* program, and now a small group leader shares, *"When I first realized I was attracted to guys, I didn't know what to do with it. After avoiding it for a couple years, I found that it was only getting worse. God provided me with a place for healing. 'Taking Back Ground' has been both a refuge and a place of hope. It was so relieving to realize that I wasn't alone, that there were other people like me that were hurting. I never wanted to be attracted to guys, I just didn't know what to do with it, and I was so afraid to talk about it. 'Taking Back Ground' has helped me understand why I have these feelings and how God desires for me to experience healing. Most of all, I have learned that God loves me, that I am not bad, and that with Christ's help, I can deal with these feelings. The leaders of 'Taking Back Ground' are loving and gentle. Their openness and humility provides a safe place, and seeing others like me experience victory and healing gives me hope."*

Joanne, another graduate of *Taking Back Ground* and upcoming small group leader writes, *"This program taught me some important concepts about myself, God, and others. I learned about some of the roots of homosexuality and lesbianism. I learned how to recognize and deal with triggers. I learned tools for healthy living and for spiritual warfare. I learned how to have close healthy friendships with other women and I learned that God is a God of relationship and desires for me to have what I desire: real love and real intimacy. Because Portland Fellowship is a safe and supportive place to be real, I learned how to be open and honest about anything I was dealing with, no matter how 'bad'. I had no idea I would learn or grow as much as I did here."*

We are now taking applications for the 2002/2003 series. We hope you will share this program with those in need.



Year One "Taking Back Ground" workbook now available for personal or group use. \$25 plus s/h. Call or order online.

life changing week for youth at exodus conference

A record breaking 85 youth ranging from 16 to 25 participated in the 2002 Exodus Conference in Wheaton, IL. The week proved to be a life-changing experience for many of these young people. With over half coming to the conference for the first time, it was hard for them to know what to expect.

One young delegate shares, *"This was my first conference and I can assure you that I was extremely nervous. Even as the train pulled into my stop, I could feel my stomach turning. I think what scared me the most was that I wouldn't be able to hide the fact that I was at a conference that dealt with issues in homosexuality. Just by being there I was saying that this was something significant in my life, enough for me to be there. And that scared me because I felt vulnerable. But all in all, I think that was the most beautiful part of the conference. It was so easy to skip over the regular chitchat that goes nowhere with people and get to the heart issues. The most common question was: 'so what's your story?' And I found myself opening up to people really easily. I'm a fairly conservative person and there are just some things you don't talk about. But that quickly changed and I found myself being comfortable enough to talk quite openly and it was so liberating! No longer did I feel that I needed to hide my past in shame. No longer was I so hung up on myself on 'being the only one.' I was at a conference with 800 other people, and not only that, there must've been over 80 other youth too."*



Exodus Youth Director, Jason Thompson hosts Sy Rogers at the Exodus Annual Conference in Wheaton, IL.

Internationally known speaker, Sy Rogers, came to the Exodus conference as a special guest specifically for the youth. As always, Sy did an incredible job speaking. His desire is not to speak for "infotainment" sake, but to bring life-changing words to those trapped in confusion and despair. The feedback was extremely positive with many saying that he was the highlight of their conference experience. The youth also had a special evening celebration with the musical group Sound Proof. Jill and Amy shared their hearts and sang words of hope and encouragement. It was the first conference in which the youth felt singled out to be blessed and appreciated.

A young delegate writes Exodus Youth, *"It was so encouraging and humbling to witness the miracles in my fellow comrade's lives and that's what it was, a miracle. I was able to see their lives in the process of being transformed by God. It was so beautiful, and on several occasions, I found myself in tears because of the pain I heard people talk about in their past but also in joy for what God was doing. It is so amazing to see how God can change all things for good and His glory. The people I met really made the conference so rich."*

september-october calendar & services

september 3,10,17,24

Leadership Training

Small group leaders and intern participants will be going through training in preparation for the Taking Back Ground program.

Tuesday evenings 7 p.m.

september 20 & 21

"At the Cross"

Conference (details on right)

october 1,8,15,22,29

Taking Back Ground

Discipleship support program for men and women seeking freedom from unwanted homosexuality. Apply to enroll for the 2002 Fall series throughout September.

Tuesday evenings 7 p.m.

september 13; october 11

Family & 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.

september 28

Relational Problems - Relational Solutions

One day informational conference at Multnomah Biblical Seminary. 10am - 4pm. Check our website or call the office for more details.

Special events, speaking opportunities, and monthly updates

Can be viewed on our website:
www.portlandfellowship.com

Counseling, Speaking, and Youth Support

Can be arranged through the office.

"at the cross" - september 20 & 21

How we express our desires for love and intimacy is a matter of life and death. Sexual and relational wholeness enriches life. Through holy, genuine relationships with others, we grow in our capacity to love, trust, and honor God's human creation. We learn to give and receive love aright.

At the Cross: Restoration & Reconciliation is a conference designed to raise awareness of our need for healing. Sexual and relational brokenness destroys us by distorting our true image of self and others. Temptations and sinful practices follow. Sexual and relational sin strips us of our capacity to love. The result is death, be it physical, emotional or spiritual.

The goals of this conference are: to minister the healing authority of Jesus Christ and to mediate His transforming power to heal the sexually and relationally wounded and broken; to invite God to release His healing in the church; and to reconcile us to God and to one another. A team from Desert Streams ministry in Anaheim, CA, will bring their powerful message to this seminar.

To register contact Irvington Covenant Church at 503.495.5733 or email Morgan at: mdavis@worldstar.com.



Upper Room Year Two

This month we begin our second year of leadership training through the Upper Room program. Applications were slow in coming, making us wonder if we would be doing the program at all. But by the end of August we had three women who will be going through the series. One of those is Lidia Gutierrez from El Salvador. She traveled to the US this year in search of training for a ministry she began several years ago in her country. When she found out about us, she felt as if the Lord had answered her prayers. One hurdle we still face with Lidia is securing her visa for training. We trust that God will lead us as we wade through the details with the INS.

Each participant of the program will work alongside staff members every week. They will learn the inner workings of a para-church organization and will be leading small groups in the TBG series. Every week, they will attend the training workshops required for the Upper Room series. It will be exciting to see how God will work in the lives of each new intern. Please be in prayer, as each is making a life adjustment to follow God's call in their life to work in ministry. We will formally introduce you to our new interns in next month's newsletter.



Lidia Gutierrez



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

MINISTRY STAFF

Phil Hobizal

Executive Director

Jason Thompson

Co-Director

Rebecca Wade

Women's Ministry

Benjamin Brown

Administrative Assistant

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

telephone 503_235_6364

fax 503_235_3896

e-mail: pf@portlandfellowship.com

portlandfellowship.com

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