



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## The Journey Continues *by John Blomberg*

*For 25 long years I wrestled with homosexuality. I never knew that there was Someone who could free me from bondage and set me on the path to life.*

I was about 3 years old when, after a bitter divorce, my father gained full custody of my older brother and me. We then went to live in my grandparent's basement. Grandma was hard working and loving but my grandfather was gruff, self centered and never smiled. He didn't interact with my brother or me unless we needed punishing or a harsh word. He was a big man and I hated and feared him. My father worked full time and I was usually in day care and rarely saw him. On weekends he was often gone and I longed to be with him.

When I was six Dad remarried but didn't seem to know how be a father and my stepmother took on most of the child-rearing responsibilities. At home, Dad often worked in the garage, around the house, or watched sports on TV. There was seldom any meaningful interaction between us. He would sometimes do things with my brother but if I showed interest he would often say I was too little to join in. I felt rejected.

In grade school, I played with boys but gradually started playing with the more passive ones and even girls as I got older. My male peers became more aggressive and rough and I avoided contact with most of them.

In fourth grade I took a risk and tried out for the basketball team. The other boys seemed to naturally know what to do but I didn't. We had our first game but I was utterly unprepared. When I got the ball I got rid of it as soon as I could. I tried to fake it by running in the same direction as everyone else. We lost the game and I went home feeling humiliated and deeply ashamed of myself because I couldn't play like the other boys could. I quit the team.

By fifth grade I played, most often, with girls on the playground. Their behavior was far less aggressive and threatening to me than the boys' and I felt safe around them.

About the same time, I remember hanging out with a friend and we had found some pornography. There were mainly women in the magazine but I found myself drawn to the few men that were depicted. I was captivated by their physical appearance and they seemed so strong. I experienced deep longings to identify with them emotionally and physically.

In junior high school I felt even more different from the other boys. They were starting to notice girls but I wasn't. When I had to play team sports in P.E., I was usually the last one picked for a team. One time, I actually hit a softball far enough to get to first base. The next batter up on my team hit the ball and it was time to run to second. I did, but got confused when I wasn't sure if I should go on to third. Some of the other boys were screaming and cursing at me by this time. I finally ran back to second base and messed up the game for my team. The other boys were jeering and scorning my performance. I don't remember anything else about that day except that I hated my male peers for their cruel words, I hated the P.E. teacher for letting them get away with it, and I hated the constant shame that came with the sense that I just didn't cut it as a boy.

When I was in 7th grade, my step mother purchased a book that explained some of the physical changes that happen during puberty. The book described the act of masturbation and what a good and normal thing it was to participate in. And so began my enslavement to masturbation and homosexual fantasy that would continue for the next 25 years.



John has attended Portland Fellowship off and on for 15 years. Now that he has graduated from the program, John is excited about giving back what he has learned through leading a small group this fall.

When I entered high school my male friends talked about girls. I was disinterested but would act as if I could identify with what they were saying or would quickly exit the conversation and find somewhere else to go.

I was involved in the instrumental music program at school and my father took some small steps to encourage me in that direction. But by that time, I didn't want anything to do with him. We barely knew each other and I sure wasn't going to let him get close to me. I felt ignored and rejected so why would it be any different now? I rejected *him* to protect my own heart.

By the time I graduated from high school the thought of manhood had become loathsome to me and I spurned it. I remember someone referring to me as a man when I was 19 and I was filled with rage. 'Don't call me a man,' I thought to myself. "I will never be a man!"

In an attempt to deal with my deep fear and hatred of masculinity, I joined the Navy in 1983. I was terrified that the recruiting staff would find out about my homosexuality. Fortunately they didn't and I went on to boot camp, training, and service aboard an aircraft carrier. My ship was stationed in the San Francisco Bay but by the grace of God I never became active in the gay community there.

I went with some Navy buddies to an Amy Grant concert one evening and was looking through the concert program when a little ad caught my eye. It simply read, 'HOMOSEXUAL? WE CAN HELP.' It listed the phone number for an organization called Love in Action. I saved the concert program but didn't call Love in Action. I continued to keep my sexuality a secret for the rest of my time in the Navy. Meanwhile, I began having anxiety attacks due in part from the inner turmoil I experienced regarding my same sex attraction.

After the Navy I settled into civilian life. The anxiety attacks got worse and I descended into suicidal depression. I started intentionally looking at men in sexual ways which fed my lust but didn't satisfy the emptiness of my heart.

One afternoon, I was thinking about that Amy Grant concert program I'd saved when I was in the Navy and decided to get it out. I found the Love In Action ad and worked up the courage to call the number. With sweaty palms and an unsteady voice, I explained my situation to the woman on the other end of the line. She was kind and patient and put me in contact with an organization in Portland called Reconciliation Ministries that helped people with same-sex attraction issues. I began attending meetings on a regular basis and found hope that perhaps there were answers for why I was attracted to men.

Eventually, I met a man and became emotionally dependent on him and and left Reconciliation. When I later ended that relationship I was nearly paralyzed with loneliness and depression.

I wanted to die. I finally decided to try and live as a "good Christian" and not involve myself in homosexuality. But despite my efforts, I still had sex with other men sporadically over the next 15 years.

The last time I acted out there was no conviction in my heart over my sin. That bugged me and I knew that a choice had been set before me. 'Choose this day whom you will serve,' the Holy Spirit seemed to say. I knew that I couldn't choose obedience to God and continue in sexual sin. I chose God and a few months later I entered the *Taking Back Ground* program at Portland Fellowship.

The first night at PF was a stressful one. *Did I have the guts to stick with the program through two years? Would God really heal those broken and wounded places during my life? What if He didn't? What then?*

It didn't take long to figure out that I was in the right place and that God had brought me to PF. The teaching and ministry time in that first year was often painful and challenging, but effective in tearing down some of my long-held misconceptions about God and his love for me.

My small group leaders maintained an extraordinary balance of intense but compassionate insight. In the group setting I found accountability. I really believed that God wanted me to surrender it because of the spiritual strongholds it gave the enemy. My leaders were faithful to prayerfully support me and I was freed from masturbation and much of the dark spiritual debris that came with it.

That first year ended and I'd learned how deep God's love was for me and how He was the One who saw me in my bondage, heard my cries for help, was moved with compassion and jealousy for me and fought for my release to rescue me. I learned that I could pray and communicate with the Holy Spirit, something I'd never known before.

Year Two came and there was more to learn, more ways to be challenged. The leadership dynamic in my new small group was different but powerful. Again there was the wonderful prayer support and a ton of encouragement as I sought to live out my obedience to the Lord. I began to embrace the idea that manhood is actually a good thing and I was encouraged to continue to pursue godly masculinity instead of trying to take on the masculinity of other men through sex and fantasy as I had done for so many years.

And here I am, just weeks after graduating from *Taking Back Ground*. I'm acutely aware of my need for God.

Is God finished with me yet? Hardly.

I've embraced my masculinity in much the same way a little boy might don his daddy's sweatshirt. It feels good; it's manly. But it will take time, determination and growth before it fits like it's supposed to, and I'm trusting God for that.

As one of this year's graduating participants proclaimed, 'The journey continues.' I heartily agree.



John proudly displaying his certificate for completing Taking Back Ground.

## Love Won Out and the Paulk's Come to Portland

In 1998, John Paulk, whose story about how he overcame homosexuality has inspired people across the nation, left his position as Portland Fellowship's public relations representative to work with Colorado Springs-based, Focus on the Family. During his five years with Focus, John created a traveling conference called, *Love Won Out*. This conference is designed to reach out to hurting families negatively affected by homosexuality. On June 21, *Love Won Out* came to the Rose City introducing Portland area residents to the good news that change from homosexuality is possible through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The event drew nearly 1,000 people and provided Portland Fellowship with a unique opportunity to invite attendees to become involved with our ministry.

### Love Won Out Facts

The first event of its kind to travel the nation.

Since 1998 more than 18,000 people have attended LWO conferences.

Greater than 50 percent of LWO attendees are comprised of parents of gay and lesbian children.

LWO has been so threatening to the gay activist community, they now host counter-events in every city where LWO travels.

PF director Jason Thompson sponsored a booth at *Love Won Out*. "The Lord gave us an incredible opportunity to meet hurting people who didn't know about Portland Fellowship. It was exciting reaching out to these individuals who were ready to learn more about leaving homosexuality behind. We also met dozens of people who were aware of Portland Fellowship and expressed appreciation for what our organization has meant to them."

Just prior to the *Love Won Out* event, John and his wife, Anne, made the difficult decision to leave Focus on the Family and return to the Pacific Northwest. "Working with Dr. Dobson and the team at Focus has been very rewarding, but after five years in a high-profile, very stressful position, Anne and I wanted to return to Portland and raise our children (Timmy age 6, Alex 4, and Jordan 7 mos.) around family and loved ones—and to live a life completely out of the media spotlight."

Last April, John called Jason and asked if there was a place at Portland Fellowship where he could use his gifts and all that the Lord has taught him while at Focus for struggling individuals and families on a local level. "I was excited about working with John again," Jason said. "John brings years of experience and will be an incredible blessing to this ministry. John continues to seek God's direction for his future so we agreed to have him at Portland Fellowship on a temporary contract basis and see how God leads."

"I pray the next few months I spend with the dear people at PF will provide me with a way to give back without fanfare or visibility", John said. "The Lord has taught me much about humility and serving in the background."



The Paulks prior to the arrival of their third son Jordan

## Fellowship House to be Sold

Since 1988, Hinson Memorial Baptist Church has graciously granted Portland Fellowship the use of the large house on Madison Street that we use for our offices, support groups and internship program. Over the years, Hinson has been very generous and kept the rental on this property at an affordable level for us.



This beautiful turn-of-the-century house has been our ministry home for the past 15 years.

Recently, Hinson has expressed a desire to sell the house and has extended Portland Fellowship the first opportunity to purchase it. Clearly, it would be beneficial for our ministry to remain in this wonderful facility since, for the past 15 years, many of those struggling with homosexuality and their family members have come to feel at home here.

If you haven't had the opportunity to see this wonderful facility, we urge you to do so. Fellowship House has ample room to accommodate the numerous activities undertaken each month. Since renovations were completed, we have full use of three floors. There's sufficient space on the main floor and basement for teaching our first and second year *Taking Back Ground* programs. This area is also used for worship gatherings and our monthly Friends and Family meetings. There's also a large kitchen, which can be utilized during holidays and ministry celebrations. The second floor houses our staff offices and counseling rooms. Our internship program uses the third floor of the house. It is fully furnished with four bedrooms, a kitchenette, restroom and common area.

Portland Fellowship has invested close to \$100,000 in the house through upgrades and renovations. These were made possible through grants and special fundraising venues and haven't come from the general ministry budget. Please be in prayer with us as we seek the Lord's guidance as to the future of this house and if He would have us consider purchasing it from Hinson. We will update you in coming weeks with further information.

## July-August calendar & services

July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29  
August 5, 12, 19, 26

**Hiding From Love** a video program by Dr. John Townsend. This series is for women only. Please RSVP if interested in attending. 7 p.m.

July 8, 15, 22, 29  
August 5, 12, 19, 26

**A Band of Brothers**, is a DVD series based on the Wild at Heart book, by John Eldredge. This series is for men only. Please RSVP if interested in attending. 7 p.m.

July 11; August 8

### Family & Friends Group

John Paulk will be teaching on roots and causes of homosexuality. 7 p.m.

July 21-26

### Exodus Conference

This year's conference is in Orlando Florida. To register call 1.888.264.0877 or go to the website [www.exodus-international.org](http://www.exodus-international.org)

July 1, 15, 29 & August 19

### Wives Support Meeting

For wives seeking encouragement and support, please contact the office for additional information about these meetings.

August 3

### Sy introduces seminar

One month prior to Sy's seminar, he will be coming to Portland to introduce himself. If you would like to get a sample of Sy, please attend the Sunday morning service at Trinity Fellowship. 2700 SE 67th. Services are at 9 and 11 a.m.

### Additional updates:

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

### Counseling, speaking, and youth support

Can be arranged through the office.

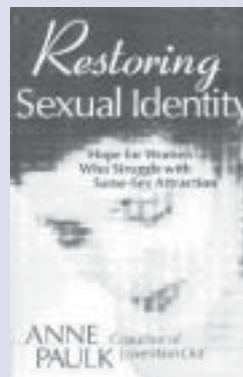
Portland Fellowship is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) nondenominational organization. We are exclusively supported through private donations, support services, and offerings.

## New Book on Lesbianism

*Restoring Sexual Identity – Hope for Women Struggling with Same-Sex Attraction* is the first Christian book to be released on female homosexuality in more than 15 years.

Written by our Anne Paulk, this book offers answers to the most commonly asked questions from those desiring change as well as friends and relatives of women struggling with same-sex attraction.

Rebecca Wade, PF's director of women said, "The resources available for women are so limited, I'm excited to read Anne's new book and offer it to women coming to our ministry."



- Is lesbianism an inherited predisposition or is it developed in childhood?
- Does becoming a Christian eliminate desire for members of the same sex?
- What support is available for women who struggle with lesbianism?
- Can a woman be a lesbian and a Christian at the same time?
- How does childhood sexual abuse relate to the development of lesbianism?

Anne answers these questions drawing from her own experience and that of many other former lesbians who participated in an extensive survey on same-sex attraction.

## Welcoming Sy Rogers to Portland



Internationally known communicator Sy Rogers, has been invited by Portland Fellowship to speak on September 6 at Trinity Fellowship Church, 2700 SE 67th. Sy shares from his own inspiring experience of overcoming abuse and brokenness.

He has a powerful message of hope for the church today. Using personal testimony and a clear, practical biblical message, Sy challenges listeners to experience the freedom that can be found only in Jesus Christ.

Some topics include: *Beyond Brokenness; Realistic Expectations; Why Christians will struggle with sexuality; Keeping clean in a dirty world; The Power of forgiveness; Renewing the mind: what it means and how to do it; Ways we wreck relationships; and Relapse prevention.*

Please mark your calendar to join us on September 6 for the Sy Rogers seminar. The cost for the event is only \$25.00. For more information, and to register on-line go to [www.SySeminar.com](http://www.SySeminar.com) or call the church office at 503.231.0981.

Sy will be coming to Portland one month prior to the seminar to introduce himself. Check calendar column for details.



## 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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