



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

march/april, 2003 volume 8, number 2

## The Minister's Wife *Interview of Amy Thompson by Bill Dolan*

*Former Portland Fellowship staff member, Bill Dolan sat down with Amy Thompson to ask, "What's it like to be married to a man who works in ex-gay ministry?"*

Jason and Amy Thompson married in March of 1997. They live in Northeast Portland. They had a beautiful daughter in 2000, who went to be with the Lord, and are expecting their second child this summer. They are involved in their local church and Jason works in full-time ministry. Ministry life has its own unique rewards and challenges. The Thompsons' ministry life may be more unique than others. As co-director of The Portland Fellowship, Jason provides counsel and support to men and women who want to walk in freedom from homosexuality. As a result of his high-profile position, Jason often shares his own personal struggle with homosexuality and the story of how God delivered him from that struggle with churches, television, on the radio, at national conferences, and in books and magazines.

Amy was raised in a loving Christian family in San Clemente, California. She came to Portland to attend Multnomah Bible College. She met Jason on campus at the Solid Rock Café. They had a typical courtship and a storybook wedding. Amy knew nothing about homosexuality before she met Jason. We sat down to talk with Amy to find out how Jason's past struggle and his current position as counselor and spokesman for an ex-gay ministry affects their marriage.

### **How did you first hear about Jason's background?**

The night before our first date he called and told me where he worked. My first thought was that it was kind of intriguing. It didn't concern me at all. I told him I didn't know anybody who struggled with homosexuality. He told me why he worked at Portland Fellowship, that homosexuality was in his past and that God had helped him walk in freedom. He told me just a little and gave me the freedom to ask him if I needed to know more.

### **Did it make you hesitate?**

No. All of my friends recommended Jason. He had a good reputation. As we started dating, I had an extreme amount of peace. I thought, this is OK to move forward. It was so comfortable.

My only concern was telling my parents about his ministry before they got to know him. It took about three weeks. I called and told my mom, "I met a guy. He works in ministry." I just kept giving her little pieces and she kept probing for more details. Finally I said that he works in an "ex-gay" ministry. She asked, "What would make him do that?" I basically told her that it was something that he walked free from. I could tell from her voice that she was very concerned. It was so strong in my heart, however, that Jason was something special it really didn't matter what insecurities other people had. I wanted to pursue this relationship.

### **What about your dad? How did he respond?**

The first Christmas I went home, he asked me about Jason's character. The issue of homosexuality was never a direct issue with my dad. He was more concerned with whether or not Jason was a good man and would treat me right.

### **Was there a point in your dating relationship that you wanted to find out more information?**

Well, eventually I did. I attended two of Jason's speaking engagements. I think the only difference was that there was more detail about his temptations and frustrations. Then, on the way home, I asked more questions. The biggest thing is that hearing Jason give his testimony, he's not talking about the man that I know. Part of me would ask, "Will the real Jason please stand up?" That's not who I know at all. I don't even see that identity in Jason.



*Amy works part time to help put Jason through school at Western Seminary and is preparing for the coming arrival of their second child due in July.*

*Former staff, Bill Dolan is studying law at Lewis and Clark Law School.*

He doesn't carry the old baggage around with him. He doesn't carry any insecurity, that I can see, in everyday life that would make me to think that it is something he still entertains or is something he is concerned about. I just see the new creation in him.

### **Did you get involved in PF ?**

Yes, I actually went through the *Taking Back Ground* program for one year. That was a real eye opener! I started the program shortly before we got engaged. At the time I just accompanied Jason at PF activities. It was more of a helper role. But going through the *Taking Back Ground* group was more for me to understand the struggle first-hand. Hearing the broken hearts of the people and what kind of things were included in the gay lifestyle, which I had no idea about, brought on even more specific questions about homosexuality, the work Jason did, and how real victory happens.

I think I was most shocked by the lack of boundaries in the people. I heard about people having sexual encounters with strangers and compulsive masturbation, things I knew nothing about. I was shocked at the depth of brokenness and the ways people try to fill their cravings. During this time, John and Anne Paulk, who are now at Focus on the Family, were in the circle and were very helpful in helping me sort through all of the confusion. John brought so much humor to the whole thing that it put me at ease when topics at *Taking Back Ground* got heavy.

### **Did going through the program give you more compassion for the struggle or did it freak you out more and make you want to pull back?**

It gave me both. I do have more compassion. I can understand more about how people are caught up in the struggle. Everyone struggles with something.

### **So once you got married, how do you feel about telling people about what Jason does?**

Well, I have no problem telling people about Jason's ministry. (laughs) But I have learned that when I meet someone I don't know, and they ask what my husband does, I simply reply, "He's a counselor". If they ask me "what kind of counseling?" Then I will reply that he works with sexual issues, and if they press more, I'll get more specific.

### **I heard you went to the annual Exodus Conference after you got married. What was that like for you?**

It was really awful! I walked into a group of wives who had found their husbands in the middle of the struggle. They had been lied to and deceived for years and they were angry. Jason and I had only been married for about 5 months and I was put in this situation where these wives would say to not trust their husbands and that men are deceitful. When I got back to our room I really had to debrief with Jason and get a healthy perspective.

### **So, there is a difference between marital unfaithfulness and going into marriage with the understanding of the struggle and that they are dealing with it in a healthy and godly way?**

... Yes. And I believe there is a difference when it comes to 'this is no longer a practice, this is not even a part of my life' compared to, 'this is something I deal with every day.' For instance, Jason goes to work at PF, but outside of that, homosexuality is not a topic. Our home time, our friendships, our overall life does not include conversations about homosexuality.

### **Do you sometimes wish that Jason wasn't involved in this issue even for ministry reasons?**

Oh gosh no. I think God has asked Jason to do this work. He brought him to where he is for a reason and purpose. I think it is really, really important. This is a major sin issue in our world and needs to be dealt with. I believe Jason, Phil, and Rebecca are extremely gifted in ministering to the needs of the people who go to PF. One of our pastors pulled Jason aside at one point and said that he was glad that Jason was doing what he was doing because there is no way he could do it. This is one of the most common things I hear. I am really proud of Jason

for sticking with it over the years. In fact I love his answer to people who ask how long he plans to work at PF. He says, "When you want to take my place I'll put my hands to something else." I have yet to see someone wanting to take up on the offer. (laughs) But really, I don't think Jason will ever stop being a part of this ministry. His love and passion for struggling people is so evident that I can't imagine him ever leaving.

### **Do you ever worry about Jason going back into the struggle?**

Well, at times I hear about other ministry leaders who fall back into sin. When I hear about that it crosses my mind that anything is possible for anyone. I don't want to be naïve. We are all human and make mistakes. It would devastate me if Jason ever choose to sin in this way, but I don't fear it happening. I believe our marriage is such that we have an honest and open communication that allows for sharing weaknesses and resolving problems before they become a real problem. Jason is in touch with his needs. When he is tired, sad, needing personal time, needing time with just me, or needing time with his guy friends he will let me know. In a real sense, I believe he stays free from resorting to past issues because he purposes to stay healthy.

### **Is there anything you would like to share with the readers of the Fellowship Message?**

Yes, I want to share that I am extremely grateful for those who financially support Portland Fellowship. Many times Jason comes home dumbfounded by the generosity of PF supporters. I am also extremely grateful that Jason can go to work and put his heart and soul into what he does and be appreciated for it. I don't know anyone else who is so moved by sin issues. There are times when he comes home after a day of counseling and is really disturbed by some of the things he had to deal with. It's at those moments that I stop and see that this is such a big deal and God has so put him in this spot. Watching him shoulder the weight of people's struggles is awesome. I guess I just want the readers to know that everyone at PF is so grateful to have your support in what they do.



*Amy and Jason spending a weekend in Victoria, B.C.*

## wives in 'taking back ground'

A few years ago the decision was made to open up our *Taking Back Ground* group and include the wives of men struggling with same-sex attraction. It seemed appropriate that they have the opportunity to hear the same material as their spouses. It has turned out to be a positive and healing experience for them as well.

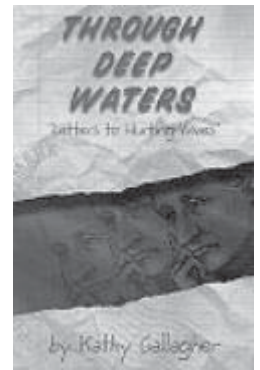
**randi sue** When I first arrived at Portland Fellowship, I felt like time had suspended as in the movies or a dream when life is madly going on around you but you are silent and frozen... It has been great to meet other women who are committed to the Lord, despite the ugly situations we are going through with our husbands. The strength and perseverance God has granted each of us is beyond measure and it is priceless to know that others are praying for us and our spouses... Because my husband is currently immersed in the lifestyle and I attend PF alone, there is a bittersweet emotion. Many Tuesdays I am filled with hope for my situation as I see so many people seeking freedom in the Lord and experiencing changed lives. But many Tuesdays I am deeply saddened and jealous that my husband isn't here seeking freedom from the gay lifestyle and choosing to reject God instead... I would love to see God work healing in my husband's life and restoration in our marriage. I hope and pray that whatever the outcome God will use my testimony in a powerful way to draw others to him so they can experience His grace and mercy. I am learning first-hand through this process how to show unconditional love to my husband as Christ has shown to me. I have experienced many blessings and much growth despite the pain and tears of such a difficult situation.

**elaine** When I first stepped into TBG, I was apprehensive not knowing who I would meet or what would be talked about. I was curious about the things I would learn about my husband's issues and ultimately about my role... The wives' group has been great as it has provided people to share with who have walked down a similar path as I have been on. My sense of who I am as a wife and a woman was shattered upon this discovery. I felt betrayed as the story unfolded of 18 years of marriage that was based on lies and unfaithfulness. The grief of who I thought I married was at times overwhelming and learning to trust again has been my greatest challenge... My desire is to rely on God as my strength and hope. I want to seek a deeper more meaningful relationship with him. I would like to see healing in my husband's life and in our marriage... God is faithful and gracious. I am glad PF is here to minister to our family's needs.

**lydia** It was a relief to meet other people who could support and affirm my needs. The *Taking Back Ground* group allowed me to step out of my role of helping others and gave me the space to allow others to help me... My desire is to learn to be courageous in this battle; to trust God with our future and not to fear it. My hope is to see a greater understanding in the church for this issue. I would love to see churches with the level of openness and acceptance Portland Fellowship has for broken people... Although there are a lot of differences among us in how we got here, there is so much to learn from each other as God works in each of us.

**m.s.** What was it like when I first came here? It was scary!! I wasn't sure what this was all about, yet I was excited with the possibility of real help. This was my motivation. I honestly wanted to see, hear from, talk to... any wife who had been through this and was still married. How amazed I was to experience incredible worship – hungry hearts broken and crying out to God. That was and is so amazing to me. I am greatly encouraged during the worship time as well as the teaching that applies to my life... I think the hardest part of this group is addressing the pain that came with the betrayal. Not only am I dealing with my own pain and grief but to watch my husband go through his pain and grief is huge. It is also difficult to open up to strangers. Facing that I too have issues to deal with... they are just different than my husband's. Yet, they all come back to drawing close to God and knowing who I am in Him... I am encouraged as I see people desperately hunger for God, to be free, and to pursue wholeness. I want to support the incredible and good work that God is doing here at PF and I'm so thankful for the leadership.

**heidi** When I first came to Portland Fellowship I was nervous – full of hope and yet scared to hope. I chose to walk along side my husband as he "took back lost ground" in his journey of recovery and restoration. I wanted him to know that he was not alone... I am not alone in this journey either. There were other wives going through similar painful experiences. The wives group made me challenge my own beliefs and made me dig deeper to see what my priorities really are in this life... Sometimes the emotional roller coaster and grief were almost too overwhelming. At the beginning, I was quiet, sad, and inwardly focused. It was difficult to become transparent and share my heart. But as I began to trust, I found being transparent helped me see my own desperate need for a savior... My hope is that I can give the hope to other women. I am not afraid of the future. On the contrary, I feel as though I am on the brink of a great adventure. God has allowed me to go through a very disturbing time, surely it is not for nothing! I look forward to the great things God will do through me! There is a freedom to laugh, cry, be confused, pray or grieve at PF. I feel I am encouraged to figure out how God is leading me in my own time, in my own unique way. And He has and continues to do so.



An excellent new resource for wives of homosexual and heterosexual addicts. The author has been in ministry to wives for 12 years.

To order this book and to find other resources online go to: [www.exodusnorthamerica.org](http://www.exodusnorthamerica.org) and click "resources".

### EastHill Church:

For Women Only: *Healing of a Betrayed Heart*

A 12-week healing class to help women who are in a relationship with someone battling sexual addiction. For confidential information and class dates & times, please call Kay at 503.661.4444 ex. 530.

## march-april calendar & services

march 2

### Beaverton Foursquare

Youth Group

Speaker: Jason Thompson

march 2

### Vancouver First Church of God

Missions fair: Staff attending

march 6

### A.W.A.R.E Vancouver, WA

Abstinence awareness group

Speaker: Jason Thompson

april 2

### George Fox University

All day seminar for students.

Speakers: PF Staff and Interns

april 10

### Concordia College

Presentation to class

Speaker: Jason Thompson

march 4,11,18, 25

### Open Meetings

Open to anyone interested in learning more about PF. 7 p.m.

march 14, 15, 16

### Annual PF Retreat

Alumni and current participants are welcome to attend. Call for details.

Location: Gearheart, OR

april 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

### Taking Back Ground

Discipleship support program for men, women, and their spouses.

march 14; april 11

### Family & Friends Group

Please join us for encouragement, prayer, and support. 7 p.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.

## a matter of fact

**Bend, Oregon** - Jason Thompson was invited by Pastor Dennis Dickson of Southside Assembly of God to appear on a local Fox network show in Central Oregon. The subject centered on the many issues of homosexuality.

Along with Jason was a gay man who shared his point of view as being a 'matter of fact'. Jason reports, "It was actually a pleasant experience. I think the other guest and I agreed more than we disagreed. We both believe that AIDS is not just a gay disease; I replied that it was the consequence of immorality. We both agreed that gay people are not child molesters and that gay people should not be ridiculed and harassed because of their sexuality. Initially the other guest replied that people can not change. My response was that not only can people change, but they do change. People change all the time... we are all constantly changing."

Although Jason did not condone homosexuality he found areas where he could connect with those who disagree with him. There was even a humorous moment when the host asked the other guest how his gay relationship works, "Do you play the wife role or does your partner? Or do you take turns?" He replied that they do not have roles, that they simply are two human beings living together. Jason interjected, "Just to respond in regard to my own relationship... my wife always plays the wife role and I always play the husband role."

The show, "A Matter of Fact", aired in the Central Oregon area Sunday, February 23, on Fox 39. We hope to have highlights of the show for download on our website.



## upcoming events

We are always in need of times of refreshing. Here are a couple of upcoming events that we highly recommend:

### Pastoral Care Ministry School

Leanne Payne

June 8 – 13 in Wheaton, IL

For information go to [www.leannepayne.org](http://www.leannepayne.org)

or call 630.682.4877

### Exodus NA Annual Conference

July 21 – 26 in Orlando, FL

For information go to [www.exodusnorthamerica.org](http://www.exodusnorthamerica.org)

or call 407.599.6872



## 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

#### Ron Perry

Volunteer Extraordinaire

### 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](mailto:pf@portlandfellowship.com)

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