



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Restoring Sexual Identity by Anne Paulk

With precious few Christian resources available to help women dealing with unwanted homosexual feelings, Anne Paulk's new book breathes life into a dry desert.

*Anne Paulk began her journey out of homosexuality when she accepted the Lord into her life in 1982. During the past twenty years, she has gained a wealth of experience and insight into the condition of the lesbian struggle. In 1999, Anne and her husband John published their autobiography *Love Won Out* (Tyndale by Focus on the Family.) Her new project is the first Christian book to be written exclusively about female homosexuality in nearly 15 years. The following questions and answers are taken, in part, from Anne's book.*

What was your motivation for writing this book?

Years ago I was looking for help as I left lesbianism, but found almost no resources. Fortunately, I was referred to a wonderful Christian counselor willing to help me work toward my goal. A few years later, I found out about Exodus International. At Exodus, I found others who had felt the tug of same-sex attraction but were experiencing real change. The hope I've found has motivated me to share what I have learned and experienced in this book. Another motivation for this book is to provide hope to family members and friends of lesbian strugglers. I want to impart hope and understanding into how to better love and support women in process.

There is so much confusion today over the origins of homosexuality. Are men and women with homosexual feelings born gay?

Popular media promotes the thought that men and women are born homosexual, but research simply does not back up that claim. A stronger argument favors the influence of a number of factors: sexual abuse in childhood, internal conclusions about the value and worth of a person's gender, and the gender of the parent the individual modeled as a child.

What causes female same-sex attraction?

Many influences are implicated in the development of same-sex attraction: childhood trauma, including incidents of sexual abuse; gender role rejection; atypical childhood play patterns; damaged mother-daughter relationships; unhealthy father-daughter relationships; and personality temperament. Researchers from practically all viewpoints agree that a strong combination of factors probably propel a woman toward same-sex attraction. Biological factors may be found to contribute to homosexual feelings in adulthood but science has produced no evidence of this. The Bible has a stronger comment to say about our nature—referring to our natural sinful nature. "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5.)

Can a woman really change her sexual orientation?

Change certainly can and does occur. In fact, therapist and Portland Fellowship board member, Steven Donaldson asserts, "changing a person's sexual orientation may be easier than overcoming drug or alcohol addiction." In my life and the lives of the 265 women who filled out my (Anne's) survey, the first major change was a new appreciation of womanhood. That initial change helped bring about heterosexual identification.

Often when we begin to deal with the issues underlying same-sex attraction, homosexual feelings may seem a bit stronger. But as we face challenges that may seem unrelated to our temptations, our same-sex attraction lessens and eventually takes a back seat to other struggles and concerns in our lives. In 1987, when I began to face problems in a deliberate manner, I found myself struggling with lesbian thoughts on a daily basis. But now, 16 years later, as a wife and mother, I find such thoughts a rarity.



Anne Paulk is a former Portland Fellowship board member and was a leader and teacher in *Taking Back Ground*. She has made dozens of media appearances on programs like *Oprah*, *Good Morning America*, and *Focus on the Family*. Her greatest joy is being the mother of three sons.

How can a person talk to a lesbian co-worker about Christ?

First, remember that homosexuality at its root is not sexual. Instead, it is an ineffective coping mechanism—a false way to love and nurture oneself. At the base of homosexual attraction is a disconnect with a woman's sense and enjoyment of being a female. She may look happy to the outside world, but at quiet moments she most likely experiences feelings of unfulfillment.

What she needs more than anything is a relationship with Jesus Christ and the nurture that comes from God alone. Pray that she may know the comfort and peace that surpasses understanding and take the focus off of her homosexuality. It's only after she has a relationship with Christ that the Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin into her life. God is the one who will give her understanding that lesbian relationships are "missing the mark" and that they are not His desire or design for her. When talking with a co-worker, share about your own weaknesses and struggles. This will open doors of communication and enable real relationship. The goal is to convey true affection and love for your co-worker which may open the door to lead her to Christ.

Can someone be Christian and gay?

A homosexual woman may very well be a Christian—only God can judge her heart. People have developed many arguments using various Scriptures to justify homosexual behavior. Believe it or not, some people teach a so-called "gay theology," but this is a revisionist view of Scripture. In other words, if she is claiming that the Bible says lesbianism is acceptable, she must have reinterpreted Scripture to fit her feelings.

The easiest way to evaluate the claims of "gay theology" is to see if anywhere in Scripture God endorses sexuality outside the boundaries of marriage between a woman and a man. The answer of course is no.

My daughter has just told me she's gay, and I'm feeling overwhelming grief. What can I do?

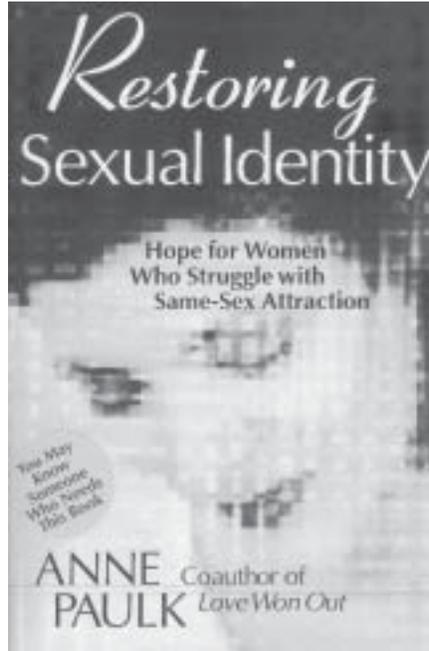
Many parents grieve when they find out about their child's homosexuality. They face letting go of their dreams of their daughter's heterosexual marriage and natural children. They may wonder how they could have not known their daughter well enough to have perceived her struggle. And they may feel that their daughter is rejecting their own marriage.

These feelings can be very powerful. I would encourage you to find support from parents at Portland Fellowship's Family and Friends Group, who are loving their children in the midst of their homosexual struggle. Through this, many of these parents have grown closer to Jesus Christ. I also recommend making an appointment with your pastor or priest and eventually risk talking with your closest friends about it. You are in great need of support and understanding at this time.

As a parent, I'm wondering what I did wrong. Am I responsible for my daughter's homosexuality?

No one is responsible for another person's actions or feelings. But if you find that you contributed to her struggles in any way, you can always take the powerful step of saying, "I'm sorry."

It's also important to keep in mind that your daughter's perceptions of circumstances and decisions based on her experiences played a huge part in the development of same-sex deficit and attraction. It may be wise to ask her views and feelings about life when growing up. If you decide to do this, be prepared to listen without defensiveness and you will be opening a very significant door of communication with your daughter. May the Lord bless you as you seek understanding and a heart-to-heart relationship with her.



Little research has been done on female homosexuality. Can you tell us about the benchmark survey you conducted in preparation for your book?

In April 1999, I came up with the idea of surveying women who are overcoming or who have overcome homosexuality. The main purpose of the research was to provide data for my book. I felt that the study was important for a number of reasons. Quantitative data on the experiences and backgrounds of same-sex attracted women is lacking. I desired to test some of the theories on the development of lesbianism.

Of the 265 same-sex attracted women who filled out the survey, one-third had invested between one and three years into receiving help for their struggle. Another 20% devoted four to seven years receiving help, and the remaining nearly 20% spent eight or more years obtaining assistance.

Just over half of the women in my survey were brought up in an actively Christian home. In almost 30% of the families, the parents had divorced before the respondent reached the age of 18. Nearly 40% of the women grew up in households where one parent was an alcoholic. When asked if they had wanted to be like their mother when growing up, an astounding 84% answered no. These women also reported that they viewed the male gender as more desirable. Almost half of the respondents grew up hearing negative or degrading comments about women. Their fathers almost always originated these comments. 91% of the women had experienced some form of abuse when growing up. The abuses cited most often were emotional, sexual and verbal.

By far, the top reasons cited for leaving homosexuality was "relationship with God". When asked, *what are the two most rewarding aspects of overcoming lesbianism?* Women answered most commonly "presence of God and peace". Other answers included "hope for the future, potential of marriage and family, joy, confidence and overcoming other difficulties more easily."

Anne, what advice would you give a woman wanting to avoid falling back into lesbianism?

One sure way to avoid getting stuck in the process of change is to shut the back door—to remove forever your option to return to lesbian relationships, identity, or culture. My pastor used to say, "Board up the windows and brick over the old door. Commit to not return to the past." Ask God to give you an undivided heart devoted to His ways, commit in prayer to not return to your past, and ask Him to give you a hatred for your sin. Proverbs 27:7 says, "He who is full loathes honey, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet."

Funds Needed for Ministry House Purchase by Scott Mitchell, Board President

"What a tremendous opportunity", was my first response to the news that Hinson Church desired to sell the house that Portland Fellowship has occupied for more than a decade.



*PF board president,
Scott Mitchell.*

As many of you know, PF has been located in the Hawthorne district, occupying a turn-of-the-century "Old Portland" style home that has been the base of ministry to hundreds of men and women. It has met our needs in so many ways. We have been able to have large group meetings on the main floor, offices on the second and living quarters on the third floor, which have been completely and beautifully renovated. Break-out small groups have also been able to meet throughout the house. The living space has been a helpful source of income for us over the last two years.

As a local pastor and former mental health therapist, I have seen the deep value of PF's ministry. Over the years, I have entrusted several people to the care of PF and seen God do a powerful work. PF has been a primary source of ministry in the Portland area to men and women struggling with same sex attraction. It has been a "front-line" ministry operation for more than 15 years. During this period, several hundred people have been brought into healing at PF for brokenness through the redemptive message of Christ and the application of His truth

to their lives. It is with this reality that I gladly chose to serve on the Board of Directors when asked a few years ago. I praise God for Portland Fellowship.

It is PF's desire to remain located here, and as such it is our hope to buy the house from Hinson. This will require a "faith" response and help from God's people. We need a sizeable down payment to make this possible. A charitable organization is considering matching funds we are able to secure. Would you be willing to partner with us in this venture? Perhaps you can give a one-time gift or pledge an extra amount with your regular monthly giving? If this is not possible at this time, we certainly understand and do appreciate your support of PF over the years. It is with gratitude that we look to our Lord for His provision in the days ahead. Please pray with us and believe God for His will. I remain thrilled at the prospects of this "tremendous opportunity".



Our turn-of-the-century house is being offered to us for purchase.

Gay Episcopalian Bishop Ordained by Father Jim Thompson

Like countless members of my church, I unrolled my daily newspaper on August 6, and stared at the headline, "Episcopalians Approve First Gay Bishop." This development was no surprise.

For years, the leadership of our church (and others) have allowed culture to lead them when they themselves ought to be doing the leading. Nevertheless, the headline sent me into shock and grief. It was as if my church had committed spiritual suicide.

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church was up to other mischief as well, including a resolution that gave a "wink" to the blessing of same-sex unions, and a little publicized resolution that stated the church's opposition to therapies that seek to change sexual orientation.

Here they got personal. I pondered for a moment how it came to be that this priest, a pastor in a small suburban church, should be reading how the leadership of his denomination was making a direct attack upon the nationally-recognized ministry of his son!

But again, no surprise. I know some of the players. They are deeply broken people, who are struggling to fix themselves by

persuading others. And when hurt goes political, it always becomes a destructive force.

But only for a time. For many of us "liturgical" Christians, August 6th is the celebration of the Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ, commemorating Jesus' appearance on the mount with Elijah and Moses. After reading enough of the newspaper to make me thoroughly distressed, I did what I should have done first: my prayer and scripture reading. I began by opening to the lesson for the Feast of the Transfiguration:

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of

God. (2 Corinthians 4:1-2)

Thank you, dear Christ Jesus, for the Word of Salvation. In it – in You — all will be made well.

Saint Luke's Episcopal Church is located at: 120 S.W. Towle Avenue in Gresham, Oregon. To visit the church website go to: www.saintlukesgresham.org.



Father Jim Thompson is the Rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Gresham, Oregon and the father of Jason Thompson, PF's Executive Director.

september-october calendar & services

september 6

Sy Rogers Seminar

Trinity Fellowship Church
2700 SE 67th - Portland, Oregon
To register: www.syseminar.com

september 7

Sy Rogers follow-up

Trinity Fellowship Church
Services are at 9 and 11 a.m.

september 12; october 10

Family & Friends Group

Support for family and friends with loved ones struggling with homosexuality. 7 p.m.

september 2, 16, 30

Wives Support Meeting

For wives seeking encouragement and support. Contact office for meeting times and places.

september 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

TBG Leadership Training

Small group leaders and teachers will spend time together preparing for the 2003-04 discipleship program.

october 7, 14, 21, 28

Taking Back Ground

Discipleship group for men and women seeking freedom from unwanted same-sex attraction. 7 p.m.

october 5

The Neighborhood Church

Jason Thompson will be speaking to the evening service. 6 p.m.

october 9

A.W.A.R.E

Jason Thompson will be speaking to this abstinence group. 2 p.m.

Additional updates:

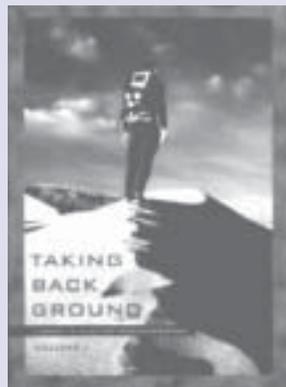
www.portlandfellowship.com

Counseling, speaking, and youth support

Can be arranged through the office.

Taking Back Ground 2003-04 Program

Portland Fellowship's discipleship program *Taking Back Ground* is one of our primary services. Each year, 50 men and women participate on Tuesday evenings in a time of worship, teaching and small group interaction. The worship is a powerful experience in which all participants can freely come before God. Many have shared that they have not been able to worship as freely in their own churches as they do on Tuesday nights at Portland Fellowship.



The teaching portion of *Taking Back Ground* 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 and safe environment. When first starting *Taking Back Ground*, attendees sometimes feel nervous and unsure. But soon they find it to be a safe, supportive and encouraging place to heal and grown in Jesus.

One former graduate of the *Taking Back Ground* program and former small group leader shared, "When I first realized I was attracted to men, I didn't know what to do with these powerful feelings. After avoiding the pull for a number of years, I found that it was only getting worse. The Lord provided Portland Fellowship as a place of healing for me. *Taking Back Ground* has been both a refuge and a place of hope. I was so relieved to find out I wasn't alone—that there were other people like me who were hurting. I never wanted to be attracted to other guys, but was afraid to talk about it. *Taking Back Ground* has helped me understand why I have these attractions. The leaders of TBG are loving and gentle. Their openness and humility provided a safe place for me."

Another *Taking Back Ground* graduate said, "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 temptation triggers, I also learned how to be more 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."

If you are interested in participating in *Taking Back Ground*, please contact our office for an application and to schedule an interview. Space is limited.

The first session begins October 7.



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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