



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## Made Complete in Christ *by Kendra Dickinson*

*It seems like all my life I was looking for what would make feel complete, or at least normal enough to fit in. When I didn't find it at home or with friends, I kept looking elsewhere. I thank God I finally looked in his Word.*

From the time my parents divorced when I was two until I moved out for college, I lived with my mother and my sister only. Alcohol and psychological problems kept my dad emotionally and physically distant from my small family of three. I grew up in church learning about God the Father who wanted to be my personal father, too. Though it brought some comfort, trying to love this invisible God was often like trying to love my absent dad. I still craved a physical person who would wrap his arms around me and call me "loved one."

The first male I distinctly remember wrapping his arms around me was a boy in Mexico. I was six and I think he was two years older. As a relative of my host family, he was around for a week. He started holding my hand and kissing me, gradually getting more sexually aggressive. When I tried to make him stop, he gave me a choice between my sister and me. Afraid to tell an adult, I chose to protect my sister and take whatever he did to me. This brought confusion, shame, and a fear of sexual interaction.

As my sister and I grew, I felt like we were always competing for my mother's affection. I often felt like I came in second place. At the same time, I had trouble connecting with my peers. I developed theories about supposed mistakes in my creation. My favorite was that I was supposed to have been a boy. I had read Psalm 139 and pictured God putting me together like a play dough child. When He got to the boy parts His hand slipped and out I came before He had a chance to finish me. Around age nine I told a couple of my friends on the playground that I wished I was a guy and would love to become one if I could. The next thing I knew, they were calling me gay and chanting for everyone to hear, "Kendra wants a sex change! Kendra wants a sex change!"

After this I found a few tomboyish girls that I enjoyed spending time with, but I usually preferred to hang out with the boys in my neighborhood. We climbed trees and exchanged punches to the stomach while my sister played with toy horses and swapped clothing with her girlfriends. When I outgrew those guy friends, I settled for being a bookworm who withdrew into her own fantasy world. For a time I was drawn into cheap romance novels, skipping most of the bad plot just to get to the sex scene. Eventually, that problem faded as a new one emerged. I developed intense emotional longings for women. Combined with my past sexual fantasies, I began to seriously question my sexual orientation. However, since I still liked guys and believed homosexuality was sin, I buried my questions deep with the fear that I could never bury them deep enough.

Sure enough, my questions re-surfaced in high school when a guy I was attracted to shared his homosexual thoughts with me. The next year he started a gay club on campus and I was president of the Christian club. Though my official stance was, "Hate the sin, love the sinner," I felt drawn to the sin and feared my own physical reactions. Again, I pushed my thoughts away until college.



Kendra Dickinson pictured with her family cat, Willie. Kendra graduated from the Taking Back Ground Program in the summer of 2001

I moved from California to go to a small Christian college in Oregon. I looked forward to a Christian education where I'd be build up in my faith. While I found that, I also found the Internet. By sheer curiosity I began viewing pornographic sites, both heterosexual and homosexual. Motivated by fear of breaking the rules, I confessed to my campus pastor after two months of viewing these sights. I was caught off guard by only one of his questions: "Have any of the sites you've visited been of a homosexual nature?" I acted like my surprise was innocent and claimed an emphatic "no."

Shortly after that, a friend of mine showed me a very sensual video involving two women. As she told me of her past homosexual involvement, I longed to be in some of her stories, having a woman attracted to me. I got back online and headed this time for the romantic chat rooms. After my first online sexual encounter, I was hooked. By day I grieved and prayed for a godly husband. By night I fell into sin over and over again.

My sophomore year I dated a man that I genuinely cared for, but when things went wrong in our relationship I turned to fantasizing about my female friend. Some time after my boyfriend and I broke up, my feelings for this friend developed further. I wanted to be with her forever, physically and emotionally. Though I couldn't reconcile my faith with me feelings, I tried to think of a way to make it work.

God wouldn't let me rest. I confessed to my friend how I felt. Having learned from her past, she told me not go down that path. I toyed with my options, knowing I was at a fork in the road. Gathering prayer support from my sister and a couple of close friends, I chose to talk to my pastor. As a first-time pastor, he wasn't sure what to do. He removed me from ministry with my best interest in mind. His wife took me out to dessert to share scripture with me and to affirm their love for me. Even so, I felt rejected and loathsome. Though I felt loved, the only practical help they gave me was the name Exodus Ministries to go seek out and a hope that they could get resources from a pastor friend of theirs. Next think I knew, they were moving to Los Angeles.

I worked that summer at a Christian camp. I immediately told the female director my struggle in fear that I would be "found out" and fired. There I received some mentoring while still being able to minister. I was encouraged not to let self-rejection usurp the truth of Romans 8:1, that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The director's unconditional love and tough challenges from Scripture added greatly to the small measure of hope God

had planted in my life. Her friendship gave me the strength to withstand the pain of giving up the friendship with the woman I had feelings for. She encouraged me to walk in obedience to God through the pain, knowing that such a hard road was the road to healing.

On that road, I entered school for my junior year of college. I had found Exodus Ministries online (finally a good use for the Internet!) and followed a link to Portland Fellowship. Wanting to talk with people who understood where I was coming from, I wrote PF a brief email, a timid cry for help. I was intrigued about Taking Back Ground's study of the roots of homosexuality and decided to do the first

quarter of TBG and no more. What I discovered was a community that was as desperate for God's direction as I was. At home I was literally on my face before God, finally able to lay my will down before Christ. I read in James, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life" (1:12). I knew then that if I did not obey God I would be missing out on God's blessings for me. I also knew that if there was blessing for endurance, then it must be possible to endure.

I decided to take time off of school and just seek God, wanting to made whole before acquiring a degree.

From this beginning, God started uprooting the lies that I had allowed to grow there by my own sin and my life circumstances. I re-read Psalm 139 and found a Creator far more accurate and purposeful than a boy with play dough. I was no mistake. A God who walks with me even when I make my bed in hell lovingly formed me. The longings I tried to fulfill sexually, I could only fill with Christ. I came to believe what that I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10).

In the midst of this growth, I experienced some growing pains. It was harder to fight sexual temptation than to give in to it, harder to trust in God than myself. For a time I used alcohol to numb the stress and pain of everyday life. It need not be much, just a beer after work to help me sleep. But it became an idol. I looked to it instead of to God. I also used alcohol to blind my judgment and that of a male friend of mine. I still grieve that I enticed him sexually.

I have not fallen into drunkenness nor blatant sexual sin since that time, though I still struggle in my thought life. I rest in hope thanks to Romans 7:24-25: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ, our Lord!" I know that on my own I am still just a body with a play dough mind. But through Christ, I am made well and complete.



**Kendra celebrating her graduation of the Taking Back Ground program with friend**

## fellowship house purchase update

Last month we invited you to join in the efforts to help purchase the Fellowship House, our ministry home since 1992. The response has been terrific! We thank each person who contributed through finances and prayer support.

### amount pledged

Actual # of Gifts	In the amount of	Amount Pledged
1	Mortgage	\$160,000.00
1	\$ 212,500.00	\$ 212,500.00
1	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 75,000.00
1	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00
1	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
2	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
4	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 8,000.00
9	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 9,000.00
5	\$ 500.00	\$ 2,500.00
3	\$ 250.00	\$ 750.00
1	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
15	\$ 100.00	\$ 1,500.00
7	\$ 50.00	\$ 350.00
8	\$ 25.00	\$ 200.00
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 560,000.00</b>

The first phase of this project was to simply ask what God would have you do to help in this endeavor. The chart on the left indicates the number of gifts and how much was given. These supporters include; long-time faithful friends of PF, staff members and their extended families, members of the board of directors, men and women who have been personally encouraged by the ministry, members of the parents, family, and friends group, major churches in the Portland area, and even first-time contributors to the ministry.

We continue to move forward full-steam but have some more to go. The chart on the right indicates our current need. Based on our contacts and support base we have set a manageable goal to reach the remaining amount. Because Hinson Church needs to sell the house by April, we have decided, if necessary, to apply for a loan to offset the amount we are not able to raise. The remaining need, not including the mortgage, is \$40,000. This is incredible in light of an initial need of \$600,000.

The next step is to identify those who are willing to pledge gifts for the next three months. We realize this is above your normal giving and understand and cherish the sacrifice. By the end of March we need to

move forward with the resources pledged. So we ask, like the persistent widow, ask again for you to consider what the Lord will have you do as we continue with this important project.

Again, we thank all who have contributed thus far and look forward to your response to this next step in the Fellowship House purchase. Please use the enclosed response card to communicate your ability to give to this project.

### amount needed

# of Gifts needed	in the amount of	in order to raise
2	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
5	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
6	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 6,000.00
5	\$ 500.00	\$ 2,000.00
16	\$ 250.00	\$ 4,000.00
20	\$ 200.00	\$ 4,000.00
30	\$ 100.00	\$ 3,000.00
12	\$ 50.00	\$ 600.00
16	\$ 25.00	\$ 400.00
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 40,000.00</b>

## billboard promotes homosexuality

Many of you may remember our attempted campaign in 1999 to reach youth in the Portland area. We located bus benches outside of ten local public high schools and designed an ad that featured a young teen asking the question, "Do I have to be gay?" along with our phone number and website. One week before the ads were to get printed, the company responsible for the benches, rejected the campaign due to it being "too controversial".

Four years later, the same company put up a billboard a few blocks away from our ministry, in which two shirtless men are attempting to embrace one another with the caption, "NICE CATCH". Our administrative assistant, Benjamin Brown, remarked that it would be great to have a billboard next to it that pictured Jesus with the caption "EXCEPTIONAL CATCH".

At times it is daunting to see the world's approval and promotion of homosexuality when every day in our office we hear stories of men and women with tremendous pain over their unwanted emotional and sexual desires. The world can not understand or embrace God's truth and according to Paul in 2 Timothy, we will continue to see godlessness in the last days. Although we know men will pursue the desires of their flesh, we are called to persevere and stand in the truth of God's Word. We are reminded to build ourselves up in the faith, pray in the Spirit and to be merciful to those who doubt. Our desire is communicate God's truth and love without compromise in the years to come.

Thank you for your interest and support in the work of Portland Fellowship. We invite you to stand with us and support us in the year 2004 as we continue to offer an alternative to the world's understanding. And to minister to men, women, youth, parents, friends, pastors, and the community. Pray for God's overflowing blessing on Portland Fellowship.



This Hawthorne billboard sits blocks from PF.

## january-february calendar & services

january 17

### Annual Planning Meeting

Portland Fellowship staff and board of directors meet to plan 2004 ministry activities. 9 - 4 p.m.

january 9; february 13

### Family & Friends Group

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

january 6, 13, 20, 27

february 3, 10, 17, 24

### Wives Support Meeting

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

january 6, 13, 20, 27

february 3, 10, 17, 24

### TBG Leadership Meeting

Small group leaders and teachers will spend time together praying for and discussing the 2003-04 TBG program.

january 6, 13, 20, 27

february 3, 10, 17, 24

### Taking Back Ground

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

january 22

### NW Praise the Lord

Jason Thompson will be hosting the program on "Homosexuality: A Redemptive Message." 9 - 10:30 a.m. Channel 24.

### Additional updates:

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

### Counseling, speaking, and youth support

Can be arranged through the office.

## pf appreciates leadership team

On December 6, 2003, the PF staff hosted a very special evening of appreciation to our small group leaders, teachers, worship leader, board of directors and their spouses. The staff, along with six Taking Back Ground participants,

**"Taking Back  
Ground leaders have  
helped me discover  
my true identity in  
Christ."**

**Thank You!**

-- a first year participant

prepared and served the meal for the 36 guests.

The evening included a video of participants thanking the leadership team. "The video was powerful and revealing as to what God is doing here. I wish all the churches in the area could watch that video to see first

hand the changed lives", said board member, John Shafe.

One of the servers even remarked, "I'm so glad I have an opportunity to give back. This program has meant the world to me and I just wanted a way to show my appreciation. Serving that night gave me such joy."

We concluded the evening with a small gift of thanks, to those who generously give of their time and energy so freely.

## recent poll: homosexuality is changeable

A few weeks ago, we stumbled on an interesting poll conducted by the Pew Research Center. It reveals that the majority of Evangelicals believe homosexuality is changeable.

Jason Thompson said, "This national survey also reports that homosexuality is a major topic in churches. In fact, the pastors who were polled said that they are increasingly teaching about homosexuality from the pulpit. For more than a decade, we have been encouraging pastors in the Portland Metro area to do just that."

"During a time when homosexuality is being increasingly forced upon our culture through media and television," Jason said, "I'm so encouraged that most Evangelical Christians do believe that someone struggling with unwanted same-sex desires can find freedom. No matter how hard the homosexuality community attempts to convince us that we cannot change, the Lord just intervenes with the truth. And that's why our ministry is here—to help those wanting freedom."

*To all our faithful and loving supporters. We will be sending the 2003 year-end statements the second week of January. Thank you and God bless.*



**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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