



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

january / february 2005 volume 10, number 1

Tip of the Iceberg by Joshua Kilpatrick

My life seemed normal in most respects, but as a young boy I began to experience sexual attraction to members of the same sex. I've spent most of my life asking why. One day God answered. He showed me homosexuality was only the tip of an iceberg. The mound of icy lies below the surface was the real problem.

I was born in the fall of 1976 in Biloxi Mississippi, the son of a tough football captain turned machinist and of a popular high-school cheerleader turned housewife. My parents had three children, all boys, and I was the youngest by four years. My father was a jack-of-all-trades and a quiet but intimidating man. He had a personal presence that encouraged people not to bother him and a quick mind that was often impatient with others. My mother was an energetic homemaker whose sole interest in life was connecting with her family through conversation, food, and shopping. Almost all my memories of her are in the kitchen or the living room where she was constantly cooking, cleaning, or visiting with someone.

From my recollection, my relationship with my father was tense from the beginning. Everything about my father's world was scary to me. I would watch him coaching my brothers in sports or working at his machine shop and be struck with fear. Everything about dad's life was sparks, blowtorches, and danger. I was, quite simply, scared to death of him. Dad was discipline and power - a provider who was best respected and left alone.

In contrast, Mom could not have been more inviting. She made up games for us to play and loved to listen about our days. She cooked wonderful things to eat and was always ready to interact and comfort us.

Though I truly had two wonderful and dedicated parents, the situation I have described created an obvious preference for my mother and what I recall as an overwhelming isolation from my father. In addition to this, an older boy introduced me to sexual behavior when I was only six years old. This early intrusion on my innocence awakened desires I didn't know how to handle.

By the age of seven, I was fantasizing about sexual experiences with other boys my age. A very active fantasy life continued throughout my adolescence. Then in college I sought out other gay men and began pursuing sexual relationships with them. I kept this new behavior completely secret. To my knowledge I was viewed as an outstanding Christian young man, but my private life was becoming increasingly dark.

In light of my sinful behavior, it may be surprising to learn that I was raised in church and had accepted Christ's salvation as a boy. I consistently participated in Christian activities throughout my adolescence, but this did not make me immune to sexual struggles.

In church and at home, the only messages I heard about homosexuality were related to its sinfulness. I never heard anyone talk about God helping people out of homosexual sin like He would from alcoholism, smoking, or even overeating. To my understanding homosexuality was a different type of sin. These beliefs thoroughly convinced me that I ought not talk about how I was feeling. To cope, I lived two separate lives. I was daydreaming about and later pursuing sinful sexual pleasure with other men, while simultaneously serving in my church, attending bible studies, and winning the praise and admiration of those around me.

Rather than reaching out for help I chose to pretend my life was fine. It seemed better to maintain my image because I believed that if I told the truth, my reputation would be ruined. I would rather be thought of as a good



Joshua is used to allowing the Lord to direct his steps. For Joshua the process of finding, applying for, being accepted and beginning the Upper Room internship only took one month.

man than confess my sin and get help to actually become a good man. This is really the crux of what went wrong in my life. I was afraid, or perhaps too proud, to ask for help.

I was desperately confused by my desires, but if I had asked for help I might have learned that, homosexuality was really just the tip of an iceberg. It was the visible problem sticking up out of the surface of my life. Underneath was the darker more serious root of the issue, a mound of lies hidden just below the water's surface. Long before I ever began to behave as a homosexual man, a foundation of untruth quietly grew under the surface of my life. The roots of this extend deep into my childhood experiences.

I believed a lot of lies about myself, others, and God. I believed there was something weird about my desire to have close friendships with other men. I believed I was pathetic for not playing sports. I believed that others saw me as a weak, effeminate man. I believed that most men enjoyed close relationships with other guys, and I was the only one left out. Most detrimentally, I believed confession would bring only punishment and shame from the church and my family. I would look at the tip of the iceberg that was above the surface and wonder, "Why do I feel this way? Why won't God take this away?" I never suspected the greater problem below the surface that was holding it all up. Satan had me right where he wanted me, frozen in lies and fear.

Perhaps he thought he'd keep me there forever. If so, he underestimated the depth of my Father's love and the power of His gentle whispers that were always calling me home. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the sons of God?" (1 John 3:1). God placed in me ceaseless longing for something better.

For me, the ice began to break during my final year of college. After a round of particularly intense one-night stands that brought me dangerously close to being caught in my double life, I began to crumble emotionally. While home for Christmas in 1999, I decided, on a whim, to reach out to one of my older brothers and ask for help.

I was horribly afraid of people's ridicule and rejection, but I had been brought to a place of despair that made me willing to override my fears. I will never forget that night, the first moment I uttered to someone who loved me what was happening in my life. This was a critical step. I feared my brother's rejection, but he overwhelmed me with his love. I showed someone what was inside, and they did not reject, ridicule, or accuse me. That night my brother had nothing but love for me. Through him, the love of Jesus swept over me like a tidal wave. Satan's iceberg of lies was beginning to crack apart. They could not withstand the power of Christ's love, the radiant burning warmth of His truth and light.

My confession to my brother was only the first of many needed steps, but it might have been the most important. Through it God

began to move in power – power unlike anything I have experienced in my life. By the end of my last semester, May, 2000, God brought direct aid in the form of a rumor I heard about a young Baptist pastor in my hometown who had struggled with homosexuality. He had resigned his position at the church and began sharing his story of how God was healing him and his family. My brother helped me get in contact with this man, and what ensued were the most transforming events of my life up to that point.

After graduation I moved back home. The young pastor invited me to a bible study he was hosting. I met each week with other men who were struggling with various sexual problems (adultery, prostitution, pornography, etc). For the first time, I had found a place where I could be honest about what I was dealing with. In that honesty, God began to show me that Satan was a thief who had come to "steal, kill, and destroy" (John 10:10). More and more of the lies I had believed were brought into the light. Eventually, I shared my struggle with my parents, a critical step for me, the importance of which I do not here have space to explain.

After that Summer I moved to Dallas to take my first job and got involved in a weekly support group lead by Living Hope Ministries. Over the next four years, God continued to bring new levels of healing into my life, not least of which was the restoration of my relationship with my father. God has now led me here to Portland where I'm learning more about how to help others escape the lies of homosexuality.

To this day, I continue to struggle with my flesh and with some nagging lies that are a bit harder for me to "shake off". The most persistent is that obeying God might be keeping me from something good – something I might want. In addressing any addiction, obedience can begin to feel like a lot of "no's" and very few "yes's". Satan still attacks me and tries to convince me that God is keeping good things from me, but I am convinced that this lie too will melt away as I more deeply accept the truth that God wants what is best for me. "He did not spare His own son; How will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things" (Romans 8:31)? My Father is not in the business of keeping good things from His children. It's with that assurance that we all find the will to trust Him and move forward in obedience.

I'm not sure when the battle with homosexuality will die down to something small in my life, but I look forward to that day with eager expectation. I focus on God's truth that we are being transformed and that one day we will be complete. "What we will be has not yet been made known" (1 John 3:2), but we know from His word that "death will be swallowed in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54)! Until that day, I follow where He leads.



Joshua and his "wonderful" friends enjoying beignets at Cafe Du Monde, New Orleans, Louisiana

checking the mail



A daily task at PF is reading the mail – these days most of it electronic. The ease with which we can send one another e-mail can be, as they say, a mixed blessing. The daily batch often includes notes from strugglers – or their parents or friends – asking for advice and resources. We get questions on every aspect of homosexuality. Sometimes we get hate mail, or we have to take it on the chin when someone doesn't think we really care, or that we have any wisdom. But often enough the batch contains something that lifts the spirit and reminds us why we answer the mail and our telephone. Take, for example, this one:

I am not sure if you remember me, but my name is Dustin from Tennessee. I am now 19. When I was a freshman, my mom called you when I told her I was gay. We talked quite a lot over the course of about three years. I wanted to give you an update on everything. It has been quite a journey, not without falling hard more than once. After I talked to you those times, I found Harvest USA in Chattanooga. Mark helped a lot. About seven months ago, I got connected to New Song Christian Fellowship, a church, in Nashville, and gained accountability through them. I am beginning a two-year internship in January for worship and the arts. The main reason I wanted to write is to tell you how thankful I am that you were there and that the Portland fellowship was there for me even in Tennessee. I thank God for the grace that he had on me. The Lord has changed my identity. I no longer carry the label that the world and the enemy had put on me but I wear His new identity. I still struggle with same sex attraction, but God is continuing to walk with me on this journey. In the grip of grace, - Dustin

thanks to the team

Each year prior to Christmas, PF fetes the leadership team – our small group leaders, worship team and interns — with an elegant dinner. The staff (helped a lot by their wives!) served a feast of chicken rosemary and the trimmings. Perhaps the best part of the evening was a video made by *Taking Back Ground* participants to thank their leaders. Here's some excerpts:

“...it's really hard because we hope for so much change and it's a really slow process, but thanks for your patience and endurance, and that you just keep praying. Thanks a bunch!”

“...specifically, the leaders in my group, Philip your great with all the details and that's cool, and Joe, you always have the right thing to say, whether it's a word of encouragement or kicking me in the butt – and that's a good thing! So thank you.”

“This is my second year of Taking Back Ground. When I came in here for my first year I was 45 years old, did not relate well with people, was very melancholy... and God did a transforming work. PF gave me a whole new perspective of God, how to have emotional fulfillment from God, and it has totally transformed my life. I can't say how thankful I am for this ministry. It has changed me as a father, as a church member... everybody notices such a big change. People who have known me for years and years say, 'You not the same person at all.'”

“As far as all the teachers and people here at PF, everyone does a phenomenal job. I can't think of anybody who doesn't go out to meet the needs of people here. From Joanne McBride to Drew Berryessa to Jason, to Jim. I can go on about all the group leaders and others. It's phenomenal what they have offered in my life.”

“...Joanne and Laura, thanks for all you do. You make it possible for us to [get stuff out] every week. Thanks for being here. We appreciate you.”

“I'm in Year two, and it's amazing the healing God has done in my life. I need you all to know that lives are changed. I'm not the man I was, and it's so exciting to say that.”

“I appreciate everyone who is a part of making this ministry happen. There's no place like this. Thank you for giving of yourselves and giving us a place.”



Our volunteers enjoying the appreciation dinner

Board member and therapist Steve Donaldson shared during the appreciation dinner:

“I believe that Portland Fellowship has been one of the major contributors to our current political and cultural situation. Policy makers and medical experts constantly ask the same question, ‘What does the data say?’ Ladies and gentlemen, staff and leadership of Portland Fellowship, you are the data. Your work, your persistence, your humble service, and your testimony make you the data that the gay agenda cannot dismiss. Your work is significant in that you care for each of God's beloved children but also because you are the salt of the earth that is preserving our culture. You are a light that draws lost souls to a relationship with the God that is. Never under-estimate the significance of your service. My deepest appreciation to you all. I thank you for your work.”

january - february calendar & services

january 4, 11, 18, 25

february 1, 8, 15, 22

Taking Back Ground

Discipliship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions.

january & february

Upper Room Interns

After their Christmas break, our Upper Room interns will hear from several excellent teachers: Steve Hotra (on leading worship), John Paulk (on the Pro-gay Agenda), Dr. Kay and Paul Bruce (legal and policy issues) and PF's founder Phil Hobizal.

january 9

Annual Planning Meeting

Staff and the PF board will spend a full day reviewing this past year and planning for 2005.

january 14th; february 11th

Family & Friends Group

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

january 16

Liberty Ridge Church

Jason will be speaking in the morning service.

april 2

Mark your calendar

PF will be hosting Sy Rogers this year for our annual conference.

Are you interested?

If you are interested in having a staff member or intern speak at your church, youth group, college, or fellowship group contact the PF office.

Additional updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com

Counseling and youth support

Can be arranged through the office.

your gift to pf

In addition to the blessing we receive from God when we give from the heart, we also receive a blessing from the government – in the form of tax deductions! Here is a reminder to take advantage of this double blessing by getting your 2004 gifts in by year's end.

In January, our administrator will be sending every donor a receipt of contributions for income tax purposes.

prayer requests

Please pray for our interns, most of whom are traveling to visit family and friends during the Christmas break.

Please pray for families with homosexual members, for God to help with the stresses that come in the holiday season.

We ask your prayers for the PF staff as they take a Christmas break. This has been the busiest (and best) year in memory, but leaving us a wee bit tired.

2005 and beyond

Though both the *Taking Back Ground* program and the *Upper Room Intern Program* are full, and the house stays busy with counseling, mentoring, writing and the dispatching of speakers, we at PF know the needs are great. Look for a new Ministry Development Plan in our next issue.

**the staff of portland fellowship wishes you a
happy new year!**



Drew, Jim, Jason and Joanne



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

MINISTRY STAFF

Jason Thompson
Executive Director

Joanne McBride
Women's Ministry

Jim Thompson
Pastoral Support

Drew Berryessa
Ministry Assistant

Benjamin Brown
Facilities and support

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.