



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Hope Beyond the Facade *by Duan Walker*

I walked around my school and church in constant fear that I would be found out. I was convinced that something I might do or say would reveal what was really going on inside. At the same time, I did not understand how I could have these feelings that were so clearly wrong. So, I did what I think we as Christians often do: I made the outside look good and suppressed what was going on inside.

I thought if I could just be more disciplined, everything would change and my sinful desires would just go away, but they did not. In fact, the more consumed I became with fear and confusion and the more I tried to make the outside look good, the worse things became. That continued for years. I would go through cycles of thinking everything was okay, followed by everything falling apart inside. The worse things got, the more alone I felt. And I made classic mistake, I thought I was the only one who struggled with this issue: that I was truly alone.

I had been involved in church all my life and became a Christian at a young age. I knew about sin, and I had heard passages like 1 Corinthians 6 that give a long list of sins, including homosexuality, followed by "none of these will have a share in the kingdom of God." But when I got into high school and all the other guys were discovering attraction to girls, I was very confused when I found myself attracted to other guys. It was not something I wanted or chose. It was just there.

The first time I felt a glimmer of hope was late in high school. I was working in a church office, answering phones and doing administrative work. One day a phone call came in that I answered: "Hello, my name is [Jane], and I'm calling from Exodus International. We are a ministry that helps people struggling with unwanted homosexuality, and we're having a conference in your area. We were wondering if some of your pastoral staff or church members would like to attend the conference." There was what felt like five minutes of stunned silence and fear. "How did she know to talk to me? Did my façade have a crack in it? ... Oh, wait! I'm just answering the phone like I have hundreds of times. She has no idea that I struggle or am hiding. Ok, act like everything's normal." I regained my composure and told her it would be great if she sent us some information. That same moment of panic and fear returned in a week or so when a flyer from Exodus came in the mail addressed to me. After recovering from my second "exposure," I contemplated going to the conference, masquerading as someone who would reach out and minister to people struggling. I did not end up going, but the tidbit of information about Exodus was filed away in the back of my brain, to be used later.

About eight years passed. I continued to go through cycles of being totally overwhelmed with homosexuality to periods of feeling like I had it altogether and my façade was perfectly intact. During that time, I moved away from my friends and family in Vancouver, Washington to Albany, Oregon. Especially at first, the experience was like pouring lighter fluid on a blazing barbecue. Not only was I struggling with a deeply personal issue, but now I was in a completely new town, attending a new church, working a new job, and meeting new people. Everything intensified, including that disconnection between how I felt inside, and how I acted on the outside.



Duan completed Taking Back Ground in May and is now a part of the Upper Room Internship Program.

Around Christmas of 2002, I finally hit rock-bottom. I had returned to Albany from a visit to Vancouver. It seemed like every interaction with friends had gone horribly wrong. I just wanted those times to be good – to be enjoyable. Since reality was nothing close to my ideal, I sought out that ideal in fantasy. But over time, my appetite had become less and less satisfied. I kept wanting more: fantasies developed and intensified, pornography was not enough, and I began searching for a way to have a secret sexual encounter with a guy. This time was no exception. I sought escape and found it in pornography. As I felt guilty about it, I wanted a more intense experience to numb that guilt. When I finally let myself return to reality, I felt worse than I ever had before. And in the midst of that deep emotional darkness, God spoke to me: “Do you see the progression? Do you realize this isn’t getting any better?”

It was then that I was reminded of that tidbit of information about Exodus. I went looking for their website, and once I found it, began reading the stories of people whose lives had changed. What struck me was the reality and honesty that was present in those stories. They did not act like they one day made a decision and everything changed. There was acknowledgement that this journey is just that: a journey of growth that takes time. As I continued to read, I found the story of a man with whom I really identified. At the end of the story, I read, “Jason is now the director of Portland Fellowship.” I did a little more searching on Exodus’ website and discovered Portland Fellowship was just a short distance north of me. After much fear and second-guessing, I finally sent an e-mail to Jason, asking if we could meet. I made it clear right from the beginning that I did not want to be in a group setting. There was no way in the world I was going to tell anyone, much less a bunch of strangers, about my struggle with homosexuality.

A couple weeks later, I met with Jason. I had a mental list of things that I was NOT going to talk about with him . . . and we talked about all of them. He challenged me to make a consistent commitment to walking through this process; and, what followed was the beginning of a life-changing experience. As we continued to meet one-on-one, I began learning many things about myself and more importantly about God.

In all the years before, I had learned information about God – who He was; His nature. But I did not really KNOW God. He had always seemed to be this distant being that could never be satisfied. I believed that if I just read the Bible and

prayed more or served in more ministries or did more things, then I could earn God’s favor... I would be close to God. I learned that God desires an intimate relationship with me, no matter what I have or have not done in my life. There is no amount of good things or level of commitment that I can do to earn that favor. God has already given it. I must simply receive it.

I had always felt inferior as a man. I didn’t feel like a woman, but I didn’t feel like a man either. However, when God designed me, He knew exactly what He was doing. He intentionally made me a man and intends me to embrace masculinity as He defines it. Over time, God replaced years of lies about my identity with truth about who I am in Christ. Does that mean I never question my identity in Christ? No – it simply means there is a new narrative that is quick to point out mistruth.



Duan and his fellow interns.

I have always had a desire to get married, but never thought it a possibility because of my continued struggles with homosexuality. It was torturous to go to a wedding and watch a couple get married, when I felt there was no way I would ever be a groom. I would often just tune out when the pastor started speaking. However, about two years ago, I had the privilege of attending the wedding of a couple in my home church. I actually listened to what the pastor shared. He spoke about how the love expressed between this couple

was an example of the love that God has for us. I was deeply moved as I watched the excited groom smile with love for his fiancé, and I realized how much God truly loved me.

God has taught me so many things over the last couple years, and now He is giving me the opportunity to “comfort . . . with the comfort [I] have received from God” (II Corinthians 1:4b). There have been many times the journey has been incredibly difficult. I have even wanted to give up at times, but God continues to be faithful, even when I am faithless (II Timothy 2:13). I do still struggle with same-sex attraction, but those desires do not control my life as they once did. God promises, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (II Corinthians 12:9).

If you are struggling and seeking hope, there is hope to be found in Christ. If you hurting because of your own choices or those of others you love, there is comfort to be found in Christ. No matter where you’ve been or what situation you’re in, God can reach into the deepest, darkest pit and bring the you light of His truth.

foundation awards grant

In our last newsletter we shared of a Challenge Grant given by a donor through Northwest Christian Community Foundation (NCCF). The generous gift has launched several significant projects that all lead toward one common goal: **transforming lives for Christ**. We are pleased to announce a new partnership with Mission Increase, and have received a matching grant in the amount of \$50,000.

Mission Increase Foundation is a private operating foundation that helps donors give wisely to ensure that each gift builds and strengthens the recipient charity. Their desire as well as NCCF is to further our work and encourage others to wisely invest their resources.



Duan's story is just one of hundreds that benefit from the resources God has provided through your faithful support.

Since our last newsletter, Portland Fellowship has received funds totaling \$153,350 from grants and donations and we are prayerfully seeking another grant for renovation. Our current goal is to raise a total of \$250,000 to develop programming, renovate the house, and fully call this place our own. We only need \$100,000 to complete this goal. Please pray and ask the Lord what he would have you do in partnership with this grant. Any gift you make will help us reach more people like Duan, and best of all, will be matched. Your gift of \$50, \$100, or even \$1000 will be a great help. Thank you.

tips for year-end giving and resources available



As the Christmas season approaches and the end of another year, many of you are thinking about the gifts you will give to friends and family as well as year-end charitable gifts to organizations like Portland Fellowship. With this in mind, we thought you would appreciate a few year-end tips that might benefit you, from a tax standpoint, and would benefit PF as well.

In addition, we are pleased to tell you about our partnership with Northwest Christian Community Foundation (NCCF). NCCF is about stewardship, resources and Complex Giving Made Easy™. We use NCCF to help us manage some of the gifts we receive and they are a resource for some of the giving opportunities described below.

Gifts of Cash

Cash gifts are immediately available to Portland Fellowship and are the most common ways to give. The Federal Government has enhanced the benefits of gifts of cash between now and the end of the year by passing the Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act (KETRA). This law temporarily suspends 50% of adjusted gross income deductible limitation for cash gifts made before the end of 2005. This means that many people who have already been generous through-out the year may be able to make additional gifts and still receive a tax deduction.*

Gifts of Securities

Donating appreciated shares of marketable securities (stocks, bonds, mutual funds) is an attractive alternative to a cash gift. The advantages are many – lower out-of-pocket costs for your contribution, avoidance of capital gains taxes, potential tax deduction of the full current value of the security.

Gifts of Real Estate

Real Estate in the Portland area has appreciated at record levels. Real estate gifts offer many of the same advantages of donating securities. Many people are reluctant to sell real estate because of the significant capital gains taxes they may pay. A full or partial donation of real estate may be a win/win situation for you and PF.

Gift Annuity

Through our relationship with NCCF we are able to offer this unique giving vehicle. A Gift Annuity is truly a gift that gives back. Funding a gift annuity with cash or a cash equivalent, such as a Certificate of Deposit, may increase your income with a higher annual return than you are currently earning. Gift Annuities offer you a sizeable income tax deduction, a fixed payout rate guaranteed for your lifetime of which a significant portion may be tax-free.

We hope this information is helpful as you do your year-end planning. Please don't hesitate to call if you have questions about any of these ideas.

*This information is not intended as legal or tax advice. Please see your tax advisor for how KETRA applies to your personal tax situation.

november - december calendar & services

november 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Taking Back Ground

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

november 11 & december 9

Family & Friends Group

Support for family and friends with loved ones struggling with homosexuality. Women's Ministry Director Catherine Chapman will be speaking at the November meeting. 7 p.m.

november 13

Harvest Comm. Church

Interns Jimmy, Jeremy and Ed will be hosting a PF booth at the church's missions fair.

december 10

Leadership Appreciation Dinner

PF staff will serve a special dinner to honor our Taking Back Ground Leadership Team. 6 p.m.

december 20

TBG Christmas Party

Those involved with Portland Fellowship are welcome to join us for an evening of food and games.

Evening Begins at 7 p.m.

dec 6, 13

Open Group

For questions about Portland Fellowship or to hear from men and women walking in freedom, come to our open group. 7 p.m.

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.

wisdom of the age...or wisdom of the ages

Matthew 16:24-25 states "If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for me will find it."

For the men and women coming to PF, this scripture becomes profoundly applicable. It is the promise of the message we bring, the promise that as we seek to follow and obey Christ, he will reveal true life to us. It almost goes without saying that the message is profoundly counter-cultural. Never is this as clear to us as when the secular media presents their bias on homosexuality and the desire to change.

On October 10th, TIME magazine's cover story was titled "The Battle Over Gay Teens". Mixed in the article's statistics about the average age that gay teenagers have their first sexual contact (16 years old for girls and 14 years old for boys) and growing number of Gay/Straight Alliance groups in schools (in 1997 there were approximately 100 gay-straight alliances (GSAs)—clubs for gay and gay-friendly kids—on U.S. high school campuses. Today there are at least 3,000 GSAs—nearly 1 in 10 high schools has one) were sweeping statements that to "reject one's homosexual impulses will usually be fruitless and depressing—and can lead to suicide" The message on their end is clear, accepting one's homosexuality is the healthiest and life giving choice.



Another example of this mindset was evident on the October 19th Dr. Phil Show. A young lesbian woman expressed "If it was really God's plan for me to not be gay - then why would it be such a struggle to overcome it?" She was joined on the show by her mother and sister, who expressed difficulty accepting that she had made her whole identity about being lesbian. Even Dr. Phil himself responded to this young woman saying "It is not all of who you are, it's just your sexual orientation", to which the young woman replied, "It is everything that I am!"

What a testament to the "wisdom" of our culture: feelings and behaviors determine our identity, embraced without question. Your support of Portland Fellowship is so important. Each of the participants who come here have chosen to go against culture and chose the road of relational and sexual healing. In this endeavor, they are following the very command of Christ and seeking his truth about their identities.



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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