



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## The Love of The Father by Drew Berryessa

*"Eternal Father"- That is what the banner declared as it hung on the wall of the chapel, seemingly mocking me. Even though I was standing in this huge room, surrounded by hundreds of other worshipers singing beautiful praise music, all I could do is stare at that banner, and cry.*

That was last June. Fast forward to this last month. I am standing in another room, a much smaller, quieter room. Once again, all I can do is stare and cry. These, however, are very different tears. They are tears of joy. It is somewhere around 3 a.m. and I am sure that I am probably exhausted, although right now nothing matters except the focus of my gaze...my beautiful newborn daughter Elaina.

It is amazing the difference a year can make. Last summer the staff of Portland Fellowship attended a conference in Wheaton, Illinois. I could not help but feel, as we prepared to leave for the trip that God was going to do some business in my heart. It had been a pretty intense year for me. It is common knowledge around here that God is never finished doing the work of healing and restoration in our lives. By the time last summer came around, I had already been a good six months into working through some pretty deep wounds within my family. Although things were beginning to get somewhat resolved, my heart was still a bit raw. I have to admit I had no idea what impact this would have on my experience at the conference. But I had the distinct feeling that I was being prepared for something. I had my answer the first morning worship service. As my eyes scanned the chapel, my sight locked on an ornate banner on the wall. It seems so silly to think about now, but when I read those words "Eternal Father" my heart broke.



*Elaina Berryessa  
born May 16th, 2006*

As with many who come to our ministry, my relationship with my father had suffered significant wounds throughout my childhood. This affected the way I related to not only him, but our Heavenly Father as well. Here is a profound truth that has proved itself in most every person that I have encountered, homosexual struggler or not: The relationship that you have with your father on earth provides the filter by which you relate to God the Father. This was made clear to me my first year as a participant in our program *Taking Back Ground*. Up to that point in my life I had never even considered that as a reality. However in the years to follow, I became increasingly aware of the impact this had on my walk with the Lord. This had come to a climax in the month preceding the conference.

It is amazing how deceived and single-minded we can become in regards to our own woundedness. This past year has proved that to me. I love my dad deeply, and I know that he loves me, but it had been a

struggle to really know and believe in his love for me. For years, I viewed my relationship with my father as a work in progress. I am ashamed to say that I had, in my selfishness and immaturity, an attitude that it was all his work to do. When looking at the hurt in our relationship, I never considered that I needed to ask forgiveness, or that I had been guilty of hurting him as well. It was only through a season of pain that my dad and I were able to come to a place of honesty that helped me understand my role in damaging our relationship. It was a tremendously difficult season, and an even more difficult conversation, and yet the healing and life that it has brought I would not trade for anything. All this preceded the moment that I found myself staring at the banner, tears streaming down my face.

I was shocked at the thought going through my head as my focus remained on those two words "Eternal Father." I was angry...very angry. The streams of accusation flowed from my mind at a speed and intensity that I had never allowed. "Why would you choose to call yourself that?? Where were you when I needed you?? Do you like pouring salt in my wounds??" There were many other accusations that my heart made against the character of God in that moment. Years of not really being able to believe that he loved me bled out through these cries and through my tears.

After the initial rush of anger subsided, there was left this deep feeling of sorrow as a realization came over me. Just the same as with my earthly father, I had held this distorted view in which I did not acknowledge my own responsibility. I knew in my head that God was always with me, and that he was, like the Bible said, a perfect Father. But my heart could never embrace that. My own unbelieving heart was what had damaged my relationship with God.

In light of such a realization, the only response that seems appropriate is repentance. I don't know what was going on with the other worshipers in that moment, I don't even know if the worship music had ended and the lecture had begun or not. It felt like I was no longer in the room. It was just me and God. As I poured out my heart to God, asking forgiveness for my attitude and my accusations, something surreal

happened. Because this type of thing does not happen often to me, it is a little hard to explain. It was like I could actually see God the Father embracing me, and as He did this, he said two simple words... "It's okay." That was just the beginning.

Now back to that small, quiet room. It is a year later and many things in my life have changed. The last nine months my wife Suzanne and I had been anticipating and preparing for this moment. Our daughter is here. After the initial business of the delivery, the nurses have gone and Suzanne is finally able to sleep. It is amazing how quiet a room can suddenly become. So there we were, just me and my newborn daughter. For the first time in this whole process of pregnancy and delivery the reality truly hit me. I began to cry silently...I couldn't help it, she is just so beautiful! It is indescribable the depth of love that I have for her. I would give my life for this little girl. As I sat rocking my daughter to sleep in my arms, God, in utmost tenderness, chose to answer the question, or rather the



*Drew enjoying a quiet moment with newborn Elaina*

accusation, that I made a year earlier. It was barely a whisper, but it was there. "Drew, you know how much you love your daughter. Then you can begin to understand the love I have for my children." For the first time in my life I really began to understand the love of the heavenly Father, and the love that my earthly father has for me. This is described well in Psalm 103:11-13

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he*

*removed our transgressions from us; As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.*

I now understand why God chooses to call himself our Father...because he is our Father. A perfect Father who loves perfectly. Children are meant to look at their earthly fathers to understand who God is and how God loves his children. And now, as Elaina's father, that is my calling. I have the privilege of showing her, through my love for her, a reflection of God the Father's love for His children. A complete, unconditional love. A love of indescribable depth. May all of us who are called fathers be up to such a high calling.

## Farewell to the 2005-06 Upper Room Interns

It seems only a short time since we were introducing the 2005-06 Upper Room interns in this newsletter. The year is now completed, and these six men are already making the transition into new ministries God has prepared for them.

This was a year the interns will not soon forget. Each will leave with a thick binder of class notes, new techniques for ministry, insights into their own life journeys, and priceless memories of time spent learning, struggling, and playing together. During the course of the year, they had the opportunity to hear from numerous Christian teachers and leaders, including Joe Dallas and John Paulk. Perhaps God's greatest blessing to them was the gift of each other, and the opportunity to live in intentional community, encouraging and challenging one another.



**Ed Murphy** is spending the summer using his engineering skills in Bakersfield, California. Ed was a full-time seminary student during his year in the *Upper Room* program, and plans to return to Portland this fall to complete his degree in Family Ministry at Multnomah Seminary.



**Don Hawes** entered the Upper Room Program as a way of repaying his debt of gratitude to Portland Fellowship. He plans to continue on our leadership team, serving as a small group leader and in other ways as the Lord may lead. Don owns and operates a business in Gresham, Oregon.



**Duan Walker** has begun the work of founding a new ministry in the Albany, Oregon area to be called *Mid-Valley Fellowship*, responding to a long-recognized need for a sister ministry in that area. During his internship, Duan offered his considerable skills providing technical support to PF's staff, assisting in the production of new media for the promotion of the ministry.



**Jimmy D'Agosta** came to us from the staff of Corban College, Salem, Oregon. During his internship, he taught in *Taking Back Ground*, led a small group, and played keyboard with our music team. Jimmy plans to remain part of PF's leadership team during the next year, and will work with Jason the design of a new youth program entitled *Reachtruth.com*.



**Matt Lieberman** spent two years in the *Upper Room* program, becoming thoroughly familiar with the curriculum, and acquiring a full range of ministry skills. He has now returned to his home in the St. Louis, Missouri area. Later this summer, he will move to Chicago to work with Deaf Video Communications. Matt is already in demand as a speaker in Deaf churches. As a result of his work at PF a number of Deaf people have been introduced to this ministry.



**Jeremy Gordon-Smith**, who came to us from several years' service in Youth with a Mission (YWAM) in Buenos Aires, has completed the translation of *Taking Back Ground* (Year I) into Spanish, and is working on Year II. Jeremy will travel home to London in August where he plans to study counseling at Spurgeon's College. He hopes to maintain ministry links in Latin America, and a trip to Ecuador and our companion ministry *Camino Salida* is likely next year.

## July - August calendar & services

July 4  
**Independence Day**  
The office will be closed and there will be no summer series meeting.

July 11, 18, 25  
August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29  
**Deeply Rooted:**  
Growth through the disciplines. See story at the right.

July 17 & August 21  
**Family & Friends Group**  
For those who have a loved one involved in homosexuality and want guidance, encouragement and support. Join us the third Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

July 23  
**Engage: Youth Camp**  
Drew will be sharing his testimony and speaking at this high school summer youth retreat.

July 25 & August 22  
**Wives Group**  
The wives, girlfriends, and fiancés of men who are struggling with homosexuality or are self-identified as gay come together for encouragement, prayer, and support. 7:00 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](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)

**Counseling and youth support**  
Can be arranged through the office.

## Join us for PF's 2006 summer session



This year's summer series will be a discussion of the spiritual disciplines that support our walk with God, aid our healing, and draw us into a deeper fellowship with our Lord. We will move through three significant areas of growth:

**Disciplines of Nourishment: Prayer, Scripture and Worship**

**Disciplines of Waiting: Silence & Solitude and Fasting & Self-Denial**

**Disciplines of Reality: Mourning, Contentment and Celebrative Expression**

With each of these topics we will provide teachings on the ways these disciplines can be incorporated into our lives, an opportunity to practice during the week, and weekly discussion groups to wrestle through the gifts and frustrations experienced by growing in each of these areas. Come ready to dig deep and courageously grow. Drop us an email or call the office and leave a message with Drew to reserve your spot. [drew@portlandfellowship.com](mailto:drew@portlandfellowship.com)

## prayers and praises

Pray for Jason, as he spends his sabbatical this summer with Amy and Trevor, relaxing, and being renewed after many years of intense, productive ministry.

Please pray for those who are approaching Portland Fellowship for the first time, seeking freedom from shame and fear.

We ask your prayers for those who are preparing to begin an internship this fall. Pray that God will provide for all their needs, and make their hearts ready for a life-changing year.

Pray for our departing interns – that God will keep them close to Him during the transition into the next season of their lives.

Praise God for providing abundantly for this ministry – showing us each day new wonders of his love, mercy and protection.

Pray for those living with the reality of HIV/AIDS; and pray that the churches will respond with the love of Christ to those who have been isolated by this disease.



**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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