



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

july /august 2007 volume 12, number 4

Working Side By Side by Drew Berryessa

There is an air of excitement and anticipation that falls on this place on Tuesday nights during the Taking Back Ground program. I am sure that everyone in leadership, and even the participants, experience it, although maybe more acutely at different times in the course of the evening. This night, however, was very different.

For me, the feelings of excitement and anticipation come at the very first moments of the evening, as I walk to the front of the crowded room to begin leading worship. In those moments, before the first strum of the guitar, things always seem to speed up. On this night, however, it felt like time stopped. Something hit me. I turned to my worship team, and looked at our guitar player, Dave, and female vocalist, Trina, and was overwhelmed with a deep sense of gratitude. Let me explain why.

Last month in PF's newsletter, Jason started by answering the question, "Does everyone at Portland Fellowship struggle with same-sex desires?" The answer is no, there are men and women that serve here at PF that have never dealt with this issue in their own lives. Dave and Trina, a young married couple, are two of these individuals who found their way to ministry here at PF. So how did they find their way here? Why did they make the decision to be involved in **this** ministry? Before I answer those questions, let me tell you a little bit more about this couple.

Dave and Trina have a deep love for people. Not any specific group of people, just people in general. This love is what led this newly-married couple to pack up their lives and move across the world to Lithuania with Campus Crusade only nine months into their marriage. During this time in Lithuania, God began to show them His heart was for the hurting people they were living among, and how He was inviting them to minister. This invitation redefined their lives as Christians. I sat down over dinner recently with Dave and Trina and had a discussion about this experience and the process that led them into ministry at PF.

Trina- *"Living in Lithuania challenged all of the rules I had been taught about evangelism and discipleship, and even what growth in the Lord looks like. So much of what I had been taught as a young Christian, and what I had focused on was about conforming my behavior, and it was not just a change in behavior that these people needed most; it was the knowledge that God loved them. I began to see that this is not something that you can just tell someone and that they will believe it, but rather, it is something that often needs to be demonstrated to them tangibly before a person can begin to entrust their lives to God."*

Dave- *"This is stuff that we had really been wrestling with for a long time and finally began to put it into practice. There was always this feeling that we, as the church, have been missing something...either that, or it was just so unnatural to Trina and I with how formulaic it felt."*

After a year in Lithuania, Dave and Trina moved back to the US with a new perspective and passion for loving those who were hurting. It was not long after they were back in the US that my wife Suzanne and I started attending the same



Dave and Trina first started serving at PF on the worship team two years ago.

home fellowship group in which they were involved. A friendship was sparked as we talked about our mutual experiences working with people who were deeply hurting, we at PF and they in Lithuania. As our friendship grew, the amount of support and understanding we felt from them became a huge encouragement. Dave and Trina are both gifted musicians, so, when a need arose at Portland Fellowship for help leading worship, I didn't even think twice about asking them if they would be interested. They quickly accepted and began co-leading the worship time for *Taking Back Ground*. They took up their leadership roles with a level of genuine humility.

Dave- *"We really wanted to be careful coming into PF. The last thing we wanted was for the participants to feel like we thought we were somehow better than them."*

Trina - *"That's true, I mean, here we were walking into this place with no history and no real experience with this struggle. I was glad that we had a very specific role that we could serve in, (the worship team), it really allowed us the freedom to earn a place in the participants' lives."*

As the year progressed, the level of comfort and interaction increased between the participants and Dave and Trina. After serving for a year on the worship team, they made the decision to become involved on a deeper level. This last year they each served as a co-leader in a small group for *Taking Back Ground*. I asked what they experienced going from a more detached, familiar role, to a role that was really at the heart of this ministry.

Trina- *"I definitely did not know what to expect walking into the small groups. I wondered if I would really have anything to offer the women in my group. I wondered if I would have any credibility with them since I had never struggled with same-sex attraction."*

Dave- *"I wondered that too, and even if the men in my group would feel comfortable talking about the stuff they were dealing with having 'the token ever-straight guy' in the room with them. In reality, it was easy to relate to what they were going through."*

Trina- *"Right! That was the thing, the stuff that the women were dealing with, I mean, sure there was same-sex attraction, but over all it was just normal human stuff. It was great to be able to say to them, 'I deal with that too! You are more normal than you think!' It was like one of our purposes was to help equalize this struggle in their eyes. It really is not so much different than what everyone deals with."*

Dave- *"That is something that became obvious to Trina and me. You don't have to have struggled with same-sex attraction to just sit and offer a listening ear or a comforting presence. And you don't have to have a history with this*

struggle in order to minister to people struggling with it. The fact that we didn't gave us a new platform from which to minister."

Trina- *"Here is a good example of that for me with the women. I am kind of a huggie person, and there was one of the women that I would often, probably every week, give a big hug to. At the end of the year, she told me how I was the first woman that she had ever really gotten physical contact from without having something wrong attached to it. To her, I was safe because I didn't struggle with this issue."*

Dave- *"For one of the guys in my group, it was the fact that he disclosed some pretty heavy and personal things about his struggle to a 'normal' guy, and still felt accepted and safe. That is just amazing."*

Trina- *"You know, the best thing about this experience is that PF really does exactly, and powerfully, what the Body of Christ is supposed to do. There are very few places, it seems, where people are allowed to be real and messy, and in the middle of it, feel loved and drawn deeper into God."*

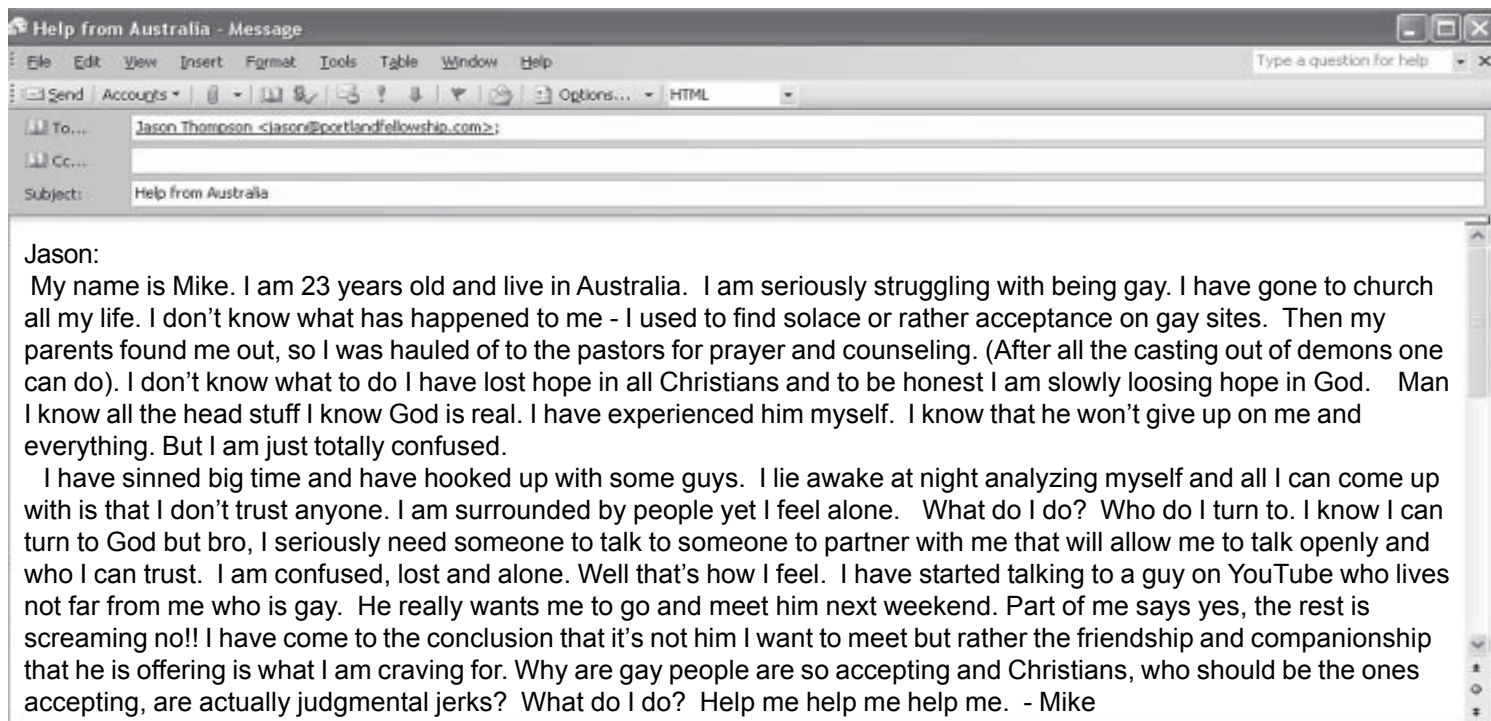
Dave- *"That is one of the things I appreciate most about this place that is constantly repeated. PF does not exist to 'fix' anyone, but to draw people into a deeper, more intimate relationship with Christ. That ultimately is what does all the transformation. It really is awesome to be a part of it."*



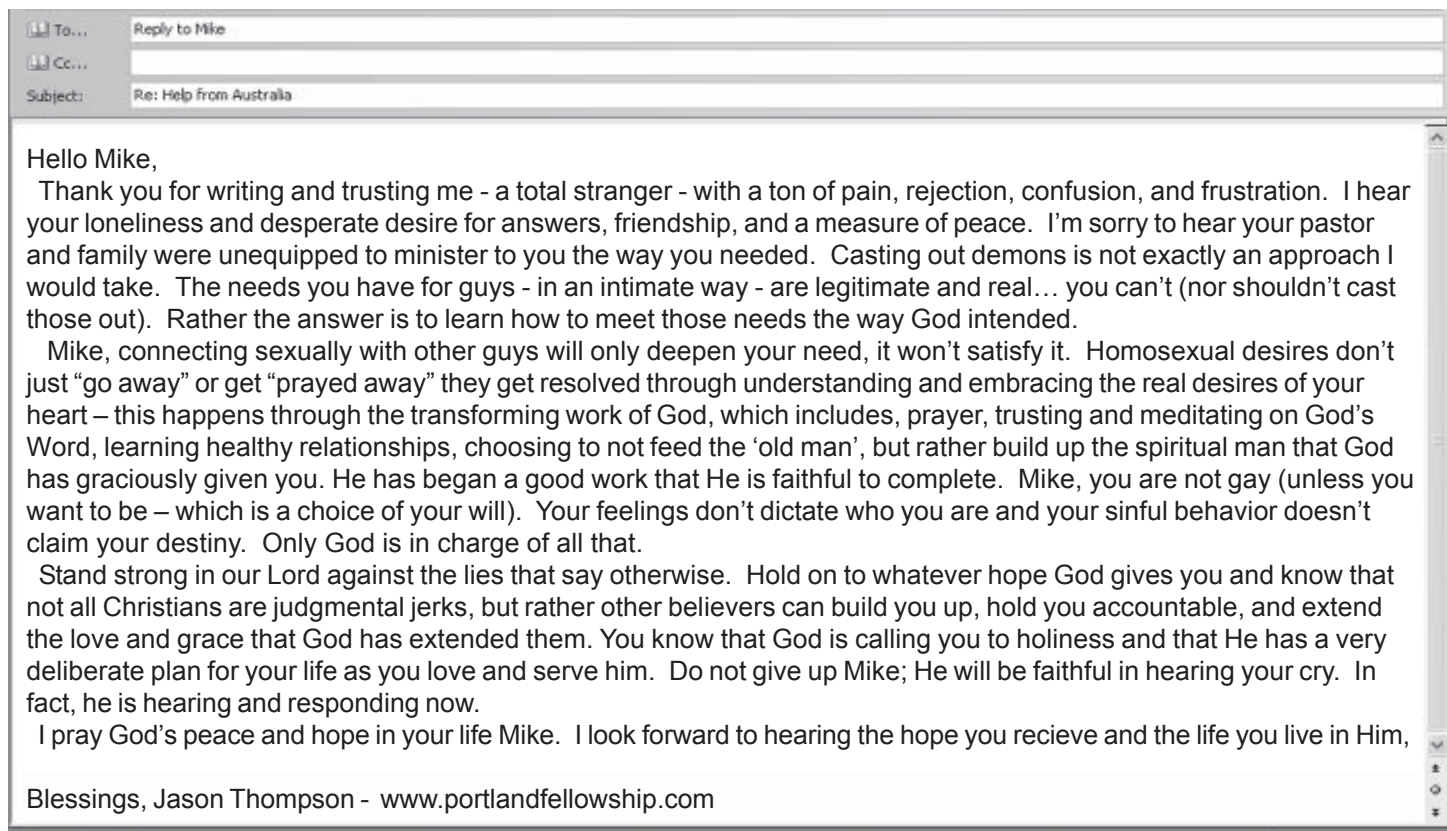
So back to that evening not long ago and that deep sense of gratitude. Dave and Trina got involved with PF because they had a talent they could invest, their musical skill, and ended up impacting many lives eternally. They have become a huge encouragement; that they would care about a group of people to whom they really did not have any personal ties, and give of themselves to serve that group. I am overwhelmed by that. But that night, looking at Dave and Trina, my appreciation was not just for them. When I looked at the two of them and thought about what they give to PF, my thoughts went to the many people that give of themselves to this ministry, people who understand what happens here and offer encouragement, support and partnership.

As Dave started strumming his guitar and worship began, I looked at all the faces, the lives that are being transformed by this ministry, and I thought of Patti, who always writes an encouraging note on her pledge check. She is with us here tonight... I thought of Laurie, who after going through this program years ago, keeps giving more and more each year. She is with us tonight too... I thought of Don and Mardie, and Dan and Jody, and Patrick and Shelly, Craig and Valerie, our prayer intercessors, and everyone else who serves with us side-by-side in the ways that God has called them. They are all with us here tonight. And for that we are all truly grateful.

Portland Fellowship receives numerous emails asking for information and for help. Some have a simple curiosity while others are in deep distress. Our desire is for you to get a deeper understanding of the need so many have. This email came to us last week.



The following is a reply to "Mike's" email...



We exchanged a few more emails until we found someone who would be able to personally assist Mike in Australia. He has connected with some trustworthy Pastors and is beginning to open up his struggles and doubts. We pray Mike continues to grow in the strength of our Lord.

july - august calendar & services

july 10, 17, 24, 31
august 7, 14, 21, 28

Deeply Rooted

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.

July 18-23

Defined- Youth Camp

Drew will be the main speaker for this Foursquare summer camp in Corbett. He will be speaking in four evening sessions.

july 20 & august 17

Family & Friends Group

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

august 4

Love Won Out Conference

A one day conference on homosexuality that balances truth-in-love with grace and compassion. Presented by Focus on the Family. Go to www.lovewonout.com for more info.

august 6-18

Equador Trip

Jason will be traveling to visit our sister ministry *Camino de Salida* in Quito. He will be joined by former interns Jeremy Gordon-Smith and Jimmy D'Agosta.

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.

farewell to our 06-07 interns

Our intern program graduated two participants this year.

Robyn Gates, who previously completed our *Taking Back Ground* program, will be serving this summer on a camp staff in the Hamptons, Long Island, New York. Robyn recently received a meritorious promotion from the retailer for whom she works. Robyn's goal, after working another year in Portland, is to work as a volunteer in an Exodus-affiliated ministry, possibly on the East Coast, while continuing with her employer in that location.

Danny Harvey is returning to Multnomah Seminary to complete his Masters in Pastoral Studies. Danny is currently co-leading a ministry to the sexually addicted in a local church. He envisions an eventual return to an Eastern state and involvement in ministry there.

We look forward to introducing the 2007-08 Upper Room interns in our next newsletter. Please be in prayer for those leaving, and those whom God is calling or are already preparing to begin the program.

a night of celebration

It is not unusual for Portland Fellowship to be bursting at the seams on a Tuesday night. On the last Tuesday in May we pushed the limits and ushered even more people into the house to join in our annual celebration of hard work, persistence, and God's grace. Graduation 2007 was a fantastic evening of honoring 16 men and women who have spent the past two years going through the Taking Back Ground program.

Everyone has a unique story. The path that brings people to PF and the way that God walks with each person is amazingly diverse and beautiful. After two years no one claims that it has been an easy journey, no one claims to be finished with God's work in their lives and at the same time hope is evident in each person's face and in the encouragement they offer the participants who are sitting where they sat the year before.

Graduation is a time when the staff and leadership team blesses each participant with stories, recollections and prayers. It is a holy time- a time to be reminded by God that he is our Advocate, our Healer, our Friend. As Corrie Ten Boone has said, "No pit is so deep that the love of God is not deeper still." On a night like graduation we can't help but respond with one strong, resounding voice- AMEN!



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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