



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Faith, Being Proved Genuine by Rick Reed

I have said and always will say that cancer of the body pales in comparison to the cancer of sin. I was only 29 years old. I thought that I was pretty much dead. Revealing my struggle of same-sex attraction was once something that I thought I never could have the courage to do. Little did I know what God had in store for me.

I was born September 21, 1971, the second of the three children of Don and Carol Reed. I have an older brother and I had a younger sister who died at the age of three from cancer. My father's marriage to my mother was his third. It was around 1973 that we moved to Arkansas. And it was during this time, as my little sister Angie was being treated in Little Rock for her cancer, that I was sexually abused by two women who were friends of the family. In 1981 we moved to Kansas, where my mother grew up, to be closer to my grandmother. Everything was good until my dad had an apparent nervous breakdown when I was in the fifth grade. For the next three years I had a father in the house, but he was unavailable. I couldn't stand being at home so I found my hope on the basketball court. I spent countless hours playing basketball with college guys from my neighborhood. I felt great comfort being around them. When I was in the seventh grade I found myself very attracted to them but I had no clue why. During this time a friend of mine introduced me to pornographic movies. I felt very drawn to the men in these because I thought to be a man I had to be sexually active - which I was through masturbation. At this point in my life the only thing I wanted was to be away from my dad because I was so afraid of him and, frankly, embarrassed to be with him.

The summer after my freshmen year in high school my brother took me to his church to play softball. I had never really liked church, but if sports were involved I was there! I disliked church because I associated it with my dad and him dragging me there for "my own good." But that summer going to church with my brother was different. I became involved in the youth group and can truly say I felt loved by the church. My senior year I gave my life to Christ and was baptized. I was hoping that since I gave my life to Christ that my struggle with same-sex attraction would be washed away. I was so wrong.

After I graduated high school, I headed off to a Christian university in Oklahoma. It was a relief being away from home. Once again I thought being away and being around so many Christians would fix me. But the summer after my sophomore year, while my brother and I were home, our parents told us they were divorcing. I had all sorts of emotions. My brother and I were told a significant lie by our father about the need for the divorce. In the end this made me angrier. My parent's divorce became final in November 1992. Less than nine months later my father remarried, a choice that embittered me all the more.



Rick is serving as an intern this year in the Upper Room Intern Program

I graduated from college in 1995 then moved to Japan that August to teach and do mission work. In 2001, while serving as a vocational missionary, I was diagnosed with cancer. Upon returning to Oklahoma and going through a bone marrow biopsy, I learned that I was in stage IV of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Of course everyone was quick to give sympathy to me as a cancer patient. But the spiritual warfare that was going on was so much worse; and I felt there was no one to share my struggle with. My battle with cancer - which included a stem cell transplant (my older brother had been my donor) and numerous other treatments - paled, in comparison to the spiritual warfare that had now gone on inside me for twenty-two years.

But the amazing thing about God is that He does open up doors to allow for healing. In January 2004 I tried to return to Japan because I wanted to *run away* from my problems. Once I arrived in Japan I became very ill again and, once again, tried to fill that void through pornography. A friend of mine found out about my struggle and gently approached me about it. Soon after this I had to return to Oklahoma for more medical treatments.

One night while on the phone, a dear friend in Texas shared with me the testimony of a mutual friend and the freedom he'd found from homosexuality. I know that this time on the phone was God-ordained and was an opportunity for me to seek help. I got my friend's phone number and called him. I will never forget that phone call. Within a month I was receiving counseling for my struggle with same-sex attraction through *Oikos*, a ministry in Stillwater, Oklahoma. I went through a season of healing and learning what contributed to my struggle. I came to understand how the many lies I believed about myself made me feel insecure about my manhood.

My healing continued as I took the opportunity to share with my family. The first person I shared with was my brother. It was the hardest thing I'd ever done. My brother was kind, compassionate, loving and very gracious. Sharing my struggle with my mother was very difficult because I loved her so much and was terrified of rejection.

She told me how much she loved me and how proud she was of me. Those words were like the words God shared with his Son in Matthew 3:17, "This is my son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased."

Through wonderful support from many friends at my church in Oklahoma, I was able to go to the Exodus Conference in California in 2007. It had a huge impact on me. It was at the conference that God began showing me what He could do with my sexual brokenness that would transform my way of thinking. There were so many that *had* struggled with homosexuality. One of the speakers

used a hilarious example: If one man got pregnant that would be a phenomenon; but if one hundred men got pregnant we could no longer call that a phenomenon. He related this to a person that struggles with same-sex attraction. If two hundred strugglers can change anyone can change. Change is possible. I wish you could have been there to see how many people have changed.

Coming back from the conference I began to pray asking God what I might

do. One of the first things that I did was write a three-page letter to my dad sharing with him my struggle and how I was terrified of him as a child. This is still a work in progress. I was also looking for a ministry that I could become involved with. The Lord opened the door to Portland Fellowship. I thank God that I'm here both to learn ministry skills and to grow spiritually.

January 30, 2008 was the most painful day for me. My dear mother passed away. I can't begin to tell you how much I miss her and how much my family is grieving her passing. My mother and I were so close and I'm finding myself trying to fill the biggest hole in my heart.

One of my favorite scriptures, read at my mother's memorial service, is 1 Peter 1:6-8 *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*



Rick with his mom Carol in winter of 2006. Rick's sweatshirt reads "Cancer survivors are my friends" in Japanese.

flashback to 1988

Twenty years ago the Portland Fellowship newsletter was launched as a one-sided single-sheet of salmon colored paper. The name "QUARTERLY" was centered at the top of the page, followed by a familiar quotation from Isaiah 61 "declaring freedom for the captive." In those first months of ministry, the plans for the newsletter were explained in these terms: *Our intention is to keep you informed of the latest news relating to ministry to homosexuals in the Portland area. We want to be faithful to God's call to share the good news of Jesus Christ to...homosexuals that there is freedom from the bondage of sin. We want you to feel a part of this ministry and we hope you will be moved to be involved at some level. We can't do this work without your prayer and support. We are expecting God to do great things here in Portland and we hope you will join us as we daily seek God to find out how we can serve Him. Now more than ever is the time to spread His message of love, forgiveness and healing.*



There is so much encouragement in recognizing that God has preserved and expanded our core desires for the work of Portland Fellowship. Our newsletter continues to be a place to inform, connect and share with all those in our network of prayerful support. Currently our newsletter comes to you in two distinct formats. Six times a year, like this month, we share testimonies and stories of people impacted by the work God is doing in our midst. On alternate months you hear directly from the staff and get a pulse on how God is specifically stirring our hearts as we shepherded and serve everyone God brings across our path. One of the many aspects of the work that has remained constant is that "we can't do this work without your prayer and support."

And your prayers matter. That same initial newsletter offered up the following dreams for prayer: *future plans include establishing Portland Fellowship's non-profit status, so that we can greatly expand the services we offer to those struggling with homosexuality... the development of a women's support group as well as a ministry to people living with AIDS.* Later that year we did receive our non-profit status; and, in subsequent years we witnessed a women's ministry and a support group for men with HIV/AIDS established. We have seen God answer prayers that we didn't even know how to pray at this early stage of work. No one would have known to pray for an interactive CD-ROM with captioning for members of the Deaf community, a Spanish (soon in Korean) version of the Taking Back Ground curriculum, a ministry for wives, the opportunity to speak to thousands of people over two decades of continuous ministry, or a perfect ministry house (fully paid off!) Amen. Thank you God for this and so much more that began as a seed of faith and a prayer for "greatly expanding the services we offer."

2008 and beyond

Recently the board of directors retooled our official Mission Statement, our underlying beliefs about this work, and the process by which we undertake the work God has given us to do: **(Mission Statement)** Portland Fellowship is an organization dedicated to glorifying Jesus Christ by proclaiming His desire and power to release people from unwanted same-sex attraction. **(Beliefs)** Portland Fellowship upholds the biblical truth that heterosexuality is God's creative intent for humanity; therefore we view homosexual expression as outside God's will. We recognize homosexual tendencies as being among the many disorders that beset fallen humanity. We consider choosing to act upon these tendencies through assuming a homosexual identity, involvement in a homosexual lifestyle or other homosexual behaviors to be destructive and sinful. **(Process)** Our methodology includes biblical instruction, spiritually-oriented accountability groups, trained lay-counseling, personal testimonies and professional referrals to help the individual discover their true identity in Christ. In addition, we equip churches and individuals to effectively communicate the message of liberation from same-sex attraction. In addition, we provide support to those who have loved ones dealing with same sex attraction. Portland Fellowship is a non-profit interdenominational ministry. We do not support political agendas or candidates. We are not a mental health agency.



Clearly, we have come a long way since our first communication with you. And at the same time the core of our purpose remains rooted in Isaiah 61, a passage that shapes our work and calling.

What do the next twenty years of life and ministry at Portland Fellowship look like...we don't know. Over the next months you will be introduced to the new initiatives and plans that God has been formulating out of the prayers and dreams. This work is not about clever ideas and fashionable trends. Pray for bold visions and creative expressions of hope, redemption, and vitality. God has established this work as a consistent and hopeful voice in a landscape of despair and doubt; and he will continue to do so as we depend on him daily for his strength, wisdom, and grace.

march & april calendar & services

march 4, 11, 18, 25

Open Group

An open invitation to come and learn about Portland Fellowship while feeling supported as people share freely about how God is walking them through this process. 7pm.

april 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Taking Back Ground

Struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions? Call for an application.

march 21 & april 18

Family & Friends Group

Join us for guidance, encouragement and support. Join us the third Friday of each month at 7 pm.

march / april

Living Well

Support and fellowship for men living with HIV/AIDS, call for information.

Upper Room Program

We are now accepting applications for the class of 2008-2009. Contact the office for more details and an application.

Do you have a vacation house or cabin? We are in need of a place for our annual Intern Retreat. This is one of the final events in our program for the men who have worked so hard this year. We need room for about seven people and we are able to bring cots/air mattresses if needed. Our preferred dates are May 8-11. Please call Jim or Steve if you are able to help.

Additional updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com

Speakers, counseling and youth support can be arranged through the office.

Pray with us...

Early spring, every year, Portland Fellowship takes a break from the routine and goes on a retreat. We invite all of our current participants and alumni to a weekend away at the coast. On March 7-9 we will be taking time out to fellowship together, spend long periods of time reading and meditating on the book of James, as well as, worshipping God through song and prayer. We need you to pray for all of us during this weekend. In addition to the time spent soaking in the scriptures, we have a specific time set aside on Saturday night where anyone in attendance is invited to surrender a specific aspect of their lives to God. We have found that as people purpose to walk closer and closer to God that He will reveal new and deeper ways that surrender needs to occur. In the past, representations of relationships, addictions, obsessions and fears have all been left at the foot of the cross with life change implications.

Right now even as you read this newsletter, men and women are preparing to bring something to that service. Please stop right now and pray for them. Pray for boldness, courage, and protection as decisions are made that will bring each person into deeper intimacy with our Savior Jesus Christ. Please also commit to putting these retreat dates on your calendar and lifting us up that weekend. There are many ways to partner with Portland Fellowship and our retreat is a real and significant way to do so right now. Thank you!



Alumni of Taking Back Ground are welcome.

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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 TEAM

Jason Thompson
Executive Director

Drew Berryessa
Ministry Coordinator

Jim Thompson
Pastoral Support

Steve Baliko
Upper Room Assistant

Sue & Suzanne
Women's support

Heidi Perry
Wive's support

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post office box 14841
portland, oregon 97293
telephone 503.235.6364
fax 503.235.3896

e-mail: pf@portlandfellowship.com
portlandfellowship.com