



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Fellowship Partners,

Throughout the year we have many opportunities to see God move powerfully in the lives of men and women in the Taking Back Ground program, but none of them compares with our annual Portland Fellowship retreat. In early March, we headed to the Breakaway Lodge (a Young Life facility on the Oregon coast) and spent the weekend with more than 50 of our participants and leaders. Our time together was spent meditating on the book of I John through worship, prayer, creativity, discussion and a practical opportunity to surrender idols or sins.

From beginning to end, the retreat was a deep breath of rest. Jason Thompson led the Friday night charge to the beach where, on a perfectly clear night, we gathered around a blazing fire singing songs from summer camps long ago. Some brave souls raced barefoot down to the water for a few freezing cold seconds and then back up to the fire. A night of playful, healthy freedom is a gift from God for men and women who have carried such heavy burdens for so many years. I truly believe that the laughter echoing up and down the beach was a beautiful song of praise to the King of Heaven.

Saturday brought several rich times of worship that prepared us for a chance to slow down long enough to pay attention to the words we were reading in the Bible. Too often we cruise by chapter after chapter of Scripture without even being able to recall what we read. The retreat offered an entirely different pace to encounter God as the One who wrote these words to each of us.

The weekend builds to the Surrender service on Saturday night. As we have examined our lives in light of the Word, we are ready for God to help us lower walls of defensiveness and fear in order to give up things that have competed for the worship that belongs to God alone. During this public time of confession and prayer people come up to the mic, as God prompts them, and literally lay down objects and symbols of idolatry while declaring what they want God to do in their lives.

A theme of “drawing a line in the sand” developed as a number of people came forward and surrendered the fantasies that they were holding onto out of mistrust in God’s ability to come through for them. Each of them wanted to be free to take God at His word and trust that He will give them the desires of their hearts. In a profound and funny confession, a man brought up a military figurine and declared that he wanted to surrender a false image of masculinity. He reminded all the men present that the choice to walk through this process was “more masculine than anything GI Joe would ever do.”

Another man held a letter in his hand as he explained the hatred and pain that he had for his father. In an attempt to deal with those raw emotions, he had been prompted by a counselor to



“He has sent me to bind
up the brokenhearted to
proclaim liberty to captives,
and freedom to prisoners.”

ISAIAH 61 : 1

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write out all of his frustrations he had bottled up for years. He made the choice to surrender the letter in a final act of true forgiveness and release, in exchange for the peace and hope found in His Heavenly Father.

Surrender and honesty has a way of being a gift that frees other people to muster up the courage to surrender things that they are holding onto. A young man came forward and talked about how he had always held onto “a way out.” He had kept a means of killing himself close at hand for years and on that Saturday night at the Oregon coast he chose to leave death at the foot of the cross and pick up the Life of Christ. His willingness to be so open and real, led to a significant breakthrough in the lives of some of his fellow small group members. Men who had been unable to shed a single tear for the pain in their own lives were weeping as they joined in prayer for their brother and friend. I dare say there was hardly a dry eye anywhere in the room by that point in the five-hour service.

Sunday morning brought a stunning layer of snow and a deep-seated sense of gratitude for the work of God we witnessed the night before. The best response to such an outpouring of hope is gratitude. Men and women once again streamed to the front for a chance to thank God for His love and strength. What a beautiful reality...men and women offering praise to God for His doing what none of us can do on our own.

Thank you for your continued partnership in this life changing work. It is a privilege to see the mighty hand of God work directly and tenderly in so many lives.



Steve Baliko,
Upper Room Manager

Focus on: reach truth

On March 23, *Family News in Focus* interviewed Jason Thompson about the online program www.reachtruth.com. *Focus on the Family* asked a few questions that many people ask: *Is this a cure to homosexuality? Is there a gay agenda that leads people into homosexuality?*

Jason shared that it is not about a cure, because it is not about a disease. Homosexuality is a relational problem that requires relational solutions. Any known “agenda” from the gay community does not bring about sexual and relational brokenness. Rather, sexual and relational brokenness comes as a byproduct of relational dysfunctions. Ultimately, that is why reachtruth.com exists. It exists to help people grow in healthy relationship with God and with others. And healing brings about a freedom that those struggling are truly seeking.

prayer

...for the returning TBG participants. Ask God to help each person to dig in deeply to this last session’s materials and to continue walking through the joys and frustrations of this healing process.

...for the Lord’s protection to rest on our leaders, staff and supporters. As each person gives of themselves, we ask that God would provide rest, strength, and joy in the service to all who come to PF looking for help.

...for all those who are struggling silently inside our area churches. Ask that God would give them the courage to reach out to ask for help in the pursuit of the Hope of life change.

portland fellowship is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 nondenominational organization. We are exclusively supported through private donations, support services, and offerings. Thank you for your gifts.

events calendar

april 7, 14, 21, 28

Taking Back Ground
Discipleship group for men and women struggling with same-sex attraction. Call office for details. 7 p.m.

april 17

Family and Friends Group
For those who have a loved one involved in homosexuality and want guidance, encouragement, and support.
Third Friday of each month. 7 p.m.

april

Living Well: HIV/AIDS Fellowship
Support, encouragement, and prayer with and for men who are HIV (+).
Call the office for details. 7 p.m.

july 14-18

Exodus International Conference
Annual Conference in Wheaton, IL
Contact www.exodus.to for details

Check website for additional updates
at www.portlandfellowship.com