



PORTLAND  
fellowship

Dear Fellowship Partners,

update October 2009

I'm always curious about that next person who comes through our door for an intake into *Taking Back Ground*. It will usually be the first time I meet most of these new participants. They each take that walk up the creaky 100 year-old staircase to my office to share their very personal story with me, a complete stranger. There's usually a little chit-chat, but then the conversation deepens quickly to the most difficult, shameful, and troubling issues of his or her life. As I listen to what brings these men and women to Portland Fellowship, I can't help but see hope for each of them. Of course I have no idea what ultimately will happen in their lives, but for that moment, I know God is present. God is wooing, calling, and inspiring each of them to trust Him and surrender their lives to Him.

But in the midst of this hope, I also see and hear the hurdles that come in with some of them... "Does God really heal?" "I don't know if I can give up my gay identity." "What I've done is unforgiveable." "I've tried this before; how will this be different?" "What about those that have done this program and are now gay?" "I'm not sure if I can really commit to this – I need to think about it."

I'm thankful that God knows these hurdles and meets people where they are. And yet, as a ministry leader I get concerned for those who will continue to struggle in knowing how to put their hope and trust in the lordship of Jesus. I'm an admirer of the *Taking Back Ground* program: the worship, the teaching, the curriculum, and the in-depth small group time of accountability, confession, and prayer. But I know that it is not the program itself that heals. I also know that we as leaders are fallible. Although the program itself is not the answer, *Taking Back Ground* has proven itself a vessel for God to do His amazing, unmatched work. It is, and always has been, about Him.

If people come with a desire simply to fix their lives, or to stand strong for a cause, or to find relief from trials and temptations, I believe they may miss the point and miss the joy. I realize it's generally not good for ministries to talk about failures in their newsletters and updates. It's more acceptable to talk about the successes and the victories, and the lives changed (of which there are many). Yet I'm compelled to share some of the heartache that comes with ministry on these front lines. From time to time we hear of those who have walked through this process with anticipation of freedom and then a few years later hear that they have chosen to walk away from their former convictions. This may reflect that the person's theology has changed, or they now identify as a gay man or woman.

I'll be honest. We are grieved and are sometimes confused as to how these convictions are so greatly altered. After some reflection, the only commonality that we have identified is this: those who find lasting victory, are people who make Christ first in this process. Those who put Christ first do not make their healing first; they do not make the cause first; and they do not make their happiness or their relief first. Those finding lasting hope are people who make Christ Lord over their sexuality, Lord over their relationships, and Lord over their personal desires. They put Christ first.

I'm hopeful for this new group of men and women and those continuing in Year Two of the program- that they will find the healing they seek; yet, my greater hope and prayer is that they (and I)



"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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will put our hope and trust in the Giver of life, the Redeemer of our sexuality, and the repairer of our relationships. To Him belong all glory, honor and praise.

So, when I hear the creaking of the stairs and a new relationship is about to be formed, I pause to wonder about this person's journey I ask myself, "What will his or her life be like at the end of this program and in the years to come?" For more than 20 years I have seen countless men and women find profound and lasting victory in and through Christ. For this reason, my heart continues to be filled with hope and anticipation for each and every one of them. Please be in prayer for the *Taking Back Ground* Year One and returning Year Two participants, as well as for their leaders. Pray that each of us will make Christ first in all we do.

Serving Him,



Jason Thompson  
Executive Director

p.s. We want to share with you a new way to connect with Portland Fellowship. You currently have a confidential profile on our website. Please visit the site and choose "Sign In". Please note: **You don't need to register for a new account. You already have one!** Simply follow the instructions to get/recover your username and your password.

*If your email address is not in our system, you will be informed and will need to email or call us to update your record.*

Your profile will let you update your information, see your giving history, sign up for programs, and choose newsletter options. Also, if you would, please upload a picture of yourself so we can have a visual of you! Do all this at:

[www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)

### supporting your ministry

Would you consider making a pledge to the ongoing work of Portland Fellowship? As mentioned above, we now have a secure online option to support this work. Your gift can be set up and managed by yourself. Please consider logging in on our homepage and check out your options. We also have a short survey for you in getting to know you better. "Sign In" on our site: [www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)

### sign up to pray!

We have a need for your prayers. Each week we take prayer needs from our *Taking Back Ground* participants and share them (in an anonymous way) with people who are willing to pray. If you have had a friendship with Portland Fellowship for over a year and love to pray, please Sign in to your profile and sign up to receive weekly emails from the office.

### prayer

...for wisdom, protection, and blessing for our leadership team who give of themselves and their time to make *Taking Back Ground* work so well.

...for all those going through the [www.reachtruth.com](http://www.reachtruth.com) program. Many more are signing up weekly. Pray it will be a powerful experience for each of them.

...for courage and strength for all the men and women starting the *Taking Back Ground* program this fall.

...for continued growth of the financial base of support that funds all of the services and our staffing needs.

...for this year's interns. Pray for safety and growth for Archie, Brian, Tim, and Josh.

...for those who have left Portland Fellowship. Pray for those who continue to trust God and for those who have lost their way over the years.

**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

#### october 4th

*Rolling Hills Community Church*  
Jason will be representing Portland Fellowship at the RHCC Missions Fair. Rolling Hills is a faithful supporter of PF.

#### october 17

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

#### tuesday nights

*Taking Back Ground*  
Discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions 7-10 pm

#### thursday afternoons

*Upper Room Community*  
Intensive training for our Upper Room Community members.

Check website for additional updates at [www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)