



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Sy Rogers: A Redemption Story

Portland Fellowship is honored to be hosting Sy Rogers, a gifted international communicator, award-winning talk show host, recording artist and pastor for our annual seminar this month. Sy has served for over two decades in ministry as a pastoral care specialist regarding sexuality and related concerns. His seminars and speaking events are conducted trans-denominationally on six continents for a wide variety of audiences including leadership conferences, counseling training, youth festivals, and men's events such as Promise Keepers. This month's newsletter presents a portrait of Sy that was adapted from his testimony as shared on his video "One of the Boys".

People think that talking about sexual themes in a church context may not seem comfortable, and some of us come from church cultures where we just don't talk about this stuff. I always say that does not make you holier, it doesn't make you healthier, and it doesn't enable you to become more relevant in a world that is talking about sexuality everyday, but not from a redemptive point of view, but from a fallen point of view.

Christians are often ashamed to admit what everyone knows: Christianity does not make us immune to our sexual passions. Everything doesn't get 'fixed' just because we come into a relationship with God. Christians are often surprised and disillusioned because they still have sexual struggles. We haven't had realistic expectations, or an informed understanding of 'why' we struggle, much less 'what' to do about it. Pastors and Bible college graduates lament the fact that they may have a head full of theology, but that is not the same as knowing how to actually help someone, or effectively manage their own sexuality. If you have been born again for more than 15 minutes, you know that while the blood of Jesus washes away guilt and sin, it doesn't wash away memory, history, humanity and its attendant vulnerabilities. And yet we serve a God who does have redemptive solutions.

The best lessons I have learned in my life come from my own life journey, not just as a pastoral care giver working cross culturally, but as a man who has to practice everything that I preach and teach others. The first half of my life was an emotional concentration camp. My alcoholic mother was killed in a car wreck when I was four. Prior to that, I was sexually molested by a family "friend". After my mom's death, I was separated from my father for a year. I lived in an emotional vacuum. My identity and security as a male was left unaffirmed and unnourished. Later in school, I was routinely ridiculed, rejected, and physically abused due to my effeminate mannerisms. Even though I tried to "conform to the norm," I was continually labeled a homosexual and a failure as a man. It's no wonder I had problems!



Sy Rogers has been in sexual redemption ministry for over two decades, speaking on three to six continents every year.

As a teenager, I had not yet identified myself as a homosexual. Yet I was certainly aware of my attractions to the same sex and I felt fear and shame. A few years later after eventually involving myself in the gay scene, I felt such a sense of relief. I felt accepted and understood. At last, I had a place to belong. It was great for a while. Soon I was living in the fast lane, and always surrounding myself with others who would reaffirm and reinforce the gay life.

When living in Hawaii, my two gay roommates became husband and husband in a gay wedding in a pro-gay church. However, years later they would be the first to tell me that overcoming homosexuality was possible – they had just began the effort themselves. They said God was helping them and that they were praying for me. I laughed in contempt, thinking they were some kind of traitors. My attitude was: I am born gay, can't change, I shouldn't need to, gay is good and they're crazy because everyone knows once gay always gay. That was the mantra I had drilled in to my head and heart.

My own journey out of the gay life first began with my attempt at securing male love by becoming a woman through a sex change. Though I did not get around to ever having the surgery, I was on hormone therapy and lived as a woman for about a year and a half. Yet, even then I realized that surgery couldn't really solve my problems and wouldn't secure love for me. Realizing that I hadn't managed my life very well on my own, I finally began earnestly seeking God. It was my re-ignited faith in God that led me to a new path I once thought impossible for me. It wasn't that I was trying to stop being gay. I didn't know how – or if it was even possible. I was, however, willing to stop living my life on my terms. Instead, I yielded to God on His terms. That was at the end of 1979.

At that time, my gay friends thought I was crazy. They said I would be back in the bars in a week, a month, a year. I never went back. But it wasn't easy. I did have a lot of struggles in the beginning, but like most worthwhile efforts, the perseverance paid off. Today I very much enjoy the opportunity to live beyond my past problems. I've enjoyed being a husband since 1982 and a father of a lovely daughter. This isn't proof that I'm not gay, but it is evidence of a life I never thought possible. As you grow, things change – what

once was undesirable and unattainable became both desirable and attainable for me.

My recovery process took time, work, and the encouragement and accountability of my supportive friends. More importantly, my recovery depended on my willingness to cooperate with God. Over the years and around the globe, everyone that I personally know – or know of – that has overcome homosexuality has been enabled to do so as a direct consequence of a life yielded to God and committed to the lordship of Christ. I always like to say, God takes all that manure and turns it into fertilizer. I joke, but I had no choice about the setup in my life, and I didn't understand how I reacted to it. I am very glad that the Lord is able to take all of that and somehow in the alchemy of God's redemption, turns it into something that helps other people, that encourages other



Sy speaking at Mega-Church 'City Harvest Church' in Singapore

people, indeed that there is hope, there is encouragement beyond brokenness and pain. We are made to mend, we are made to grow, we are made to go on, and you can. I am so thankful I yielded to God. The best decision I ever made in my life was that I just stopped resisting Him.

I often share in my story, Isaiah chapter 1:18-20, (paraphrased) "Come now says the Lord, let's talk this thing through, let's reason it out. If you'll just stop resisting Me, you'll have My best, but if

you insist on your own path, you are going to destroy yourself. You choose. I want to bless you, I want better for you than this. "You know, I love that God takes responsibility for the stuff that happens in our life. He did allow all these bad things to happen to me, but now that I am yielded to God, He now has permission to take the bad and work it into something good. It's the classic story of God, and I'm just thankful that it's not just something that you can hear about or read about, but that I have experienced it, and anyone can.

I've had people say to me, 'You're the LAST person I'd ever pick as a representative of sexual redemption!' I can only agree and say, I know—and that's probably exactly why God would deliberately pick someone like me...after all, it is God who first originated the idea of not judging a book by it's cover...of picking 'the reject', 'the weak one', the 'least likely to succeed'. Though I'll never live my life as if I had not been a homosexual, I am able to live BEYOND that now.

keeping clean in your dirty world : seminar event

Why do we struggle with sexual issues? If I have fallen into sin, can I regain purity? What can I do to help those in my life who struggle with sexual issues? Is there really hope that I can live beyond my brokenness? The Body of Christ has got to face some facts: The rate of divorce is virtually identical in the church as it was in the world, roughly thirty-nine percent. The statistics reveal sexual misconduct with leaders and laymen alike. According to an article in Christianity Today, fifty-one percent of pastors say pornography is serious a temptation. Thirty-seven percent say it is a current struggle, and forty-seven percent of Christians admit that pornography is a major problem in their homes. These are all indications of sexual brokenness within the Body of Christ.

Each year, Portland Fellowship offers an educational seminar to the community. This year, we have teamed up with Pure Life Alliance, another local ministry committed to offering hope, support and instruction in the area of sexual brokenness, and invited international speaker and teacher Sy Rogers to offer his insight in the area of sexual redemption. This seminar will not be focused on the issue of homosexuality, although that is part of Sy's story, but rather will be applicable for everyone. Please consider attending the seminar. In addition we want to encourage you to share the enclosed brochure with your pastor or church body and by doing so partner with us in promoting this seminar. Please join us as we seek together to tackle this tough, relevant and challenging subject.

For more information or to register for the seminar, **please visit www.portlandfellowship.com**



a funny thing happened on the way to september *by Steve Baliko*

Someone once said that the quickest way to get God to laugh is to hand Him your plans for your life and ask Him to sign off on them. Most often God responds by giving us a blank piece of paper titled "Trust me" and asks us to sign at the bottom without first knowing the details of what he might write down on that crisp white sheet. This life of faith involves a trust that God knows what is best for us and that He loves us passionately.

I was gearing up to manage the Upper Room Program this fall, when God brought an opportunity across my path that I could not ignore. I was invited to apply for a position as a mental health counselor within the Multnomah County Corrections system. There are too many God finger prints on how this all came about for this brief paragraph but suffice it to say that after participating in the application process I was offered the job and I accepted.

It is bitter-sweet to share this with so rich a community. I have cherished my time at Portland Fellowship and I have been blessed to serve in the roles that I have over the past five years...first as an Intern and then as member of the staff. More than that, I have learned so much and grown in ways that are a direct result of God's power presence in this place. Jason, Drew, and Jim have all been instrumental in significantly encouraging me to be a man of God that I could not be without them. And countless participants have been used of God to speak a timely word into my life, words of challenge, blessing, hope and life.

My intention is to continue serving at PF. I will be involved with the prayer team and will occasionally teach a *Taking Back Ground* lesson as needed. Darla and Annie and I have had a dizzying summer of changes and we are looking forward to an autumn of settling into a new rhythm of life. My prayers will always include PF. God established this work and He has so much richness ahead for every person who shares a part in this work. Be blessed brothers and sisters!



Steve came to PF as an intern in 2004, and later joined the staff. He has been a great blessing to everyone at PF.

september / october calendar & services

september 8, 15, 22, 29 leadership training

Small group training for the leaders of the *Taking Back Ground* 2009-10 program. 7 p.m.

sept 3, 10, 17, 24, october 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 upper room program

These first two months of training will include: orientation, personality testing, and small group dynamics.

september 18 & october 16 family & friends group

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

september 25-26 keeping clean in a dirty world - sy rogers seminar event

Portland Fellowship and Pure Life Alliance are teaming up to sponsor a Sy Rogers seminar this fall. We are excited to bring Sy's message of the healing of sexual and relational brokenness to an ever-expanding audience. Plan to join us at Village Baptist Church in Beaverton. Register online www.portlandfellowship.com

october 4 rolling hills community church - open house

Jason will be representing PF at a missions open house. Thank you RHCC for your faithful support!

Additional updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com
Speakers, counseling and youth support: can be arranged through the office.

calling all intercessors

Have you ever read our newsletter and wondered if there was a way that you could help minister to the people served by Portland Fellowship? It almost goes without saying that there are two things that PF will always need your help with: Your financial gifts, and your **prayer intercession!!**

If you love to pray and would like to be part of the team that receives prayer request from the ministry weekly by email, praying for our staff, interns, participants, and needs, then email drew@portlandfellowship.com for more information.

retirement in action

As many of you know, Jim Thompson retired last year from five and half years of service at Portland Fellowship. But, as it turns out, retirement is not simply sitting around woodworking and reading books to the grandkids. Retirement can be an amazing time to continue blessing others with ones years of wisdom and experiences.

With this in mind, Jim has agreed to continue mentoring and teaching the interns of Portland Fellowship. He is still in retirement, but will join us a few hours a week to offer some of the best of what he has received over the years. As limited as it is, we look forward to his involvement with the ongoing work of Portland Fellowship and the lives of the interns.

prayer

...for our staff and ministry team as they prepare to minister to those in need through the *Taking Back Ground* program this fall.

...for all our participants, new and returning, who are seeking to either begin, or continue to work through their struggles and make Christ Lord of their relationships and sexuality.

...for the Upper Room participants that God has brought together this fall. Pray for unity of heart, a singleness of mind and a willingness to allow God to have his way with each of them.

...for continued support and provision of the ministries of Portland Fellowship. That we would see an increase in overall giving and a continued trust in God's ability to sustain the work that we are entrusting to Him.



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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