



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Maybe I'm Wrong. by Tim Werth

We're all familiar with the concept that beliefs and attitudes are shaped in childhood. This is a problem when the things we come to believe are false, unhealthy, destructive, and contrary to God's Word. For me, what that looks like is needing to come to consider that maybe what seems so familiar to me is wrong.

I grew up in Roseburg, Oregon to a family of four: both parents, and an older sister. We went to church on Sundays, and my sister and I went to a private Christian school. As far as I can remember, life was pretty normal for us when I was a kid. Our parents were involved and I remember spending plenty of time with my dad, at least enough for me to feel secure.

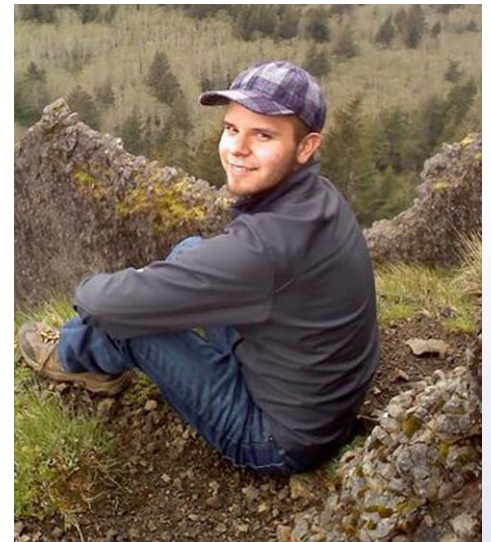
In the first couple years of school, I started to think that maybe there was something a little different about me; something that made me not quite like the other boys. It wasn't prominent at this point, but I can recall this idea being planted. I had some buddies and I think I felt accepted by them. However, after playing baseball in Little League for two years, I never hit a single ball. Too afraid that I would miss if I swung, I instead hesitated. It froze me up. I started to wonder why I didn't feel as aggressive as other boys, and why they seemed to take more risks than me.

Before entering the 4th grade, my family moved to the Salem, Oregon area. At home, brokenness was beginning to show. My sister was entering her teenage years and we started to grow distant as she understandably found other interests. I connected well with my mom, but my dad seemed to become more disconnected, uninterested in the family and we were occasionally the object of his anger.

To make things harder, my commendable efforts to make friends at school and church didn't lead anywhere. I would sometimes get to spend time with some of them but they all either moved or had friends they liked better. At recess, I would usually just play some game by myself. I ended up more surrounded by girls because of our family's friends. I got along with some of them, but it still wasn't affirming my incomplete male identity.

Part-way through the 6th grade, a new family who just moved nearby joined our school. One of the boys was in my class, and I eagerly befriended him. We lived close, so I would usually go over to his house, and we soon became best friends. I began to wish I was part of his family; he had brothers, and his family seemed to be happier than mine. After a year, however, he began to spend most of his time at school with girls, of whom I had no interest. I felt betrayed, and wondered why he seemed to like them more than me. A great loneliness began to settle in. I was sure that I was somehow inferior to the boys in my class, since they fit in with each other and seemed to have some secret understanding of what to do in a basketball or flag football game, while I always felt confused and timid when I worked up the nerve to try.

About this time, I began to notice my eyes being drawn to other guys. The shallow yet mesmerizing world of fantasy opened up, and I would scour the internet searching for anything that would display what I longed for. I didn't know hardly anything about sex; about how it works, about its benefits as well as its dangers. All I knew was that the things I saw and imagined seemed to be everything I desired: unashamed closeness, companionship, and physical contact with men that you didn't have to be good at sports to get.



Tim (pictured here at Saddle Mt.) was an intern at PF for the 2009-2010 program year.

When it was about time to move into high school, my friend asked if I would switch to a particular school if he did. Of course, I said yes. He was my only friend and I would do whatever I thought I could do to keep it. Once high school began, however, we hardly associated with each other at all. Now I can see that we are just very different people, but at the time I didn't see it that way. I had given up. I lost my only friend, but I figured that's just the way things go.

I entered high school with an ever-increasing despair. This being a new school, everyone already had their cliques and I hid behind a shy and stony exterior. I approached life with no confidence in myself, not only socially, but in my schoolwork as well. My grades dropped because I thought I was stupid and helpless. Perpetuating this, my sexual struggle became frightening. It was at full force now. I no viewed it as a handy and fascinating way to feel good, but

something that made me feel weird and different. Even more, it was a juggernaut that was keeping me in bondage. I couldn't seem to say no to a temptation.

In all of this, I clung to God. I yearned for His help and comfort; for His deliverance from temptations. I see now how crucial this was. In the driest and most depressing time of my life, I knew I needed Him. I knew nothing else would satisfy.

During my sophomore year I decided to reach out more aggressively. I discovered that some of my classmates went to the youth group of a small church. A new youth pastor, Andrew, arrived during this time. He soon became a great influence in my life, surprising me by actually paying attention to me and caring about me. By this point I was so broken that a good relationship like this didn't just pull me out of my sorrow, but it was important. I had already reached a conclusion that I'm not worthwhile, and this got me wondering if maybe I am.

Junior year, my parents found out about my same-sex attraction and my dad sat down to talk with me about it. I don't really remember much of the conversation, except that it was very emotional and he mentioned a ministry called Portland Fellowship that could offer help. He and my mom had gone to meet with a staff member for support, and he encouraged me to consider this as well. While I was interested, and meeting someone who could relate to me sounded liberating, I ultimately was too afraid to, and convinced myself that I could take care of this problem on my own.

That summer, our youth group went on a trip to Colorado Springs. The weight of my secret and the shame that came

with it was tearing me apart. After a powerful worship set one night, I knew, because of the conviction God had put on my, that I had to find disclosure. I found Andrew and said I needed to talk with him. We had set up our camp on a hill overlooking the city, and after finding a log to sit on and watch to blinking street lights below, I opened up to someone else for the first time. And when he listened to me and prayed for me, I knew I was loved. However, as great as that moment may have been, it still didn't "fix" me. Our relationship continued and grew for another year or so. He soon moved away and the youth group dissipated.

After high school, I continued this pattern: seeking new friends in order to gain acceptance, but all the while frozen up with fear that at any moment I would be rejected. This living in constant fear takes its toll, and in a particular season of frustration I remembered

the time my dad told me about Portland Fellowship. I spent several entire days online researching testimonies on others who have had similar struggles. A point came when I knew beyond denial that God was calling me to contact this ministry. After anxiously typing out my e-mail, I waited for a reply that would inform me of the 3 easy, dummy-free steps that would rid me of all insecurity. Unfortunately, that information was not included in the response; instead I was invited to meet with a staff member. I began meeting for personal mentoring, then later the Taking Back Ground program, and now the Upper Room program.

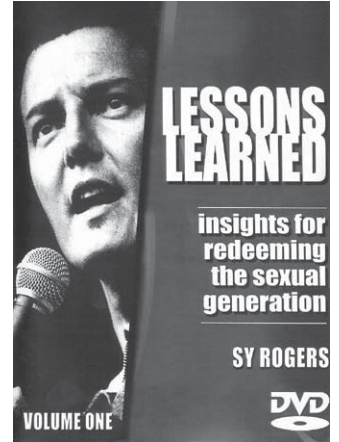
It's impossible to fully explain in just a handful of words the deep healing that's taken place over these two and a half years. Perhaps it can best be summed up in stating that I can now begin to consider that the things I've come to believe from the past might be wrong. That maybe there is love that is gracious, even unconditional. That maybe I can learn to accept myself as a man. That maybe making mistakes won't always lead to rejection. And even if at some point it does, that it won't harm me to the point of death. I've even frozen up a few times in the process of writing this article, sure that someone will be disgusted with me after reading a poorly written sentence. What matters is that I am working beyond that, and trusting that the work God has done in me is not in vain. I do not claim to be complete- quite the opposite. I instead state that I will never be complete in this life, only bound to the One who is holding me near, that His truth may in my life be proven as right.



*Greg, Tim, Jason, Archie & Brian
enjoying a hike on Beacon Rock.*

join us for our summer series

Taking Back Ground is now officially over. The Upper Room Community for 2009-2010 has also come to a close. And although we celebrate the work that God has done over these previous months, the summer does represent a lot of change and transition for many of our participants and those involved with PF. One of this year's former interns said that his Upper Room Community alarm went off and then he realized that there were no more meetings... sad day for him. We also know that for some the program may stop but the struggle doesn't. That is why Portland Fellowship is offering people the opportunity to come to PF and stay connected during the summer. If you are needing some encouragement during the summer months, need a place to continue to process and grow or are just wanting another PF dose then we definitely want to invite you to Sy Rogers, "Lesson's Learned: Insights for Redeeming the Sexual Generation" DVD series. Our time together will include a DVD teaching followed by time of small groups for processing and working through the material together. For those of you who are not familiar with Sy Rogers, Sy is an international communicator whose focus is on sexual redemption and wholeness. He is regarded as a pastoral care specialist regarding biblical sexuality and has quite a testimony of this transformation in this area himself. Along with being a renowned advocate for practical biblical truth and insights, Sy is also a long standing friend of PF and we are more than excited to offer his material to everyone.



Some of the topics that we will cover will be on the power of forgiveness and community, renewing the mind, sexual and relational obstacles, sexuality in context to culture, etc. This event will be open to everyone who is interested at no cost but gifts or donations are greatly appreciated. Please consider joining us as we will definitely have some good teaching and discussion. RSVP is not required but is appreciated. If you plan on coming or if you need more information, please email Cynthia cynthia@portlandfellowship.com or call the office 503.235.6364.

Starts: **July 6th from 7-8:45pm** (and we will meet every Tuesday until August)

taking back ground alumni group begins

Taking Back Ground (TBG) has proved to be a life-changing program for hundreds of men and women over the years. Those who have completed the program are sent off with a certificate of completion and blessings for what lies ahead. Yet, a familiar question has been asked over the years, "What type of ongoing support is available for those who complete the Taking Back Ground program?"

memo:

alumni group
meeting every
second thursday
of the month at
7pm.

Up until now, we have emphasized the last section of the program for preparing participants to integrate into the body of Christ. We encourage graduates to engage more fully in outside accountability, prayer, and Bible study groups, with the intention of developing deeper, ongoing, supportive relationships.

Yet, with their best intentions and efforts to connect more deeply, it still can be difficult to find and nurture relationships that understand the unique struggles men and women face with same-sex attractions. Alumni of TBG know that Portland Fellowship offers an atmosphere that allows them freedom to talk openly and honestly about their life challenges. With this in mind, we started an Alumni Group for all participants that have completed the program and for those who attended Portland Fellowship prior to the creation of TBG program.

We had a great first meeting in June. We shared our experiences while in the program and our experiences since leaving. The common theme that was expressed was the need to learn how to develop and sustain deeper friendships with the same gender. Some share of their disclosure with friends, only to never really talk about it again and others continue to desire Godly intimacy without fear of rejection or embarrassment. We hope to offer ongoing dialogue on these issues as well as others as we tackle - life beyond *Taking Back Ground*.

If you have completed the program, please consider joining us each month or every now and then. We will meet at the Fellowship House the **2nd Thursday of each month**. Please sign up for our monthly communication on the website. Visit www.portlandfellowship.com and click "log in". If you don't know your username, please call or email us. We look forward to seeing you there.

july calendar & services

july- august

Tuesday nights: 7pm

Sy Rogers DVD Series

Location: Fellowship House

Cost: Free (donations are greatly appreciated)

Join us as we learn about sexual and relational wholeness through this enriching series.

july 8 the alumni group

Graduates of Taking Back

Ground are invited to receive ongoing support and encouragement. Meeting takes place at the Fellowship House at 7pm.

july 9 the hope group

Join us for our family and friends program a time of prayer, encouragement, support, and a great meal. The topic of our next meeting is **Guilt & Shame**. Special summer meeting times will be the *second* Friday of July & August at 7 pm.

online ministry support

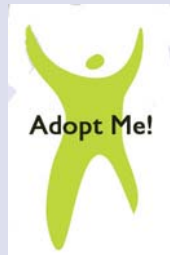
Many are unable to attend a local ministry program such as Portland Fellowship's Taking Back Ground program. Because of this, we have created an online program for anyone with internet access. If you are looking for an in depth program to walk through, please consider signing up for the online series www.reachtruth.com. All the information can be found on the "Travel Plan" page.

additional updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com

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

adopt an intern



As many of you may know by reading our newsletters over the last 7 years, Portland Fellowship runs a program called The Upper Room. The Upper Room is a nine month, live in discipleship / leadership development program where individuals from around the area, and literally around the world, commit to live and serve here at Portland Fellowship. Every

year it is amazing to see the way the Lord meets each of these individuals and draws them into deeper maturity in Christ, and a greater sense of God's will for their lives.

That being said, the nine months that the interns spend here at Portland Fellowship also proves to be a very challenging year, stretching each of these men and women incredibly. We often tell interns at the beginning of the program that they can expect the coming year to be the best and hardest of their lives. This has proved true time and time again. This next program year, we have five men beginning this journey, and each is going to have a different set of challenges to contend with. Certainly, God has a point and a purpose for the trials and challenges that he will allow each of these men to contend with this year, however, not every challenge is productive.

In Matthew 13, Jesus is sharing the parable of the sower, describing how different people respond to the word of God. In this parable, one of the scenarios Jesus describes is the seed that falls among the thorns, and the life is choked out. Jesus describes these thorns as "the worries of this world." For many on this journey through the Upper Room Program, it is a challenge to not let "the worries of the world" to hinder their growth. Some of these "thorns" include financial difficulty, loneliness, and discouragement.

Would you consider helping to ensure the experience of our interns this next year will be protected from unnecessary "thorns"? For the first time, we are offering you the opportunity to "Adopt an Intern". Adopting an intern will give you an opportunity to provide a little extra support, encouragement, and prayer coverage for one of these men who are committing the next 9 months of their lives to serve and be transformed by Jesus this next year. **If you are interested in learning more about adopting an intern, contact drew@portlandfellowship.com.**

Thank you for your continued prayers and support!



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 Portland Fellowship, a ministry proclaiming freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ

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