



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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In Disguise by Rebecca

"You've always been the black-sheep of this family!" raged my mother. "You are selfish and ungrateful." "The Bible says to honor your father and mother. You don't honor me and you're simply selfish!" These, and many more charges, were bitterly pronounced on me throughout my childhood. Emotionally disturbed, my mother used shaming through her words as well as through Bible verses, and even threats of suicide to make me and my siblings do what she wanted us to do. To this day, I still hear her shaming voice in my mind as I read God's Word.

I grew up in a Christian home, with an intact family. But the ravages of my mothers' emotionally deprived upbringing, chronic insomnia, and depression, gave her few tools for parenting. She didn't believe in taking tranquilizers for any consistent length of time, leaving me never knowing what I would be dealing with each day. Dad had Petit Mal Epilepsy which made things even more difficult. Though my parents tried to avoid medication, his seizures were too disruptive to living a productive life. By the time I was six or seven, the doctors had him on medicines that kept him drowsy and extremely passive. My mother felt victimized by this and let him and the rest of us know more times than I care to remember. From early on, I remember Mom calling Dad weak and incapable of normal participation as the man of the house. I had nobody that I could respect and look up to. I knew Mom was a mess, I couldn't count on my father, and there was no one else that stepped into my life to guide me as I grew up.

In public, my mother was a wall-flower and my father extremely gregarious. I was frustrated with them at home and embarrassed by them in public. I remember one night, crying out to God, at the age of nine, "God, please don't let me be like my parents." About the same time, I choose to keep my distance from my parents I would not even want to sit with them in church. Every chance I had, I would spend nights at friends' houses. As a teenager, I spent hours at a ministry coffeehouse. Almost anywhere but home was fine with me.

Though I believed the Bible and the salvation message to be true, I really didn't believe I was or could be a good person. I had been told too many times how selfish, disobedient, overwhelming, and unworthy of love I was. I desperately wanted to be loved. I kept trying to get love from my mother by being a good Christian person. Yet it was never enough. I was about 12 years old when she made that "black-sheep" statement. Those words came after I made a deliberate effort to be good and to change anything that would meet her unrealistic expectations. The internal words of shame didn't necessarily come to mind after some terrible sin I committed. Rather, at times, when I simply didn't want to pursue the singing and music my mom wanted for me. My interests were more in the outdoors, nature, and sports. Though I really wanted to try sports, I never dared. My mother's disdain, my own fear of failure, and asthma kept me from making an attempt.

Though I had idealized some of the church women in my life, it wasn't until about twenty-two years old that I acknowledged, to myself, that I was actually sexually attracted to women. The attraction hit when a girl I



had just met began asking me about my upbringing. She seemed so interested and caring and I soaked it up. She understood me like no one ever had. We met just briefly before she moved away, but we kept in contact via mail for several years. I never told her I was attracted to her. Because I was a firm believer in Christ, I was at odds with this same-sex attraction. Eventually my attraction to her faded and I felt relieved. Maybe this was just a random, one-time thing.

My friend and several others in my life helped me see the wrong in my mother's shaming words. However, nineteen years of emotional abuse required time to change my own belief of worthlessness. One night, when I was very discouraged with myself, the Lord spoke to me through his Word. I opened my Bible and looked down at Psalm 27:10 "Though your father and mother have rejected you, I have loved you." This verse was the living water that cracked open the window of hope for my hurting soul.

Over the years, I grew to understand God's love for me in deeper and greater ways...yet the struggle with attraction to women remained. I found myself attracted to very nurturing women. I continued to 'deal with it', pushing those thoughts away as soon as they entered my head. For years, this seemed to be the solution. There were long stretches of time, months, and even years, where not one thought would bother me. I went to college, got married, had children and merely pushed any intrusive thoughts aside with a worship song, a prayer, or a verse.

My marriage had always been difficult due to baggage from both of our families of origin. Suddenly, I found myself forty-something and struggling even more with same-sex attractions. I was getting desperate to figure this out. What was wrong with me? I had a great relationship with God, many close friends, amazing years involved in different ministries, beautiful and amazing children; the struggle simply didn't make sense. I heard about Portland Fellowship (PF) soon after we moved to Portland. I was afraid of anyone finding out about my secret attractions, so I never dared to look into what they might have to offer. I had shared my secret with only one friend and a counselor. I felt I could not tell my husband of these attractions because I believed there would be 'fall-out' and I did not want my children's lives disturbed.

Years later, as I found myself struggling more than ever, I had some ministry friends who were personally involved in the *Taking Back Ground* program at PF. I watched closely the inner workings of this program. I learned how powerful the workbook and teachings were. I saw the freedom for those involved. The freedom of being fully known by others. I prayed desperately

about this. I knew, under my circumstances, if I became a participant, my spouse would have to be told of my attractions to women. I did not plan to open this 'can of worms' with him until the kids were grown up and out of the nest, if ever! I knew the affect this would have on my marriage and family. I also knew that disclosing my struggles could also have far reaching effects for the ministries I was involved in.

One night, after weeks of talking with a confidant, I decided to lay a fleece before God. I told Him that if He wanted me to participate in this program, to let me hear "now is the time" verbally spoken by someone, within the next few days. The following day, I went to pray with my confidant. I listened

carefully to every word she prayed, scared that I would hear that phrase. It didn't happen, so I breathed a sigh of relief and went home to bed. The next day, I randomly decided to visit a friend's church for the first time. The title of the sermon was, "Now is the Time." The pastor must have said that phrase twenty times that morning. Yes. I was freaking out! As each 'What if...?' popped into

my head, God answered through the words of that sermon. One week later and with a counselor present, I told my husband about my struggle. I then went to the leaders at PF and shared with them my struggles and the need I had to be involved. They lovingly and graciously heard my story and then invited me into the process as a participant in the *Taking Back Ground* program.

The journey has not been easy at all. Telling my husband became the tipping point for many years of unresolved issues. Several friends learned of my struggle as well and my relationships changed as a result. Yet I would not go back. At PF, I truly began to "take back ground" lost to shame and condemnation. I had found a safe place to worship, without a mask. I learned about my struggle, and participated in a small group of other women who shared the same beliefs and hopes as I had for something to fill the holes left behind by humiliation. I never realized how hiding from myself and others had imprisoned me.

Through Portland Fellowship, I found a counselor who specializes in working with women like me. Many hidden areas of wounds have finally been revealed and are now in the healing process. Shame is being defeated with the belief that I am created by the design of a loving Heavenly Father. For the first time, by both God and others, I can be understood and supported to the very core of my soul. Gaping holes are becoming whole, giving me the strength and motivation to live a holy life. There is no longer a need for a disguise.



meet the 2010-2011 upper room program interns!

Each year, Portland Fellowship invites a number of men and women to participate in our *Upper Room Program*. These interns work alongside staff and volunteer leaders, learning to do ministry with the sexually broken and continuing to grow through their own discipleship process. Each week, they will spend six hours in classroom instruction, will co-lead *Taking Back Ground* groups with our volunteer leaders, engage in other ministry tasks, and receive weekly mentoring. This is the ninth year of the *Upper Room Program*, and this year we have six men who will be walking this journey with us. Here is a brief introduction of each of these men:



Phil M. – A native of the Portland area, Phil completed the *Taking Back Ground* program this last spring. Phil is one of two artists in the community this year. With his empathic personality and sincere walk with Christ, he brings a lot to offer his fellow interns as well as the participants at PF. It is a thrill to be able to walk alongside Phil as he continues to pursue Christ in this community.



Clif C. – Clif comes to P.F. from Anchorage, Alaska. He is the second of the two artists in the program this year. Clif spent several years working through his same-sex struggle through personal counseling and accountability groups. Clif is looking forward to being in the Upper Room community, both as an opportunity to serve, but also as a place to grow. He is a wonderful addition to the group.



Venicius S. – Venicius, “Vinny”, comes to the *Upper Room Program* from Brazil. Although he is making the international move specifically to be a part of our program, this will not be Vinny’s first move to the US. Vinny spent time at Love In Action, another Exodus ministry in Tennessee. Vinny is looking forward to continuing his healing process in a community of men on the same journey.



Aaron R. – Aaron comes to us from the Salem area. He completed the *Taking Back Ground* program this last spring, alongside fellow intern Phil. Aaron brings a number of skills to the Upper Room community. He is incredibly perceptive as well as a gifted communicator. It will be amazing to watch as God uses Aaron this year in the lives of those at PF.



Seth N. – Seth, originally from Salem, has been a familiar face around PF for many years. Seth completed *Taking Back Ground* years ago, and his testimony is featured on PF’s resource, “The Map”. Seth is looking forward to a challenging year where God will be free to shape and refine him. We are excited to have Seth as a part of this year’s program.



Tim W. – Tim, also from the Salem area, was an Upper Room Intern last year and is joining us again to assist in the administration of the program. Tim brings many gifts to PF, including his talented musical abilities to help lead worship for *Taking Back Ground*. It is exciting to have him sticking around for another year.

adopt an intern

Would you consider helping to ensure that the experience of our interns this next year will be protected from unnecessary complications and distractions? 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 financial 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.***

reminder: taking back ground starting in october

Friends, as we draw near to the beginning of *Taking Back Ground* this year, we, as staff, ask that you would be in prayer for those who are either too afraid to call or email our offices in search of help. We ask that you would pray for those that have circled the block but have never come into the office, for those who have made appointments but have not kept them, and for those who are yet to discover that Portland Fellowship even exists. We ask that you would pray for those who will walk through these doors, daring to hope for a life free from this bondage. We covet your prayers. Your prayers are powerful. Your prayers are essential.

september - october calendar & services

september 7, 14, 21, 28

leadership training

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

sept 9

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.

sept 17

the hope group

Join us for our family and friends program for a time of prayer, encouragement, support, and a great meal. The topic of our next meeting is **Forgiveness**. 7 pm.

sept 17-18

Evergreen International

Jason Thompson will be speaking at this conference. Evergreen is the Church of Latter Day Saints counterpart to the Evangelical Exodus ministries.

oct 5, 12, 19, 26

taking back ground

Discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions

online ministry support

We have created an online program for anyone with internet access and unable to make it to a local ministry. If you are looking for an in depth program to walk through, please consider signing up for the online series **reachtruth.com**.

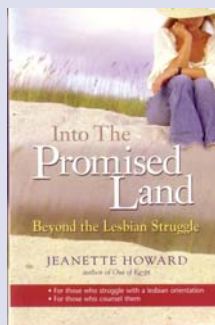
additional updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com

speakers, counseling and youth support:

can be arranged through the office.

into the promised land- book review



In this thoughtful and thought-provoking book, Jeanette Howard takes readers Into the Promised Land: Beyond the Lesbian Struggle. Taking a firmly scriptural position, she encourages Christians who struggle with lesbian attraction to enter fully into God's promises. She bases her teachings on the journeys of Israel into the Promised Land. Howard had assumed when she became a Christian that God would take

away her homosexual attractions, that she would marry, and have children. He has not done that. Instead she has embraced her celibacy in obedience to Scripture, in order to further her walk with Christ. Her struggles with homosexuality, and depression have given her an uncommon spiritual depth.

Though directed at Christians struggling with lesbianism, much of the book applies to any temptation — sexual or non-sexual.

Into the Promised Land is a wonderful source for those who want to minister to homosexuals and befriend those who struggle with homosexuality. For additional resources for women, as well as men, youth workers, family and friends, and pastors, please visit www.exodus.to and click on bookstore.

partnering in 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 those needing to attend *Taking Back Ground*, 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.

...for Jason as he travels to Salt Lake City and speaks. Pray that he represents the truth of God well.



P O R T L A N D

f e l l o w s h i p

The Fellowship Message
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Portland fellowship,
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from homosexuality through
the power of Jesus Christ

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