



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Friends,

update - april 2011

One of the bravest acts of faith that I witness happens every March at our *Taking Back Ground* retreat in Gearhart, Oregon. This year, fifty-six men and women gathered in the crowded room at Breakaway Lodge, in anticipation of a powerful evening of surrender and hope.

Struggling against unwanted same-sex attraction is a tremendous battle. The reason that most people eventually come to Portland Fellowship is because they have realized that freedom will not come by their own will power and commitment. The attempt to manage a life of destructive sexual activity, fantasy, pornography, unhealthy relationships, and/or false gender identity are so prevailing and life-dominating that many realize that they have only two options. The first is to give into and embrace an identity that will no longer be in conflict with their desires, and to assume a homosexual identity. The second option is to learn how to fully surrender their life and desires to the Lord.

We talk a lot about 'commitment' in the Christian life. Many who struggle with sinful and damaging behavior attempt to 'commit' those areas of their life to Christ and to others. Commitment means "promised devotion, a pledge, or dedication". It is something we decide for ourselves. Commitment is a good thing, but the problem is that we still decide what and how much we want to commit. The decision still lies with us. We are still the ones in control.

When we 'commit', we often fail. Why? Because it's about us, and we fail! Many times, commitments to the Lord and to others come when we are focused on ourselves. We want to see changes in our lives because we are exhausted of living a certain way, or we are tired of hurting others, or frustrated with how things are going, or we are caught and pledge to 'never do that again'.

Surrender is different than commitment. Surrender is "to give up or relinquish possession or control of something; abandonment of legal rights; to hand over; to give up a fight; an act of declaring defeat of our own will". The concepts of Scripture speak of surrender, not commitment. Surrender is an act of faith, declaring, "Lord I trust you" even when our feelings may say otherwise. I trust you with my heart; I trust you with my relationships; I trust you with my body; I trust you with my sexuality; I trust you with my food, finances, and future.

We can certainly surrender our lives and areas of our lives anytime. Yet, on that special evening at Breakaway Lodge, we set aside a time to 'declare defeat of our own will' – to 'surrender' to God. We make a public declaration of the things God is laying on our hearts and present a symbol of that surrender as we place it at the Cross. As leaders and friends come forward, prayers of blessings and intercession leads us on the walk with a deeper hope and faith in Christ.

Of course, commitment will come after surrender. Commitments will take the form of reminders, accountability, and new disciplines. Commitment will help us continue to keep our lives and areas of our lives at the foot of the Cross, where Christ demonstrated to us the greatest act of surrender. (Rom 5:2)



*The Fellowship
Retreat, included current
TBG participants, alumni,
and members of Mid-
Valley Fellowship, a sister
ministry in Albany,
Oregon*

"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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I understand that an annual surrender, or even a series of them in our lifetime, is not sufficient to live a life holy and pleasing to God. We are to be a living sacrifice each and every day. Yet, God honors those moments and works powerfully in our lives when we gather together. I had a similar moment of surrender in 1990, where God was calling me to surrender a destructive fantasy life. When I did, I truly surrendered it. When the enemy encouraged me to pick it up over the following years, I could honestly reply, "It's not mine to pick up. It's not mine to use... I surrendered it!"

A few years later, I surrendered an emotionally addictive relationship. When I was tempted to call and welcome that person back into my life, I was reminded that it is no longer mine to seek; nor mine to rekindle. I surrendered it!

My life is not perfect – I know that I have a life-long journey of surrender ahead, but because I desire to be a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, I will continue to experience real and lasting freedom, even in the midst of failure. My prayer is that each man and woman at the retreat, who surrendered the things that hold them back from a deep relationship with Him, will remain anchored to the Cross of Christ, and because of this, will bring glory and honor to Him!

As always, I am so grateful that you are a part of this journey. Thank you for investing through prayer and financial support. Your love, through Christ, is a blessing to many. I pray God will bless you in return.

In His Service,



Jason Thompson
Executive Director

upper room program

Drew Berryessa, leader of the Upper Room program, is seeking new participants for the 2011-2012 program year.

As part of the Upper Room, residents will be immersed in Portland Fellowship's *Taking Back Ground* Program, as well as participate in weekly Upper Room meetings, both as a community, and in individual mentoring appointments with staff members.

If you have experienced God's healing touch and desire to continue the process of growth in an intense, personalized community experience, we encourage you to learn more about the Upper Room Program through portlandfellowship.com. We also invite you to call and talk directly with Drew, or to our current interns, about their experiences.

Drew's story will be in the next Exodus International newsletter, which can be found through the website exodus-international.org

low cost counseling

We have a counselor available onsite for ongoing, low cost, support. Sharon has an in-depth understanding of those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions. Sharon is available for men, women, youth, family and friends. For more information or an appointment, contact us at 503.235.6364.

prayer requests

Please pray for the message of God's powerful redemptive work through the ministry of Portland Fellowship, to go out to all in need of God's healing touch.

We ask that you specifically pray for those who need the ministry of *Taking Back Ground*, the Family and Friend's group, and the Upper Room program. Pray that they will come and experience hope and healing.

Please pray for the protection and encouragement of our board of directors, staff, interns, leaders and participants.

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

taking back ground

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

april 15

family and friends group

For those who have a loved one involved in homosexuality and want guidance, encouragement, and personal support.
3rd Friday of the month 7 p.m.

april 15-16

jason speaking:

Conference - Spokane, WA

C.P.R. Outreach will be hosting a one-day seminar on understanding homosexuality and finding wholeness in Christ.

april 21

jason speaking:

Eastgate Bible Chapel

Youth group 7 p.m.

Check website for additional updates at www.portlandfellowship.com