



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Fellowship Partners,

update february 2011

On a recent Tuesday, night I had the honor speaking to the men and women currently in the first year of our discipleship program, *Taking Back Ground*. As we discussed our lesson for the week; Picking up our Cross and Following Christ; I was struck once again by the radical demand of the Christian life. In Mark 8, Christ informs the crowd following him; “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.”

I remember when I first began my journey to wholeness, this verse posed a particular problem for me. First, Christ was making clear that the path to life was *through* death. I realize that this is a figurative death, dying to my own desires is what Christ was saying was necessary in order to find life. Frankly, figuratively or not, that was very intimidating. A lot of us Christians may have come to faith in Christ partially because we were convinced that Jesus makes everything easier and better. I know I am not the only one who has heard the glorious testimonies of how Jesus has miraculously freed people from addiction, disease, horrible circumstances, etc. However true those testimonies may be, I know many Christians who have become disillusioned when their story doesn't match up to the experiences of others. Maybe our expectation has not been based on the testimonies of others, but rather the unbiblical thought that if we are obedient enough or if we love Jesus enough, the journey of faith will be somehow easier. That is not what Christ is saying in this passage and that is not what the witness of scripture affirms.



The fact is, perfectly obedient and fully in love with Jesus or not, as a Christ follower we will face this death that Christ demands of his followers; our own cross to bear. It is when the battle gets hard or the struggle persists; the only choice is faithful obedience, or abandoning the journey, that these unrealistic expectations get challenged and the true choice of whether we will answer this call to the cross become unavoidable. I know that here at PF, this is where people either press in or run away. If we are to be true Christ followers, there is only one choice. As the French mystic Madame Guyon writes, “If you gave yourself to Christ to be blessed and be loved, you cannot suddenly turn around and take back your life at another season when you are being crucified.” The fact is, being crucified with Christ is one of the greatest blessings we partake of as believers and it is also one of the most terrifying acts of submission we must make.

“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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The second problem I had was that Christ does not offer a very detailed picture of what the new life He offers will look like. Don't get me wrong, the Bible makes several promises that we can bank on for a life surrendered to Christ. We can hope for the Fruits of the Spirit, we can hope for peace beyond our circumstances, and we are assured that we will be more and more conformed to the image of Christ. As a believer, this gives me great hope. However, if I am honest, as fallen man, the choice between these promises and the tangible life that I can "go out and get" in the world can be excruciatingly difficult to make. Wrestling this out alongside our participants, the difficulty of this choice is undeniably real. It takes great faith to believe that the God who will subject you to the death of your desires is also a good God that will bring you great fulfillment in the life that he has to offer you on the other side of the cross. I am blessed to say that I know this to be true.

But now back to that recent Tuesday night, wrestling through these words of Jesus. It is an awesome and holy thing to watch the men and women that God has brought here to PF contend with these truths, and choose to trust in the God of whom Job said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." We on staff here at PF have been blessed greatly to do the work that we do, to serve as character witnesses to the God that demands death, yet gives back such abundant life. Thank you for enabling us to do such a holy task.

Gratefully,



Drew Berryessa
Program Manager

financial update

If you are a long time reader of our newsletters, you will know that we do not often bring up our financial needs. We will often ask for you to consider ways that you can support our ministry, either through giving, prayers, or service, but we try not to focus on financial issues, but instead share the work that the Lord has given us to do.

However, in December, Jason shared through our year end letter that it has been a financially lean season for our ministry. I am sure that news was not surprising, as it has been a difficult year financially worldwide, and many ministries and charitable organizations have felt the impact. Jason made a simple request you each consider what you can do to help us continue our work. The response was so encouraging. We are entering 2011 in a stronger financial position than we had when we entered 2010! In a year like this last one, that is a tremendous accomplishment! We are so thankful for each and every one of you who make this work possible through your sacrifices! May the Lord bless you!

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 our staff and leaders. Pray that the Lord will encourage us and renew our strength as we serve those the Lord has brought to us.

Please pray for the protection and continued growth of our participants as they continue pressing in to this process.

Please pray for the men in our Upper Room Program, it is a particularly intense season for each of them. Please pray that they will surrender to the Lord's refining work.

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

pf alumni group

second thursday of each month
A place of connection and support for those who have completed the TBG program. Contact office for details.

feb 13

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.

mar 4-6

taking back ground retreat
Annual retreat at the Oregon coast. Open to current participants and Alumni. Contact the office for details.

Check website for additional updates at www.portlandfellowship.com