



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Loving People His Way... by Monica Diaz

Children are amazingly resilient. We hear it all the time regarding healing from physical wounds or even emotional traumas. God, in His amazing provision, has prepared us in advance, to survive in the midst of pain we might experience from others. Although I know this to be true, I didn't feel resilient when I was a child.

When I was eight, I was exposed to a world that no eight-year-old should ever experience. The shame and the pain of being sexually abused by a family member was the pivotal point of confusion and destruction in my life. As a result of the trauma, it's difficult remembering much prior to that time. The innocence of my childhood was stolen from me and it set me on a course toward personal destruction.

The abusive experience, as painful as it was, gave me false permission to further explore what I was exposed to. I first began experimenting sexually with some neighborhood kids. This behavior made me feel as though what was happening within my own home wasn't so weird after all. Even more so, I adopted the lie that because I didn't do anything to stop it, the fault was mine; I had brought it on myself. Rather than playing the victim card or feeling sorry for myself, I became emotionally numb about my abuse. Instead, I took all that pain and became passionate about injustice being inflicted on other girls.

As I got older, it was clear to me that men were never genuinely wanting good things for women. From my perspective, men were selfish and hurtful. They were never to be trusted and were to be kept at a distance. In order to protect myself, I stayed away from the possibility of being in a relationship with a man and sought out the safe company of women. My first relationship with a girl began as a friendship. At the time it was simply friendship, but we got closer. She was engaged to be married, but, not to my surprise, I learned that he was cheating on her with many other women. I desperately wanted to protect her and show her that she could be treated so much better. I knew I could treat her better and was out to show her.

The relationships that followed had the same general theme. A genuine longing to restore hope and love to these women who deserved to be happy but simply weren't. I was convinced that even though my Christian background taught that homosexuality was sinful, God brought these women into my life so I could care for and love them. Although I knew that He wouldn't be pleased with my choices, I didn't know how else to express that love and care. I was ill-equipped to love appropriately and I wrestled with that.

Although I coerced myself into believing that I was doing well, I knew, even from the beginning, that what I was doing was not okay nor would I find fulfillment in my relationship with women. There was seriously something missing. I began having discussions with my girlfriends about what I was feeling. They were trying very hard to understand and were patient as they tried to convince me that my feelings of doubt were a part of the process of accepting who I really was. I was unsure at first because of how I had been raised to think of homosexuality. So I tried to believe the lie they were feeding me and thought that in time, I would feel liberated and free. "God just wanted me to be happy", I would say out loud to convince myself, but deep inside, I knew better. There was something instilled in me as far back as I can remember that being gay was not what



Monica Diaz is a graduate of our Taking Back Ground program and is now seeking to volunteer in the coming year.

God wanted for me. I wanted so badly for my feelings to align with this truth, but my feelings continued to challenge it.

Why do I feel this way, God? You must have meant that being gay just isn't right for everybody, right? What about people who have felt attracted to the same sex since before they can remember? I threw many questions at the firm foundation of truth, praying that it would bend. I NEEDED that foundation to be the lie because I wanted to be completely happy with my girlfriend and I needed the convictions to stop! I wanted to just be okay with it all and push God out of my mind. And most days I was. I could. I went through emotional hell until one day I just couldn't do it anymore.

I was ready to give up the fight. I finally gave up the relationship and was now ready for God to take away my attractions and desires to be with women. I figured because of my obedience, God would heal me and things would get better. I waited for the change to come, but in the meantime, another girl came along. The tornado of confusion hit with full force. I then took on the

belief (or tried to) that all the doubts and struggles I had in the previous relationships were there because I had been with the 'wrong person'. My hope was that the right person would alleviate these uncomfortable feelings and bring peace in my life. I could make it work now, or so I thought. Yet nothing changed. For the next six years, my emotions and my spirit were throbbing for release. I thought I was going to go crazy. I felt so alone and like God had abandoned me.

In the year of 2007, my older sister was going to school in Oregon and was taking a class that required her to volunteer with a ministry of some kind. Jason Thompson, the director of the ministry, had spoken at her church in Bothell, Washington a little less than a decade before. Having been touched by the spirit after hearing his heart for those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions and learning about the ministry of Portland Fellowship, she took his business card. A decade later, when the opportunity to serve in a ministry became available, she remembered Portland Fellowship and made the connection to get involved. Meanwhile, the lease on my apartment in Washington had just come up and, for the first time in years, I heard God speak to me. He told me that if I stayed in Washington, my life would not change. However, if I moved to Oregon, he would show me something new and prove to me that He hadn't abandoned me. I didn't know how this would happen, but I was so wounded and torn from battle and was ready to be done. I would do whatever the Lord would ask of me.

I moved back in with my parents, without a job or anything to do for a month. I spent a lot of time journaling and just being by myself, free from unhealthy relationships. It was at this time, that I got a call from my sister. She told me about

Portland Fellowship and the powerful life change she had seen in so many others. She was the only one who really knew me and I trusted her. She didn't try to fix me and wasn't encouraging me to become 'straight'. But she saw beyond my brokenness and knew that I truly wanted to fall madly in love with Jesus. We both knew that I could not see him clearly with all the crap and deception in my heart. I believed her when she told me that the staff at Portland Fellowship would be able to relate to my mess and would walk alongside me to allow me to see who God really is.

So in the fall of 2007, I started my first year in the Taking

Back Ground program, and I was overwhelmed with the liberty that I felt. I was not alone; not only was I in the company of other men and women seeking hope and healing, I knew that God had not abandoned me. Strangely enough, I was excited about my struggle because it was drawing me to Him! 2 Corinthians 11:30 says that "If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness."



*Great friends for encouragement and strength along the journey
Suzanne, Monica, & Cynthia*

I could finally do that. I could verbalize issues and sin that I wrestled with. Nobody was telling me to just stop fighting my convictions and embrace my feelings as being true. This family of believers gave me room to wrestle with pain and doubts, yet loved me all the way through it. At the same time, God brought a very dear friend into my life (outside of Portland Fellowship) that loved the Lord more than anyone I had ever seen. Through her, Jesus showed me what He intended for a healthy friendship to look like with women, and how desirable a relationship with Him can really be. I hadn't seen that before. Jesus loved on me through the family at Portland Fellowship and I was able to be real about the lies I had believed for so long; lies about myself, men, God, marriage, fathers, and brokenness. Although it was an awesome journey, it was not an easy process. For my first year of the program, 'shame' was the "hammer" Satan used against me. I could be in a really good place regarding my walk with God and then in a flash, the movies inside my head would begin to play of my past behaviors and things I had done, and my spirit would be crushed. In those moments, I lived in the truth of Job 11:13-20. It starts with, "Yet if you devote your heart to him and stretch out your hands to him..." vs. 15-16 "...then you will lift up your face without shame; you will stand firm and without fear..." vs. 17 "...Life will be brighter than noonday". God's word began to speak to me, or rather, I began to listen.

I still battle with accepting truth over lies. The difference is, I can identify them as lies and I have a God who is with me and for me! I can, and will, combat these lies with the truth of God's love and mercy. I now know who I am in Christ, and will live that out all the days of my life.

participation in restoration - jason thompson

It's been said that being involved at Portland Fellowship is having a front-row seat to seeing God in action. Not only do we see powerful transformation take place in the lives of men, women and youth regarding relational and sexual wholeness through the programs of Taking Back Ground, Family and Friends' Hope Group, Reach Truth and personal counseling, but we see God's amazing, awe-inspiring provisions in practical ways for our ministry needs.

The most noticeable and consistent provision comes from you, our faithful supporters. Each gift translates to hours of ministry, and without you, our many services would desperately struggle. We could never thank you enough for your gifts of financial support.

There are also gifts beyond financial support that amaze and, at times, even confound me. These are gifts only God, in his wisdom and power, orchestrates. Although I serve as Director and am responsible to seek funding and volunteers to accomplish what we do, there are many times in which the needs we have are given solutions without me even asking or deliberately seeking. As it is written in the Scriptures, *"Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear."* Isaiah 65:24

One example of how God provided was done through a loving couple. For many years we would

attempt to heat our basement so the second year participants of Taking Back Ground could stay warm. We would use space-heaters and even kerosene heaters (not recommended for inside use) to warm the space. Without even seeking a better solution, we got a call from a retired furnace and air conditioning worker asking if we could use a gas stove and that he would install it for free. We were all shocked and amazed how God provided this need without any effort from us.

There are many stories like that, but the most recent provision came in the form of a professional painter. Jeremy Shank, who has no personal connection with Portland Fellowship, learned through a friend, that our ministry had a large home that needed painting. It had been over a decade since the last paint job and the house was ready for a new coat. The only request to Jeremy's offer was that the paint would be the highest quality (lasting many years to come), and that he would take the time to do it right.

This was an amazing gift. To be honest, I kept looking at the side of the house watching it slowly deteriorate, and internally worried about what I would have to do to find the funds and the labor to restore this beautiful home. When Jeremy approached me, it was a repeat of the gas furnace event, a reminder that this is God's ministry and that He's the great overseer and provider, as well as Healer and Redeemer.

Jeremy is taking this whole month to power wash, sand, prime, and paint this 5200 square-foot house.

Would you consider participating in this amazing renovation project? Jeremy is donating all his time and efforts and we are currently seeking a grant from Mission Increase to help with the cost of the ongoing work of restoration. In addition to the high quality paint, the 45-foot boom rental, the sand paper and all the other material used, we are hoping to install new windows throughout the entire house (a very expensive endeavor, but a much needed one as well). Jeremy has access to discounted quality windows if we act now. **We seek to raise \$20,000 to cover the cost of the materials.** Without the free labor of painting it would be closer to \$130,000. If we are approved for the grant through Mission Increase, we will continue the restoration to the inside of the house.

Would you consider supporting the renovation project? As most of you know, we already own the Fellowship House outright, and the renovation is an important ongoing effort in being good stewards of what we have. If you are able, please memo: **"Fellowship House Renovation"** on your gift. Thank you.

upper room's new assistant - aaron riffe

The opportunity to give back to Portland Fellowship has been a goal of mine since I began my involvement with the ministry in 2007. I have been tremendously blessed by the mentorship and discipleship that I have received while participating in the Taking Back Ground program, as well as through my completion of the Upper Room program this past year. I know that I will continue to be blessed as I take on the role of Upper Room program assistant this fall. As program assistant I will be walking alongside the Upper Room participants in a leadership capacity while addressing community issues that arise. Through out the year I will continue to be mentored and trained in ministry by Jason & Drew. It is in a spirit of thankfulness and humility that I take on this role. Being part of PF is not a responsibility I take lightly and your prayer support is greatly appreciated.



Jeremy Shank



Aaron Riffe
Upper Room Assistant

july - august calendar & services

july 15 & aug 19

the hope group

Join us for our family and friends program for a time of prayer, encouragement, support, and a great meal. 7 pm.

july and august summer series: boundaries

Brian and Cynthia will be leading this important video series on Tuesday evenings. Please RSVP. There is no cost to this program. Donations to the ministry are appreciated. We will have used books available for a discounted price.

aug 30

boudaries bbq

For those joining the boundaries class in July and August, we will complete the series with a bbq celebration.

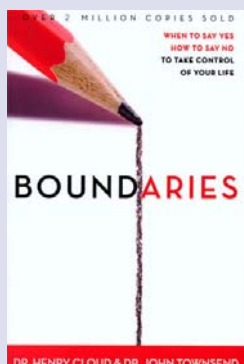
counseling available

As a reminder, Sharon, our intern counselor, is available for personal counseling throughout the summer and into next year. She has agreed to stay with us beyond the ending of her internship, which will be a blessing to many. We desire to still keep counseling extremely affordable by offering a sliding scale. To learn more about this, visit www.portlandfellowship.com and click "resources".

additional updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com
Occasionally we have events that are scheduled in between newsletter printings. For a current, up-to-date calendar, please visit our website.

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



summer series

Our summer series, starting this month, will be a DVD series by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend titled *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No, To Take Control of Your Life*.

How can you tell if boundaries are something that you can benefit from? Do you, as a Christian, struggle with saying "No"? Do you feel guilty for not meeting the requests of others even when it is not possible? Do you

find yourself caving into the needs of others and constantly neglecting those of your own? Do you put your feelings on the back burner and ignore them because that would be the "godly" thing to do? Do you find yourself overspent, overbooked, and overwhelmed far too often? Let's be honest, one area that sexually broken people struggle with is developing and maintaining proper boundaries, particularly since so many of us have had our personal boundaries violated at such young ages. This is extremely unfortunate, and an area where God desires us to walk in wholeness. God wants to impart to us the tools we need in order to restore Biblical boundaries in our life - that we may walk in maturity and be effective Christians.

If any of this resonates with you, then *Boundaries* will be the perfect study for you. Even if the concept of boundaries is remotely interesting, or if you would like to gain improved skills in this area, come be a part of this summer series.

Again, the invitation is extended to anyone interested. We highly encourage all to come and take advantage of this very rich and free study. You are welcome to just show up, but it would be great if you signed up so we will know how many people to prepare for. You can sign up by calling the office, e-mailing us, or by signing up online. For more information on signing up online, take a look in the box below.

Hope to see you Tuesday nights in July and August at 7pm!

your online profile

As a reminder, you have a secure personal profile online. You can make changes, set up online support, or sign up for programs and more!

Go to www.portlandfellowship.com and click **sign in**. You already have an account if you personally receive this newsletter. If we don't have your email, which is required, call or email us with it, and we will set you up right away. If you are new to us, simply click "new account".



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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