



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

Mar/ Apr 2011 volume 15, number 2

Why Choose Marah Over Elim.... by Cynthia Beaudry

Paul says in Romans 12:2 that the will of God is good, perfect and pleasing. Although that is absolutely true, at Portland Fellowship it is okay to admit that it does not mean that His will is easy. Even so, the reminder that He alone is truly pleasing and satisfying resonates within the heart of our ministry.

As a child, I unknowingly developed negative core beliefs about the character of God. My father having been murdered, and my mother choosing a life of drugs translated to me that I wasn't worth enough for God to give me the family that I needed. I did not have an accurate understanding of His heart towards me. God, in my mind, was a withholder of good things. Without even realizing it, a bitterness against God took root in my heart, and the accusation that God would give good things to everyone else, but not to me, continued to echo on.

It was at Portland Fellowship that I learned affectively and personally that there are pleasures at His right hand forevermore for me, and the challenge to allow God to rightly meet my needs was faced.

When I became a Christian in 2000, I knew immediately that God was calling me to a life of holiness. After going through the motions of Christian discipleship, I still felt that I was missing something; that holiness had to be deeper than just stopping worldly behaviors. It took me many years to discover that holiness also included healthiness. Healthiness for me needed to run deep; it needed to be life-changing, not just behavior-changing. PF introduced me to a more whole picture of Jesus and holiness. That is one of the things that makes PF such a healthy place. Here there is no "feel good" gospel, not any false promises of prosperity. In fact, the only promises made are rooted in the infinite goodness of Christ's character. The call to die to self is a daily reminder in this place, and yet, the hope that is poured out in the midst of that call is remarkably beautiful.

I have always loved how holistically the call of Christ is represented here; it such a refreshment to my heart.

In Exodus chapter 15, God's people, after being released from slavery in Egypt, were then led out into the desert, setting out toward their promised land. After three days of wandering in the wilderness and not finding any water, the people set up camp at a place called Marah. They began to complain and murmur because the water there was bitter, and they began to cry out asking Moses what they would drink. God showed Moses a tree to cast into the waters, which then turned the water sweet. It is at this place called Marah where God miraculously changed the people of Israel's bitter water into sweetness.

And it was here where God extraordinarily reveals Himself as our Jehovah Rapha: "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you." (Ex. 15:26) Other translations say "I am the Lord your life-giver." The passage



Cynthia is on staff here at PF and serves as a small group leader and teacher for Taking Back Ground.

later goes on to say that after Marah, they traveled to a place called Elim, a place of 12 springs of water, plentiful with palm trees for shade and refreshment. Some scholar's suggest that Elim is only a day's journey from Marah, the place where they camped initially! Imagine that, settling for bitter water when Elim was not too far away!

Unfortunately, I can relate all too well to the murmuring children of God in this passage. When I got to Portland Fellowship, my heart was permanently planted in a figurative Marah. My heart had a list of offenses against God, with a long list of good things that I was sure He had withheld from me. "Where is my sweet water?" I begrudgingly wondered against God. I think that for a lot of people, or at least for me, and the people we serve here at PF, our sexual struggle can take center stage in our murmuring. "God, did you leave me here just to be lonely? Did you create me with this desire just to leave me unsatisfied? Did you bring me out of slavery only to leave me in this wilderness?" The ministry of Portland Fellowship pointed me to Elim after I had been so long camped in bitterness. I learned here that God never intended for me to make camp in bitterness, but had Elim awaiting if I pressed in further, if I just trusted Him longer.

Another reason that Portland Fellowship has been such a place of health for me is that they ridiculously love and believe in people. Many of us, come through the doors of PF so messy and hung up in our woundedness, but the staff, the volunteers, and the prayer intercessors all see past that. They see people of value worth investing in. Even when I didn't believe I was worth it, when I couldn't see the beauty that God wanted to bring out of my ashes, Portland Fellowship saw my value. Here we see each person's potential. We see each person as someone that not only deserves, but warrants worth and value. When I came here, I was at a place where I didn't believe that God had Elim for me; I didn't even have the strength to believe that was true.

I had experienced a life of lies, sexual immorality, brokenness, rejection, and of not being valued by the people that mattered most to me. These experiences robbed my ability to dream. Yet, I specifically remember Drew and his wife Suzanne, and many others of the Portland Fellowship community, loving me when I was most messy proving that I was worth it. Portland Fellowship sowed seeds of worth into me; seeds of value, hope, and dreams.

Today my life is a life that is giving back to others and fostering health and encouragement into the hearts of the people that come to our ministry - the exact same thing that was done for me. My life now is fruitful and full of sweet water. As a small group co-leader I now am sowing into the lives of others.

I know that each year looks different, and that God always has amazing plans for the women's ministry here, however, this year has been the most amazing one yet, in my opinion. An amazing thing is happening; the ministry is being promoted by those who are attending. The women who are finding value in what they are learning are the ones who are drawing others in.

This year has also been a year of significant personal honesty within our groups. These women now have a place to share with safety. The women are bringing things to our small group that they have never had the freedom to share with others elsewhere. Personal honesty is so important as we pursue wholeness, and yet it is so hard to find places and people that are safe. It is a sacred trust to facilitate a group where transparency can happen if women choose to let others into places that have remained in darkness. His heart is to shine His Light on our lives, not to shame or embarrass us, but rather to bring us into who He created us to be all along. And I see God shining His loving spotlight on the women we serve week after week. It is absolutely evident that God is moving here and I am so excited to have a front row seat in this transformation process.

The Portland Fellowship atmosphere certainly is a conduit of growth and healing for those committed to just that. Jesus uses the transparency, the community, the reflection of truth in this place to awaken our hearts to His holiness and health. I appreciate that so much. I appreciate the accountability, the lathered grace upon grace for mistakes and mess-ups when we are in a process of falling forward. I appreciate the frankness, and the prompt to press through even when it hurts. It was at PF where I learned that taking care of myself is not a sin, that boundaries mean love, and that confrontations are catalysts to grow and care authentically. I learned upon salvation about holiness, but it was Portland Fellowship that taught me about health, which to me, is the application of holiness in my life.

I am proud and can boldly proclaim that I believe in our ministry, not because it is so great and grand, but because our intent is to present Christ and His plans for our lives as great and grand. Be encouraged, He's got an Elim for you!



worth while work by Sharon

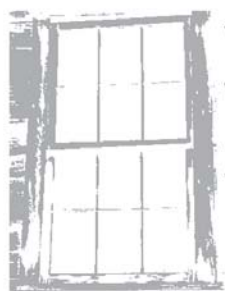
Since May, I have had the privilege of being an intern counselor at Portland Fellowship. When I started my studies at Multnomah University, I immediately hoped that I would have the opportunity to counsel at Portland Fellowship, believing that this area of work would be both challenging and rewarding. It has been just that. In the past ten months I have worked with those aged fourteen to fifty-something, each with personal trials and struggles that they desperately desire to conquer. Being in the midst of their struggle and fight for a transformed life, has given me great joy.



Some seek help because of unwanted same-sex attraction, while others have a family member who has embraced a homosexual identity. Regardless of the reason that people first come in for counseling, they each have a similar desire to find a safe and confidential place to share, seek meaning, empathy, encouragement, change, and hope. And ultimately, people, in their own unique way, are seeking a deeper love and knowledge of God in their lives.

Counseling is a difficult journey. For some, the idea of seeing a counselor is full of doubt and genuine concern. Many may struggle with even initiating an appointment. They question how helpful it will be. They wonder if they really want to start unpacking all their pain and hurt. And for many, they are simply uncertain about the process. Portland Fellowship is a safe place to work through these concerns. We respond to people exactly where they are in their life journey, and we stay focused on the power of Christ in people's lives. Holding to these two principles allows Portland Fellowship to be a Biblically safe and sound place for everyone. Of course, no journey is easy, and at times clients take "three steps forward and two steps back". Yet, I consider this a great progress. It takes such great courage to even want to change; courage to take the first, second, and even that twentieth step. It is hard, yet worthwhile work.

If you are stuck in destructive patterns, or simply needing someone to talk with about trials you are experiencing, I encourage you to consider counseling. From the website, you can get additional information about our sliding scale counseling, as well as referrals to other counselors in the Portland/Vancouver area who agree with the mission and purpose of Portland Fellowship.



**the
upper
room**

upper room program: accepting applications for 2011-2012

Every year, men and women come from around the country, and sometimes from around the world, to move here to Portland, OR, and spend nine months living in an intentional discipleship community. For some, the decision to participate in The Upper Room is born out of a desire to learn more about ministry. They may feel a call on their lives to minister to this community and want some practical ministry training to help them towards that goal. For others, the decision to join The Upper Room is out of a desire to experience an intentional season dedicated to deeper personal, spiritual, and relational growth. Whatever the motivation, The Upper Room provides a safe and challenging environment that can help an individual meet those goals.

As part of the Upper Room, residents will be immersed in PF's Taking Back Ground Program, as well as participate in weekly Upper Room meetings, both as a community, learning and growing together, and in weekly individual mentoring appointments with the staff of Portland Fellowship. The focus of these meetings range from spiritual to practical, all with the intention of moving us into deeper intimacy, health, and maturity in Christ.

We are now accepting applications for the 2011 – 2012 program year. Deadline for applications is July 15, 2011. If you are interested in applying, please contact Drew at the PF office, or go online to www.portlandfellowship.com/upper_room.php

march - april calendar & services

mar 4-6

annual tbg retreat

Participants and alumni of Taking Back Ground will be headed to the Oregon coast for a time of fellowship, worship, prayer and surrender.

tuesday nights

taking back ground

Our discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions resumes on Tuesday April 5th. There is still space available in the group, contact the office if you are considering joining.

mar 10 - apr 14

the alumni group

Graduates of Taking Back Ground are invited to receive ongoing support and encouragement. 7pm. Call the office for more information.

mar 18 - apr 15

the hope group

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

apr 15-16

jason speaking: spokane, wa

Jason will be speaking at a conference in Spokane for CPR ministries of Washington.

additional updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com
Please take a few minutes and check out our newly updated website.

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

a growing divide

Two recent articles got the PF staff's attention recently; GQ's interview with former Evangelical leader Ted Haggard, and a blog article feature Jay Bakker, son of former televangelist Jim Bakker. Each of these articles

communicated a similar message. Haggard, by the way he talks about his life, convictions, and the direction of his new church, minimizes the issue of homosexuality, instead preaching "inclusion". Jay Bakker flat out accepts and affirms homosexual expression as legitimate for the believer. This may be shocking to some of our readers, but unfortunately these two articles are just a few examples of how the issue of homosexuality continues to distort the church's understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Historically, the church has done a poor job addressing the pastoral needs of people who struggle with same sex attraction issues. More and more, people within the church are recognizing this fact. Unfortunately, in response, the love of Christ and his commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves gets twisted, and a sweeping acceptance and endorsement of behavior (that a traditional interpretation of the Scriptures calls sinful) replaces grace for the sinner, which would otherwise make space for repentance and healing. This, however, is nothing new.

In the book of Jude, verse 4, the author warns the church of the first century of this same mentality: "... some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God's marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" Paul addresses these types of people as well who have "... the appearance of godliness, but deny its power." (2 Tim 3:1-6) As a pastoral worker who walks alongside those who are attempting to submit their wills, desires, and lives to the Lordship of Christ, the deception represented is just more evidence of the growing divide between the true Gospel of Christ, and as the apostle Paul puts it, "things taught by demons" (1 Tim 4:1)

Please pray for the ministry of Portland Fellowship; that we would continue to be a place that demonstrates powerfully the love and grace of Jesus. Pray that PF, and other ministries with the same message, will have increased opportunities to share with the Body of Christ the healing and redemption possible for those who struggle with same sex issues. And finally, pray that the Body of Christ will recognize the deception that is permeating it, and that we will respond with an increased commitment to live out the true Gospel of Christ in our world.



The Fellowship Message is a monthly publication of Portland fellowship, a ministry proclaiming freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ

MINISTRY TEAM

Jason Thompson
Executive Director

Drew Berryessa
Program Manager

Cynthia Beaudry
Ministry Administrator

Suzanne Berryessa
Women's Support

Karen Sherwood
Support for Wives

The Fellowship Message is sent free upon request. (An annual donation of \$15 is appreciated to cover printing and postage costs.) No part of this newsletter may be reproduced or reprinted without permission.

post office box 14841
portland, oregon 97293
telephone 503.235.6364
fax 503.235.3896

e-mail: pf@portlandfellowship.com
portlandfellowship.com

Portland Fellowship is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) nondenominational organization. We are exclusively supported through private donations, support services, and offerings.