



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

Nov / Dec 2011 volume 15, number 6

You are My child... by Brandon Foote

Through a haze of fear, shame, gender confusion, alcohol and drugs, I heard Jesus whisper to me that I am a child of God. That is when I began to have hope.

My step-father drank. Alcohol turned him from a decent father to the kind who taught me how to swim at age four by pushing me into the deep end of the pool and leaving me. As a drunk, he became the kind of man who threw my mother down a flight of stairs, threatening to kill her if she ever left him. I was the youngest in a blended family, which created a division with my siblings. When a babysitter sexually abused me by exposing himself to me, stopping just short of physical molestation, my stepbrother mocked me for it and told our friends that I had a "boyfriend".

I had attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, which was addressed with medication, and any hyperactive behavior that remained was treated with beatings. On top of a dysfunctional home life, my time at school was equally as miserable for me. The girls made fun of me and the "cool" boys hated me. Because of all this, I retreated into an elaborate fantasy world. I imagined myself a super-hero and tried to convince the kids in the neighborhood that I had special powers.

I discovered a way that I could get attention from adults that, though it was negative attention, still felt good. I was around twelve years old when I went to dinner with my mom and was mistaken for a girl. When we moved to a new town, my mom met a woman in the neighborhood with a boy around my age. I met him, told him I was a girl and that my mom made me dress like a boy. For the next year, we had a relationship that was physical yet he had no idea that I was really a boy.

As I got older, I could not hide the fact that I was a boy any longer. I came out of the closet to a few close friends. They rejected me. With a strong desire for connection, I began a sexual relationship with a guy that continued on and off for years. To deal with the pain of rejection and the shame I felt for being different, I began to drink at age 17. I did drugs, including methamphetamines. I got a fake ID when I was 19 and began going to gay bars. After one binge drinking night out, I woke up on the sidewalk next to my car with people stepping over me.

I was not openly gay. Though I medicated myself with drugs and alcohol, frequented gay bars, and continued a physical same-sex relationship, I also developed another side of my life. My cousin was a youth pastor and I went to his church where I got involved in the worship team. For a time, I was a DJ for a Christian radio station. I was practiced at living lies, manipulating and keeping things hidden. I was good at living a double life, but deep down I desperately wanted freedom.

When I was 28, I developed a case of rare Fungal Meningitis that put me in the hospital for a month. I had three spinal taps, and when I was discharged I had terrible withdrawals from the morphine. I knew



Brandon is a graduate of the Taking Back Ground program

God was trying to get my attention, calling me to a different life, but I did not know what to do. It was three more tumultuous years before I would begin to make a change.

I continued to drink and was arrested for driving under the influence. I became suicidal, tired of fighting what was inside of me that I could never quite defeat. The voice that I heard in my head always seemed to be that of a woman. The inner desire manifested itself at thirty-one when I began cross dressing. I adopted a female persona on the internet and had several cyber-relationships. I went to bars in women's clothes and even considered having a sex change.

One night after going out in women's clothes, I came home despondent. I thought again of ending my life. It was through a TV preacher that Jesus reached out to me. As I prayed, the Lord's voice was clear to me - "You are My child - that is all you need to know." I was a child of God, not a male or female but simply his child. That was where I needed to begin.

I started to renew my mind by listening to the Bible on tape. I ditched soap operas and secular music. I made Christian friends, on-line at first, so I did not have to let them see me. Eventually, I began to feel OK with being a man. I put an end to the fifteen year same-sex relationship I had. I went with a friend to his church, where I met the woman who would become my wife. On our second date, I told her about my past. Within weeks we decided to marry. It was fast, but I was so sure that marriage would "fix" me. It did not but instead became the most difficult thing I had ever experienced. I wanted to bail after six months but did not - and I am glad I stayed, but more glad that my wife stayed with me.

Two years into our marriage, we both went to Portland Fellowship's *Taking Back Ground* program. But, in between Year 1 and Year 2, I had all but given up. I was so tired of fighting. On-line, I started chatting with a man who had left his wife and two kids to be "gay." I decided I was done with my marriage. I needed to do what made me happy. I met this man and we had a sexual encounter. I was devastated. It was not the first time I had had sex with a man, but it was the first time since I was married and since I was truly trying to follow God. I did not tell my wife as we began Year 2 of *Taking*

Back Ground. I was angry and cynical and felt like I was going insane! I felt the only way to dull the painful shame was to ride my bike to the river and binge drink among the homeless.

One day I was riding and drinking, and I hit a set of railroad tracks at an angle. I flipped over the handlebars and skidded on my side for twenty feet. I had severe road rash and a sprained wrist. The next couple of months I had to have



Brandon with his wife Faith, along with their kids and family

my entire side bandaged and cleaned daily. The accident humbled me but I still could not bear the shame. One day, I got on my bike to leave for good. I rode around for hours before I broke down. I called my wife and confessed over the phone. She picked me up and brought me home. Her love and compassion terrified me. I deserved to be kicked around the house by her, but in the moment, the Holy Spirit took over and I saw unconditional love for the first time, up close and personal. I finished the year of *Taking Back Ground* in a different state, open

and willing to learn and hear from God.

A huge turning point for me came when I figured out that fear was my core issue. Fear ruled me; the fear of a little boy flailing in deep water, the fear of being abandoned, of my true self being rejected. It had nothing to do with sex, or identity. Fear clouded every decision I made and distorted my view of everything.

My wife and I have gone through two painful years of healing. I am glad we both had Portland Fellowship to help us through this very difficult time. I have been involved in some "cleansing stream" type of programs since then too where I prayed to break generational curses and with soul ties. At one of the *Taking Back Ground* retreats, I surrendered a picture of a former boyfriend. At the foot of a solid wooden cross, I burned it. That release changed me.

Today, I am experiencing more freedom daily. I have started to see men in the work place as friends, and not objects to fantasize about. It was weird at first, but now it is common everyday life. What used to be like fiery darts hitting me are now like annoying gnats. Jesus is showing me that I am His child and He won't abandon or abuse me. He wants me to be His son and to cast my fears at His feet.

an unexpected response -jason thompson

For the past three years, I've been invited to share the message of Portland Fellowship to a Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgendered (LGBT) class at Pacific University. Although the class is in favor of supporting LGBT issues, they have opened up a small portion of their time for me to share an alternative perspective to the things they are studying.

Each year I go with a bit of apprehension. My desire is to communicate a message that is understood by a group of unbelieving students, but without compromising the truth of Christ. That's not an easy task, considering this highly controversial issue. The first two years, I was greeted with a polite and respectful class, yet the questions were aimed at trying to corner me into saying something bigoted and contradictory. Regardless, I was grateful for the questions and the opportunity to respond in truth and love.



Two years ago, unknown to me, a writer for a local gay newspaper was sitting in the back of the class. The article appeared the following month, with a description of "Pastor X" (that's me) coming across as being an idiot and archaic in his views. His article went on to contrast my *sad* life, as a husband and father of 2 boys, to his *fun* life cruising gay bathhouses, connecting sexually with several people in one night.

Even though I'm aware of the world's perspective, I was taken back when I read in the article how good and right choices are considered foolish while destructive choices are celebrated. I'm saddened by the great deception and confusion this world has embraced. Yet, it shouldn't come as a surprise, for it is written, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" Isaiah 5:20.

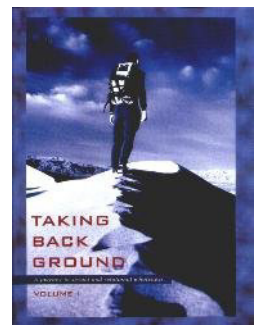
This last year in the LGBT class, I had a different and unexpected response. In the course of sharing my story and the work of Portland Fellowship, I was asked several questions that were honest and genuinely curious. A few students began to express verbal and nonverbal "aha" moments, as they realized there may be something more to sexuality and identity than what they have been learning or have understood all along.

Later that evening, the professor sent me a simple email, "Thanks so much for coming in to speak tonight. I deeply appreciate your sincerity and candor with the students. You certainly gave them a tremendous amount to consider. If I am teaching this course again next year, I'd like to invite you back." I pray I get that opportunity.

a record-breaking year -jason thompson

I'm assuming you have observed the change in the tide of our culture and even many of our churches on how homosexuality is viewed (i.e. the repeal of Don't ask, Don't tell; the ordination of gay clergy; the marriage of same-sex couples; the overall acceptance throughout media and politics, just to name a few.) Although there is still bullying and hate in our culture, there has not been an easier time in U.S. history in which a person who embraces a homosexual identity can live a life that will be accepted by so many.

So, one would think, with the growing acceptance in the world, Portland Fellowship would begin seeing dwindling numbers in those fighting for a redeemed life. On the contrary! I'm delighted to share that the Lord is continuing to do something amazing in his people. This year, with a total of 74 people, we have the largest *Taking Back Ground* program in PF history. We literally have no more room on Tuesday nights, and there are currently 6 people on a waiting list, which will only grow in the coming weeks and months. With this in mind, we are discussing ways to meet the growing need with our limited resources, including an online option.



Each person that comes here, could choose a gay-affirming church, find a huge community of support, and live out desires that seem natural to them, but they are responding to the Lord and His call on their lives to be a 'living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to Him'. Please be in prayer for all who come here for the healing touch of Christ.

nov - dec calendar & services

nov 11 & dec 16

the hope group

Join us for our family and friends program for a time of prayer, encouragement, support, and a great meal. 6:30 pm. - Third Friday of each month, **except for this November's meeting.** The group will meet on **November 11**. Please sign up at portlandfellowship.com for updates and reminders.

november 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

taking back ground: tuesdays 7pm

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

november 3

Jason Speaking Multnomah University

Sexuality Class 10 am

november 6

Jason Speaking SW Bible Church

Young adult class 10 am

november 12

Drew Speaking Bridges Youth Conference

Multnomah University

counseling available

To learn more about counseling options and referrals, visit our website and click "resources".

additional updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com
Occasionally we have events that are scheduled 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.

out of a far country - a book by Christopher and Angela Yuan

Christopher Yuan, the son of Chinese immigrants, discovered at an early age that he was different. He was attracted to other boys. As he grew into adulthood, his mother, Angela, hoped to control the situation. Instead, she found that her son and her life were spiraling out of control - and her own personal demons were determined to defeat her.



Years of heartbreak, confusion, and prayer followed before the Yuans found a place of complete surrender, which is God's desire for all families. Their amazing story, told from the perspectives of both mother and son, offers hope for anyone affected by homosexuality.

God calls all who are lost to come home to him. Casting a compelling vision for holy sexuality, *Out of a Far Country* speaks to prodigals, parents of prodigals, and those wanting to minister to the gay community.

For more information: www.christopheryuan.com

ignite the flame

Dan Summerfeldt, a faithful prayer intercessor in our *Taking Back Ground* program is co-leading a special conference, titled: **Ignite**, at the Fellowship House on Friday, and Saturday, November 18-19, 2011.



Ignite, is an opportunity to experience God and the power of his Holy Spirit. If you are feeling a bit burned out in your Christian walk and reached the limits of your own ingenuity, talents, and gifts, this may be a great place for the refreshment and encouragement you are seeking.

Although this is not a Portland Fellowship sponsored event, we are thankful that Dan has brought Ignite to Portland to encourage others in their walk with the Lord.

For more information, and to register, please visit Ignitepdx.org or call Cheryl at 503-574-3537.



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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