



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Pursuing Character by Cody

"Character" was a word that I had no grasp of seven and a half months ago. To me, it was a word I was aware of simply in theory, but it did not seem to apply to who I was as a person. I had always heard phrases like "This builds character", but there was never any comprehension of how it applied to my life and my person.

Now, at the end of my year in the Upper Room, the word "character" has a whole new place in my life. It is who I am when I'm in the heat of an intense moment, during a difficult situation, and when my doors are closed. It is the root of how I interact with others and what I choose to invest my time in. In essence, it is who I am when all I can hear is the ticking of the clock with no distractions. Nine months ago marked the beginning of a season that placed my character under the microscope. Entering the Upper Room program, I was a hot mess. My distinctive mental and moral qualities reeked of narcissism and selfishness, allowing the desires of my hunger to rule me. The focus of my world was myself, leaving little time to think about other people. Mentally, my thoughts never went beyond myself.

My morals were my ideals but not my reality. I held the virtues of a godly person on a pedestal, viewing them as unattainable by a person such as I. The awareness of my moral state existed but the desire to change remained at medium heat rather than a rolling boil. Consequently, the thought never crossed my mind to consider how my words, thoughts, and actions affected my friends, family, community, and the passerby.

My insecurities and self-worth bore the sour fruits of pride, selfishness, indecisiveness, sexual promiscuity, and relational brokenness. I look back at where I was and I am terrified to think about how my life's story would have unfolded had I not taken the reigns. My future would have been full of pain with little resolve; and my brokenness, covered with medication and band-aids that offered little help for the wounds that remained open. As an adult, I see myself surrendering to my fleshly desires, but internally living in a tumultuous state of mind. I would have had a boyfriend or some sort of sexual partner to feed my cravings of attention and affection from males, and I would still be attempting to make sin and righteousness friends with one another. I know that I would still believe in Christ, but where I would be in relationship with Him is another story. I am a person of conviction, and I know that I would not be able to fully enjoy my sin because of the Holy Spirit. I do know, however, that I would find myself avoiding or ignoring the Holy Spirit so that I didn't have to face reality. In order to maintain a



*Cody is part of the
2011-12 Upper
Room Community.*

relationship with a man, I know I would remove myself from my church community, and from my family and friends because I would not want to face the white elephant in the room every time I was in their presence. This would only leave me with one alternative- to live in isolation from healthy community in order to pursue my selfish desires, finding myself only in community with non-believers and placing my identity in the gay community. I see myself making mistake after mistake, and constantly living with the stress of unhealthy, codependent relationships. STD's would be very much a reality, as I do not see myself being able to remain faithful to any one person for any extended amount of time. My life's story would not be much of a story at all, and would be full of cultivated fruits of the flesh.

My character is, thankfully, very different from where I was in September, and on the path to being remarkably different than the life I would have had before this program. The fruits that are most apparent in my life are love, patience, kindness, and gentleness. I see love in my life in that I genuinely want to give myself to others, serving them and dying to myself. This is a newly emerged fruit within the past couple of months, but I strongly desire to serve God and others, and am learning to lay myself down for the benefit and service of others. Patience is a fruit that I can see on a daily basis. I grow daily in patience with my students, my family, my roommates, with God, and with myself. This patience is causing the fruit of peace to slowly emerge, because with patience comes a peace, trusting that God is sovereign and in control. I see kindness with my relationships and as a teacher. I see my actions and my heart wanting to work as one, because of honesty and integrity. In my eyes, I see gentleness as the newest fruit that is beginning to grow in my character. As a result of the Lord healing past wounds and my relational brokenness, I can see gentleness exhibited, especially in my interactions with people. There is no longer a need to always be right, and I now recognize how abrasive I was

with people. I am fascinated how I respond to situations now, with calmness and a gentleness that I have never seen before.

In this process, I also have fruits that are beginning to grow, and are begging to be harvested! These fruits include joy, peace, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control. I view all of the fruits of the Spirit as very much interconnected, so when more current fruits grow they

lead to others. As I exercise love, patience, kindness, and gentleness, I see the other gifts getting ready to be cultivated. The more I exercise self-control and faithfulness, the more I witness peace and joy in my life. I have always been told that this would happen, but it has not been until recently that I have been able to experience these for myself. There is an incredible sense of masculinity that comes with self-control and faithfulness, and it has led to the beginnings of having true

peace and joy in my life. The more I selflessly love others, the more I cultivate kindness and gentleness.

I am led to contemplate what I want my character to look like a year from now. The biggest thing I want to see in myself is service to others. For so many years I have been poured into and invested in, and I now feel that it is my time to do the same for others. This will be my church, my family, and community. I know I am moving into a place of mentoring or discipling, and doing that in whatever capacity is possible. I see myself investing into more healthy male relationships, and exercising faithfulness and self-control in my sexuality. Specifically, I want to be able to say that one year from now I have still been able to abstain from sexual immorality.

I want to be at a place where my cup is overflowing, and my love and servanthood to others is simply the outpouring of this full cup. I desire to be an even more disciplined man, with a good sense of how to remain healthy with my time and my commitments. The ball of character development is just starting to roll fast. I don't want it to stop!



Cody and the other Upper Room Interns enjoying a lighthearted moment.

grateful for ongoing provisions by jason thompson

I am constantly amazed at how the Lord continues to provide for all the many needs of Portland Fellowship, in His way and in His time. Each year God provides leaders to facilitate small groups, teachers to pour into the hearts and minds of the participants, worship leaders, prayer intercessors, financial donors, in-kind gifts, and the list goes on.

And God's provision has shown up yet again today. As I'm writing this, hammers are pounding away downstairs as 100-year-old windows are being removed, and replaced with new, energy efficient windows. It was well past time for replacement, as several windows had gaps large enough to put your thumb through! Imagine how much heat is lost each winter! Better yet, imagine how much we will save next year!



Last summer we were offered a matching grant challenge from a generous donor, who is also a good and encouraging friend. With the grant, we raised the necessary money to replace 32 windows throughout the first and second floors, but due to some complications, we had to hold off on the project until this summer. Several of you were gracious enough to contribute to the match to make this happen. Thank you very much for your gifts and also for your patience in seeing this project completed.

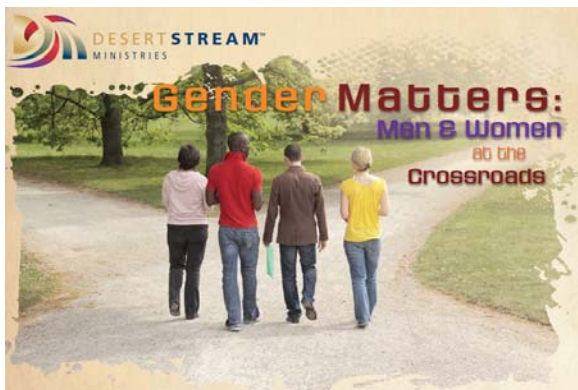
We are also grateful for Lifetime Windows. They came in under our budget, found us Energy Efficient Rebates, and also have an appreciation for the work of Portland Fellowship, as they know people who have been blessed by going through the Taking Back Ground program.

Everyone who uses this house will be pleased to open windows on hot days, for the first time in years (maybe decades), as well as feel the warmth and comfort this coming winter. Thank you, Lord, for your ongoing provisions through your people year after year.



Eight windows had gaps like this.
take note: this is in fully closed position

gender matters: men and women at the crossroads - july 14, 2012



Does Gender Matter? "Male" and "female" seems up for grabs these days, subject to a clash of opinions that divide families, and that challenge how we define marriage, compassion and personhood. Yet, at the end of the day, each woman and man must answer the question: Who am I?

Gender matters to God. He made us as male and female; He remakes us in His love to become good, life-giving gifts as gender people.

Come join the ministry of Desert Stream as they explore together the challenge and beauty of 'gender matters.' The day-long conference will include worship, healing prayer and teachings.

The teaching sessions will include "Does Gender Matter?", "How Jesus Restores Our Gender Identities", "Gender Wholeness through the Broken Body" and "Loving Well: Back to the Future." Andrew Comiskey will be the main teacher; he will also be preaching at the Irvington Covenant Church on Sunday, July 15th, at 10:00am.

For registration or additional information call 866.359.0500 ext. 801, or visit desertstream.org/events. The cost of the event is only \$20/person and will be hosted at Irvington Covenant Church in Portland, Oregon, on July 14.

july - august calendar & services

tuesday nights summer series

Phil Hobizal will be leading our summer series on Loving God & Others: 7p.m. RSVP is appreciated, no cost, open to all. Tuesdays, July 10 - Aug 28.

July 15
cynthia representing
Rolling Hills Community Church - Tualatin, Oregon.

July 13 & August 17
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.

July 20 - 21
jason speaking
Jason will be speaking at an international conference in **Guayaquil, Ecuador**, for the ministry of Camino de Salida.

July 22 - 24
jason presenting
Jason will be leading a three day workshop for leaders in **Guayaquil, Ecuador**, for the ministry of Camino de Salida.

Aug 26
drew speaking
Faith Evangelical Free Church, Dallas, Oregon.

additional updates
www.portlandfellowship.com
Please take a few minutes and consider signing up or updating your profile.

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

new ways to connect

This month we launched several new ways to connect with us. Besides our newsletter, you can find us on Twitter and Facebook! We would love to keep you posted on the more personal experiences of our ministry, as well as, share daily updates and additional resources. For example, when Jason Thompson goes to Ecuador next month to speak at the International Conference and the Leadership Training seminar, he hopes to keep you updated on what God is doing and how you could pray for him by using these connections.



To connect, go to:
www.facebook.com/portlandfellowship
and/or
www.twitter.com/PTLDFellowship
to check us out.

Be sure to 'Like' or 'Follow' us so you can stay up to date on what's going on through the ministry of Portland Fellowship!

summer series: greatest commandment tuesday evenings



We are pleased to share that Portland Fellowship's founder and former Executive Director, Phil Hobizal, will be creating and leading this series. Phil has a passion for the Lord and is a gifted teacher in the Word of God.

Join us Tuesday nights (*July 10-Aug 28*) for worship, interactive teaching and prayer. You are welcome to invite friends or family members (as space allows). We would love to know how many are coming, so please take a moment and RSVP. You can do that online through our website www.portlandfellowship.com or call/email cynthia@portlandfellowship.com.

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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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