



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

May / June 2012 volume 16, number 3

## Still Walking In Truth by Kathy Grace Duncan

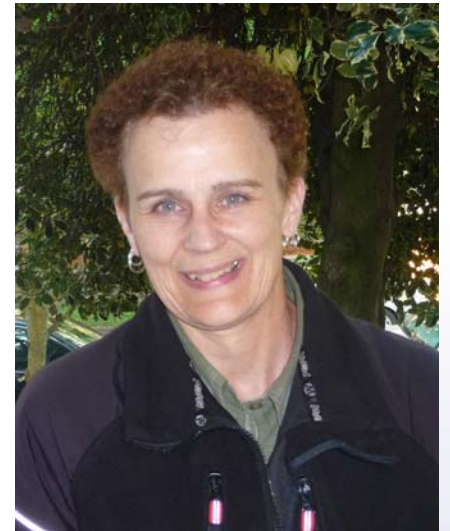
*February 2012 marked 19 years of coming out of the transgender life style. Before coming out, I had lived for 11 years as a man. After church one Sunday night in February of 1993, I was confronted by my pastor with the question "who are you really?" It was then I told the truth and simply stated, "I am a woman living as a man." From that point on, my life has never been the same.*

Through friends, and my pastor, I was directed to Portland Fellowship. I met with the women's ministry leader, letting her know of my desire to go back to whom I was created to be, and that I had no clue how to do that. I was invited to come, but since the program was already in progress, I had to wait until September. I had also lost my job at about the same time, so I spent the spring and summer looking for a new place to live and finding a new church. During this time, I began developing a new group of friends who would know my whole story, and who were safe.

I spent the next 5 years at PF; three years of it were as a participant in the program, and then two years as a small group leader. While I was a small group leader, I shared my testimony in the PF newsletter. It was encouraging to know that what I had written had touched lives and that the Lord was using it. However, I began to notice that I was being recognized for my past, and not for who I was becoming. I wanted to be known as Kathy Grace, definitely not by "Hey...didn't you use to live as a guy?" This was happening, not only at PF, but also at the church where I had been attending. During that season, the Lord gave me the opportunity to transition away from both PF and my church, and so I did.

Over the next several years, the Lord did many different things all at once. He first began revealing my fear of being a woman. Even though I believed He created me as a woman, and meant for me to be one, I was afraid. I was afraid to be seen by men as a woman; that made me vulnerable. I was afraid to be seen by women as a woman; I believed I would never measure up. Now that I was living again as a woman, these were not good fears to have. To work this out and to help me overcome, the Lord started talking me into, or rather "tricking" me into, going to a women's Bible study at the church. I thought if I went to a Bible study then I could make some friends, which might help with the loneliness I was feeling. There were a couple of openings and I chose the Wednesday night gathering.

Wednesday night came and I made my way to the church. I found the room, went in and sat down. There were others already in the room having conversations and of course, when I entered everyone looked at me. I was suddenly hot. I sat down and everyone resumed their conversations with one another. I was listening and feeling kinda stupid as I sat there. Then, the leader finished her conversation and said "hi" to me with such enthusiasm I was wondering if she was for real. "Welcome to the Bible study. What is your name?" All eyes were on me and I thought, "Here we go." After I mumbled my name and answered those awkward questions, it was then that I realized I was the only one who was sitting at the end of the row with 4 chairs between me and the others. Mmmmm, I thought, maybe this looks a



Kathy Grace serves PF as a TBG Small group leader, and teacher.

little stand-offish. With all the courage I could muster I got up and closed the gap between me and them hoping they couldn't see me sweating.

Although the study was actually pretty good, I still felt so stupid and inadequate as a woman. All the way home I kept saying that I was never going to go back and look or feel that way again. In spite of that, every week I would go back. And every week I would feel stupid and inadequate. And every week I would make that same vow on the way home. Then one night at the Bible study, one of the women spoke a prophetic word to me concerning how the Lord saw me. She spoke all about the beauty that the Lord saw in me and that I was His treasure. I never imagined that the Lord saw me that way. I knew He loved me, saw me as His daughter, and called me His own. I had experienced healing and knew His heart was for me, but beauty and His treasure?? He could see that in me??!! Even though that scared me to death, on the way home that week, instead of making the vow not to go back, I was thanking Him through my tears for the group He had found for me. I still felt stupid and inadequate, but I also felt so accepted by all the women that night. They just loved on me and for the first time I felt like one of them.

I thought that I was making real progress in overcoming this fear of being a woman. I was going to Bible study, sitting by other women in church and becoming actual friends. Then, the Lord put men in the mix. I began to notice men were holding the door for me, helping me to carry things and calling me "miss". It was like I was being seen for the first time as a woman and being valued. You think I would be excited about that! Instead, I felt even more vulnerable and more afraid. One day after a male friend, whom I trusted, had helped me, I said to the Lord, "He is not like my dad." The Lord simply said, "There are a lot of men who are not like your dad." He was right. I was viewing men through the lens of what my dad had been like. I realized that I thought men were doing things for me because they saw my weakness and were waiting to take advantage of me. That was SO not true. It was through allowing trusted men to treat me as a woman that I learned I could be feminine and it was not vulnerable. It actually did the opposite and drew my femininity out. I finally came to see that when a man held the door, he was not looking for anything. When a man offered to walk me to my car, he was actually protecting my vulnerability, which showed my value. As



Kathy Grace with several others at our recent Taking Back Ground retreat...

I believed the truth that all men were not like my dad, it helped me not to be afraid of what men might do to me, and helped me to not be suspicious of them. For each truth I embraced, it allowed me to be more and more who I am in Christ. As I believed who Jesus said I was, and walked in these truths, the changes in me became a permanent way of life.

One day, as I read a PF newsletter, a small flame was ignited in my heart after reading the testimony. I don't remember much about the testimony, only that I wanted to go and visit PF.. so I did. As I stood in the back during the worship, I was amazed: I was longing to be a part of PF again. Even though I had left PF, PF had not left my heart. I decided to join the prayer team, and it was an awesome experience. After 2 years of being on the prayer team, I could feel the nudging of the Lord to become a small group leader... so I did.

The first year was a little intimidating. All I knew was the Lord had called me to be there and I hung on to that! During that year, Jason approached me and wanted to know if I would be willing to teach on 'Femininity.' I said "yes" to this, wondering what I had just done! As I prayed about how to teach the topic, the Lord began giving me a plan. On the way home from PF after the teaching, I thought "What a slap in the enemy's face! Me, who lived as a man, now teaching on femininity! Who would've thought?!"

More opportunities opened to teach at PF and I signed up. Each time that I prepared to bring a lesson, I was reminded of what the Lord had done. Once, as I was going over the material I was going to bring, I saw it really was true that I no longer struggled with the attraction to women. I asked the Lord how that happened and when it changed. I could sense Him pondering the question and He responded with "I don't know." "What?!" I responded "How could You not know? You were there, You walked me thru it, I know You were there. How can You not know?" Then the Lord said, "I never saw you that way." I know that is true. As I continue to serve at PF, I do not see the men and women defined by their struggle either. Each one is precious, and even though I hear their stories, it is hard to see them that way. I am grateful the Lord has led me back to PF.

*If you would like to read the first half of my journey in detail, it can be found at the Portland Fellowship website titled : "Walking in the Truth."*

## the chicken or the egg by drew berryessa

When it comes to healing and freedom from same-sex attraction there seems to be a constant debate as to which comes first... a change in heart, or a change in actions. In our stream of ministry it is an increasingly difficult debate to navigate, as there are strong opinions on either side of the issue. For starters, "obedience" and "effort" have, in many ways, been viewed negatively in this field of ministry. Unfortunately, there have been many who have been wounded by sexual redemption ministries that focus exclusively on the external, and fail to adequately address the underlying needs motivating sinful behavior. In the last 12 years of involvement at PF, I have heard plenty of complaints against "legalistic behavior modification" or "sin management" employed as a means to experience growth or healing.



Although this frustration has some real legitimacy to it, the unfortunate trend has been to throw the baby out with the bathwater and label all attempts to help people address behaviors as "legalistic," "fruitless", and "damaging." Many who go this route often express a viewpoint that explicitly states that "God really doesn't care about your behavior, because all He wants is your heart". This mentality, while probably intended to offer freedom to those struggling with an over-focus on behavior, has its pitfalls as well. Over the years, I have seen many in this struggle minimize their sinful behavior, or flat out give up on obedience and discipleship because they adamantly defend the premise that obedience equals legalism, and God's grace frees us from that. Although this may seem like an over-simplification of a larger debate (which, admittedly it kind of is) it is raging on and causing significant rifts in the community of ministries like Portland Fellowship.

Recently, in a Facebook discussion with other leaders of ministries like PF, a young woman and leader from a similar ministry in the Dallas / Fort Worth area commented on this tension (*used by permission*):

*I'm always the first one to say, "This is about JESUS! If we were to change from gay to straight and miss Jesus, then we've missed everything!" And I believe that's true when it comes down to it; we all agree that the Gospel of Jesus is the most important thing in the world, and that it's the most essential thing for those we're walking with to grasp. At the same time, what makes our ministries distinctive is that we're specifically focused on the issue of homosexuality... There are so many things directly related to healing from sexual and relational brokenness that we can offer people that most people within the church are simply not equipped to address. Again, we exist to fill a gap in the church. Perhaps we've gone too far to the "Jesus is IT!" extreme, and begun to neglect the very things that exist within that gap: attention to all the idols surrounding a false identity, emotional dependency, practical steps to take to grow into healthy manhood or womanhood — all the fundamentals.*

*It seems like the problem (for me) came when I felt like all of the focus was on those fundamentals to the neglect of the message of, "If you don't get Jesus then none of this matters." But the answer to that problem is not to throw out all the fundamentals. The answer would be to make Jesus the rock, the foundation on which we're building the rest of the house... it would be tragic for us to move away from equipping broken men and women with the tools that will help them grow practically in these areas. What do you all think about this? What is the balance of making the focus the Gospel of Jesus, while continuing to walk with people through some of the changes in behavior that will enable them to experience even more freedom? As we think about this, I think it would also be good to think about what language we need to use in speaking about these complex issues. It is a very delicate balance we're seeking to find, and it's obviously played out in discipleship relationships.*

This leader articulates a profound truth that brings balance to this tension when she identifies "Jesus the Rock, the foundation on which we're building the rest of the house." In approaching this balance, it has always been helpful for me to reflect on James 2:17-18: "Faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead. But some will say 'You have faith; I have deeds' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do." This marriage of faith and deeds is the heart of the issue. There is no separating your heart (faith in Christ) and your actions (obedience to Christ). PF has always existed in the truth that a change in heart, and a change in action are both needed for healing and freedom... sometimes obedience helps people get to a place of understanding and receiving God's truth, and sometimes God illuminates us to His truth and a change in action follows. So... which comes first? Both... and both are essential.



## may - june calendar & services

tuesday nights

### taking back ground

Our discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction: 7p.m.

may 3

### multnomah class

Drew will be sharing about the ministry of Portland Fellowship to a Youth Ministry class from Multnomah University.

may 18 - june 15

### 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.

may 20

### gladstone first baptist church ministry fair

Jason will be exhibiting the Portland Fellowship ministry at this annual event.

may 29

### taking back ground completion ceremony

Year-two participants and the 2011-2012 interns will be completing their programs. We will have a time of celebration, sharing and food to share. We celebrate their lives and blessings for the future.

### additional updates

[www.portlandfellowship.com](http://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.

## resources online

Last month we shared with you the launch of [www.takingbackground.com](http://www.takingbackground.com). We welcome you to consider participating in this online program to examine your life in an in-depth and personal way.

This website is a virtual presentation of the program at Portland Fellowship. You will journey through a 42-week series to examine your walk with the Lord and with one



another. The program includes video teachings, online curriculum, and daily devotionals. This is a relational program, therefore a personal mentor is required to participate. This website also allows for group interaction and participation. If you are interested in leading a Taking Back Ground group using this online material, you may sign up as a facilitator and begin to build a group in your own church.

Please check out [www.takingbackground.com](http://www.takingbackground.com) or contact Portland Fellowship with any questions.

## tbg completion celebration!

On May 29, we will celebrate with 14 participants who will have completed the Taking Back Ground program. These men and women took two years of their lives to journey through an intense discipleship process with the Lord and one another.

As many of you know, this is not an easy journey to take as it is full of pressures from the world, strong temptations from the enemy, and sin patterns that require constant surrender. Completing the program does not equate with being finished, but rather it is a moment in which we celebrate the work God has done in their lives, and speak a blessing over them for the years to come. Please join us in prayer for all those who complete the program, that they will continue to grow in the Lord and stay close to His side.



**PORTLAND**  
fellowship

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 Assistant

**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](mailto:pf@portlandfellowship.com)  
[portlandfellowship.com](http://portlandfellowship.com)

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