



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Lord of the Fleas by Cynthia Beaudry

I used to feel sorry for myself, all of the time, in fact. And when I wasn't feeling sorry for myself, I was trying to manipulate those around me to do the same. Honestly, it was because it seemed that nothing ever came easy in my life and because of that I spent a lot of time in victim mode.

Somewhere along the line, I bought into the lie that God was depriving me of something or had it out to get me. It could have been because of the trauma in my life that communicated this to me, like my mom's drug abuse, my dad's murder, or my own abuse at the age of 12. But even the trivial things of life seemed to reinforce this, like someone pulling the whiskers out of my Velveteen Rabbit or the lady at Holy Cross Catholic Church who had made fun of my big toe, the toes God made me with. So my life, marked with affliction and wounds and complaints and disappointments furthered me in my heart away from the Lord. Surely, He had forgotten or thought less of me. Obviously, I was a burden on life and my job was to cower under who I imagined God to be.

Even though I became born again in 2000, it was not until I came to Portland Fellowship in 2008 that the Lord began to confront this belief system in my heart. I remember sitting in my very first teaching of Taking Back Ground, as Drew taught "The Journey Begins". I listened intently, as he paralleled the story of the Children of Israel's journey out of Egypt to our own journey out of sexual brokenness. It was very compelling, as I had never ascertained the similarities. Then I remember him, at one point in the teaching, leaning in toward us and relating, in a tender yet, sobering tone, the secret to his discipleship success. *Oooh. This is gonna be good*, I thought. I could tell by the way he leaned in and what not. "I'm gonna tell you what's gonna get you through in this journey," he announced. "...Gratitude."

Gratitude? Gratefulness? Thanks... but no thanks. You mean to tell me that I came all across the US to hear that the secret to sexual wholeness is thanksgiving? Pfffft. But a part of me marveled, because I know that it was the Holy Spirit who had whispered to me a very important antidote to my "Woe Is Me" syndrome. Simple... yet profound.



Cynthia participated in the Upper Room program in 2008, and has served on the PF staff for 4 years.

"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:1

But what if you, like me, can't really see much to be thankful for? What if your life, like mine, has been marred with neglect, abuse, and loss? What if it's too hard to give thanks to God because the gratitude sensor on your heart has been calloused over with layers of pain? In *The Hiding Place*, Corrie Ten Boon recounts her time in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. It was in Barracks 28, a compound designed

for 400 hundred but that actually housed 1400 women, that Corrie and her sister, Betsie, prayed and sought the Lord with their smuggled Bible. The conditions there were unbearable; overflowing toilets, rotting straw, unstable sleeping platforms, and a flea and lice infestation. In Barracks 28, Corrie and her sister recited 1 Thessalonians 5:1, and Corrie begrudgingly gave thanks to God.

“That’s it, Corrie! That’s His answer. Give thanks in all circumstances! That’s what we can do. We can start right now to thank God for every single thing about this new barracks!” I stared at her; then around me at the dark, foul-aired room.

“Such as?” I said.

“Such as being assigned here together.”

“I bit my lip. ‘Oh yes, Lord Jesus!’

“Such as what you’re holding in your hands.” I looked down at the Bible.

“Yes! Thank You, dear Lord, that there was no inspection when we entered here! Thank You for all these women, here in this room, who will meet You in these pages.”

“Yes,” said Betsie, ‘Thank You for the very crowding here. Since we’re packed so close, that many more will hear!’ She looked at me expectantly. ‘Corrie!’ she prodded.

“Oh, all right. Thank You for the jammed, crammed, stuffed, packed suffocating crowds.”

“Thank You,” Betsie went on serenely, ‘for the fleas and for—’

“The fleas! This was too much. ‘Betsie, there’s no way even God can make me grateful for a flea.’

“Give thanks in all circumstances,” she quoted. It doesn’t say, ‘in pleasant circumstances.’ Fleas are part of this place where God has put us.

“And so we stood between tiers of bunks and gave thanks for fleas. But this time I was sure Betsie was wrong.”

I don’t know about you, but I would have reacted in the same way Corrie did. Give thanks for fleas? Doesn’t God see that I am already in a concentration camp? Truth is, we all have had “fleas” in our lives. And in the midst of the infestation or affliction, we can question God’s character. Maybe your affliction is same sex attraction, or perhaps your heart is grieving deeply over the life choices of a loved one. Sometimes our affliction comes in the form of illness, or financial loss. Whatever the fleas in our life, it can cause us to doubt if God really does have our best interest in mind.

“My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees.” Psalm 119:71 (NLT)

Pain certainly does get our attention. The Holy Spirit used Taking Back Ground to disciple me through my pain and taught me the value in grieving. At the end of my internship, I took an isolated retreat to spend some time with Jesus. Quite honestly,

most of my time in that cabin... alone... in the woods... with no cell phone or computer... or anything to entertain me... was one big pity party. *Waaah*, I whined. *My mom is a crack head. Waaah. Nobody loves or wants me... Waaah... I’m ugly. Waaah... I’m in the Internship... Waaah... It’s almost done....* At some point, I decided to read my Bible; 1 Thessalonians, in fact. I read it through and highlighted the verse about being thankful. After reading, I waited for the Lord to speak to my heart and give me the majestic oracles of life and the prophetic revelations for my future. Silence..... *Waaaah*.

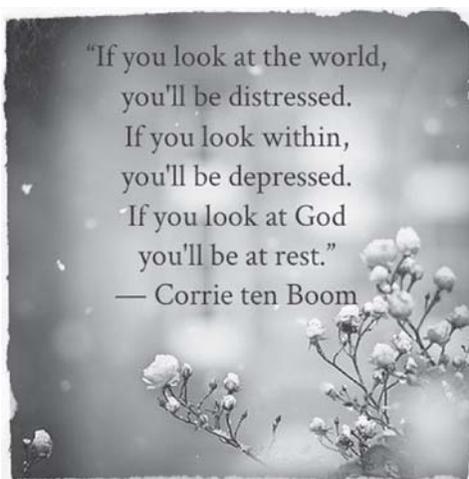
As my time at the retreat was about to be up, I packed up my leftover Ramen and articles of clothing and slouched on the futon next to my knapsack. This is when the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart. *I am not withholding anything from you.* It honestly was a shock. I was surprised, not that He had spoken, but that His Character indeed was good. *Thank you,* I replied.

I can let suffering cripple me, and I did for many years, or I can let suffering compel me toward maturity. I am grateful for a God who can empathize in my sufferings, for even Christ was abused. I learned about this God here at Portland Fellowship, truly and

authentically. I know that the holiday season is over now, but God is encouraging my heart to continue to be thankful and I hope to encourage you in that as well. It is in gratitude that we can start to see the God of Justice moving on our behalf working all things together for our good. Being thankful for me has made the temporal stuff start to seem fuzzy, as if I have removed my worldly glasses.

When Corrie Ten Boom, and her sister were in Barracks 28, they thanked God for the fleas. Little did they know God’s intention. During their time there, they were able to meet with other women for worship services. At first, the book says that they met with great timidity. Then, as night after night went by and no guard ever came in to stop them, they grew bolder, and increased the number of times they met. Despite the great surveillance, and the threat of execution, in their dormitory they had no supervision oddly enough, and were able to worship the Lord freely. Later they came to discover all of the Nazi personnel were afraid to enter into their dorm because of the tremendous infestation of fleas.

I pray that for you and me, over time and through the learning of God’s character, that we would accept His invitation to trust in Him despite the fleas in our lives. May our hearts thank the Lord for His afflictions that do certainly teach us to trust in His laws. May we come to a supernatural understanding that God uses our “fleas” to bring about His eternal purposes. I pray that God continues to use Portland Fellowship to open our eyes to the bigger picture of our afflictions, and may our hearts erupt with gratitude.



frequently asked questions by jason thompson and drew berryessa

Portland Fellowship is a fascinating and curious ministry. In the world of Christian ministries that seem pretty straight forward, such as feeding the homeless, missions, Awanas, and worship teams, PF is surrounded by many questions from the secular public as well as the local church. Our desire is to answer questions that you may have as we move into 2013. Here are two frequently asked questions, with more to follow.

Does Portland Fellowship support or practice Reparative Therapy?

Reparative Therapy is a general term which describes a process for those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions to find resolution through professional counseling. The goal of Reparative Therapy is to help repair wounds that stem from childhood--physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse and neglect. One of the more well-known organizations that support Reparative Therapy is www.narth.org, based in California. Most reparative therapists don't deal primarily with spiritual concerns, but rather focus on underlying psychological issues, using therapeutic techniques. One of the desired end-goals is a change in one's sexual orientation or a 're-orientation'.

Portland Fellowship does not oppose Reparative Therapy, as there is much good that can come from working through unresolved pain and confusion through professional counseling. Also, the goal of seeing a shift in one's emotional and sexual desires are both a possibility and a reality for many. However, we highly oppose any methods used in Reparative Therapy that conflict with the Word of God or a matter of a person's conscience.

Our work at Portland Fellowship is that of Biblical discipleship. Although Portland Fellowship does not practice Reparative Therapy, the process of discipleship can, at times, look similar to that of therapy; they are not exclusive. For us, the end-goal, is not to change one's sexual orientation, although that is a reality for many who have gone through this process, but rather to strengthen one's relationship with Christ, as He does the transformational and healing work in our lives.



How does Portland Fellowship get its funding?



Portland Fellowship is funded by donations, program fees, and resource sales. PF is blessed to be supported financially by several churches in the Portland Metro area. These churches have made the decision to put us on their missions budget. We are so grateful for the support and partnership that these churches provide both financially and spiritually. Another portion of our funding comes from program fees from our Taking Back Ground program, our Upper Room program, and our online discipleship programs. Even though we collect modest fees for our program, we never turn anyone down because of an inability to pay. One of the reasons we are able to minister to people, regardless of their ability to pay, is because of the individual donors, who provide the majority of our funding. We are so blessed to have many who believe and support the work that we do. Every donation, whether large or small, is

an investment in the Kingdom of God, and we are grateful for them.

Portland Fellowship's financial partners do not simply represent a transaction that happens, but rather a relationship and a history that comes in with each gift of support. Each gift is a parent's hope and belief in the God who transforms lives, or it is an offering of gratitude of a life that has been changed, or the affirming support of the family of faith to continue doing a ministry that so few others have the platform to do. There is a lot more than just a check to be cashed in each envelope. The truth is, Portland Fellowship is blessed to have wonderful partners who care about the people which this ministry serves; partners who faithfully sacrifice from their own resources to make sure that the message of hope and healing will continue to be shared with those who seek it.

If you have been faithfully supporting this ministry through giving, then please know that your gifts are of eternal value. God moves mightily through them. If you have not yet made a decision to partner with us financially for 2013 and beyond, may we ask you to consider whether or not God may be inviting you to do so.

We would love to hear your questions about the ministry of Portland Fellowship. Please call us at: 503.235.6364 or email your questions to office@portlandfellowship.com and we will seek to answer them in the next few newsletters.

jan - feb calendar & services

tuesday nights

taking back ground

Our discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction: First night back on January 8 at 7p.m.

monday nights

upper room program

Portland Fellowship's live-in discipleship program, The Upper Room, will resume the first Monday of January. Please be in prayer for Brandon, Chris, Cody, Curtis, Graham and Patrick as they continue to work through this intense program.

jan 2-5

restored hope network board retreat

Jason will be spending the week with others on the board for this newly formed network on the Oregon Coast.

january 11 & february 8

the hope group

Join us for our family and friends program for a time of prayer, encouragement, support, and a great meal. 6:30 p.m.

jan 12

annual planning

The Board of Directors will meet with the staff of Portland Fellowship to review 2012 and prepare and plan for 2013.

additional updates

www.portlandfellowship.com

Please take advantage of your online profile. If you don't have a username, please email or call us to access your record.

speakers, counseling and youth support

can be arranged through the office.

restored hope network: online

Restored Hope Network, a newly formed ministry to network like-minded ministries together, is forming and taking shape. The official website has been launched and can be viewed at www.restoredhopenetwork.org. Please take a moment and learn about the network's mission and resources through the website.



Jason Thompson serves on the Board

of Directors for RHN, which will be meeting January 2-5, on the Oregon Coast, for prayer and ministry development. There is still much work to be accomplished and our desire is that it would be covered in prayer.

prayers needed and appreciated



women find freedom from sexual and relational confusion.

Please pray for God's continued protection of the staff's hearts as we deal with the brokenness of those who come to this place. There is great warfare for those who are helping men and

-- Please pray for an increase in the provision for this ministry, including volunteers, financial partners, prayer partners, and church partnership. The need for this ministry continues to grow and we want to be able to meet the need.

-- Please pray for new opportunities to minister to and within the Body of Christ in 2013. Sadly, many churches, pastors, and lay people still don't know that we exist. We pray that continues to change.

-- Please pray for PF's ministry team, interns and their families; Jason, Drew, Cynthia, Brian, Eddie, Ron, Scott, Kathy Grace, Karen B, Karen S, Heidi, Brandon, Chris, Cody, Patrick, Curtis, Graham, Dan, Daniel, and Tomas; that the Lord would continue to lead and sustain them, and that He would give us great vision, great ability, and great joy in our specific areas of calling and responsibility within Portland Fellowship.



PORTLAND
fellowship

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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