



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

July / August 2013 volume 17, number 4

His Story / Her Story by jeff and amelia

This month's newsletter features a "His and Hers" perspective of a married couple who recently completed our Taking Back Ground program.

His Story: My whole life has been a search for affirmation. As a kid I would perform in front of anyone, without fear, because deep inside I desired to be loved and affirmed. Because I wanted to be accepted so bad, I would also be all things to all people. One of my parental units growing up said that it was the "Jeff show" and that I was really good at manipulating those around me. Well, as much as it hurt to hear that, it was true. I wanted to survive and that was my tactic. There were also males I grew up with who took advantage of my weakness and need for love by fulfilling their secret sexual sin and passing the blame onto me as being the gay one. I was lost.

You see, the real problem is that I was so busy pleasing those around me and being all things to all people, that I never learned the value that I had and who God made me to be. This manifested in self loathing and a high regard for putting up a front on the exterior. I was never comfortable with myself on the outside. I hated my voice, my complexion, my big head. So I would be very meticulous about presenting myself in the best fashion mixed with a cool and witty demeanor. That way, I could never be seen through my flaws.

Thinking back on my journey, I realized that I had a huge deficit in how I compared myself to other men. Mostly because the only men I could ever be intimate with were the ones in porn. I could totally let loose because it was my fantasy. The only problem I didn't foresee is that I was building a mountain of "perfect" men from my fantasies that I could never truly be like. This became an escape every time I was rejected or used. I raised my eyes to my idols to whom I wished I was.

Most of my teenage years and on, I was a passionate Christian. I don't consider my time in worship and study any sort of an act. There was total sincerity there. The problem lied in my idolatry that I would lift a little higher in my weakest times. As I have found in God's word, one sin leads to even greater sin. James 1:14-15 says, "Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death." I had a desire to be perceived as perfect as these other men. That desire led to temptation to be intimate with them to attain their approval. My acting out on these temptations became sin that at the time seemed to satisfy for the moment, but never truly met my deficit, no matter how deep or intense the situation.

I could never really reconcile my love for God and my homosexual struggle, and consequently, I lived most of my struggles in secret. Those who knew about my struggle knew just enough to not know anything about how deep it was wounding me. In the midst of this, I met a woman who I could truly be very vulnerable with. I didn't



ever put walls in front of her because she accepted me and my struggles for what they were. We were going to pull through this mess together. Eventually, I genuinely fell in love with her and we married. I kept my cool for a while but porn never really lost its strong grip on me. I couldn't truly love her as a Godly husband until I allowed the Lord to affirm who he made me to be as a man. I was in a dilemma. I couldn't break my front that I had it all together. I wanted to be the perfect husband and telling the truth would dash that all to pieces. So I suppressed it into what is called "sin management". I would handle it all on my own because my wife was not strong enough for the truth, especially as the sins against her built up. Every now and then, she would catch me in my sin and we would painfully move through that and be ok for a while. The issue was just as the scripture implies. There is a progression in sin. Deep inside I felt that porn became not enough. I began seeking a more intense fulfillment of my needs. This led me into dark places and with men who didn't have names to which I slowly gave too much of myself. At first, it was good just to be held by men who I thought would affirm me for who I was, but instead, I was met with a truckload of shame and guilt.

I didn't ever know how I would upload this on my sweet wife, so I suppressed it. But as I've learned, without confession and repentance, I could never truly walk away from this. That is where the Lord brought PF into my (our) life. I began telling her that I needed to be in a group that deals with this so I won't let it get the best of me. Without her knowing the extent of my sin, she joined with a fairly light heart. We both began to become surrounded by a community of likeminded believers with very similar situations. Problem was, other wives in her group (I think by the leading of the Holy Spirit) prompted her to dig deeper for the truth. So one night she sat me down and asked me point blank, "Have I been unfaithful to her?" . . .

Looking back, I have seen the Lord restore broken lives all around me. I have led people to him with great anthems of song. I have even seen Him restore marriages that have been torn asunder. Not until I was able to come out with the truth, the whole truth, was I able to let the Lord work in my life. From there, the floodgates opened on who I truly was. My wife stuck by my side, even though it was extremely difficult. My friends did not abandon me. Most importantly, my God never left my side. He knew he would lead me to repentance!

In my healing process henceforth, I have seen Him breakup this perfectly placed exterior and demeanor and replace it with a confidence I have in my identity in Christ. After all, I never had to really perform

for his love. And everyone else I was trying to impress, turns out they were too busy worrying about their own lives to think about what I'm wearing! In turn, I find I'm most useful when I'm pouring out of the gifts the Lord has given me to use to bless those around me and to finally let this performer sing his final note.

Her Story: If our marriage was a vessel on the water, then three years ago you would have stepped on an attractive ship, nothing too flashy, but with all the amenities you would hope to find. However, upon closer inspection you might have noticed surface cracks, some wear on the sails, a little leaking here and there, and the occasional locked cabinet, bolted tightly shut. It was certainly "good enough" to last for a long time, and fairly impressive considering the tools at our disposal.

Then two years ago, a storm blew into our lives. It was a hurricane upon our sea. It left our boat in shambles, and soaked us through. Our ship was utterly annihilated and we were left floating, treading water, and grasping at debris.

I had known about my husband's struggle from the beginning, and knew much of his painful past before we were married. What I did not fully grasp until the storm came through was how deep his pain went. We had hit the occasional rough patch, but there was little that had alarmed to me the deep current that ran within him. Our marriage was "good enough," and we had sailed along without too much trouble, but not actively striving and seeking the excellence God wanted for us. On the evening that all of my husband's past was drawn into the light through confession, our little boat was torn asunder. I cried out to God, questioning why He had allowed such wreckage to take place. I love that God is always able to take our questions and tears, and is such a gentle teacher of truth. Even as I wept and struggled, I could not help but be completely amazed at the grace of the Lord. I had been coming to Portland Fellowship for three weeks with my husband for "his problem" when the veil of secrecy was lifted. While it was a brutal time for my heart, I knew even just a few weeks in that I could come to PF and find those who would weep with me, mourn with me, and spur me on to lay my burden at the cross of Christ. I look back and cannot praise God enough for the beautiful women in the wives group. They understood my heart like only those who have journeyed there could. **(Continued on page 4)**



frequently asked questions by cynthia beaudry

We continue this month answering another frequently asked question. This month we are responding to the question: **What is your success rate?**

Often times, I am the first person that people speak to when they call PF. And although the needs of many vary from call to call, one question that I find myself answering often is “What is your success rate?” When I first started working here in 2009, and someone first asked that, I thought to myself, *wow, what a loaded question!* Then I said, “Please hold while I pass you to speak to Drew.” For me the answer to this question has unfolded over the years. I’ve also wondered how Jesus would answer if I were to come to Him and ask “Jesus, if I follow You, what is Your success rate?” What would He say?

In the gospels, people asked Jesus all sorts of pointed questions. One of my favorite interactions in the gospels is when Peter in Matthew 19:27 asks, “We’ve given up everything to follow you. What will we get?” I wonder if Peter was asking what success there would be for him in following the Messiah.

Jesus response to Peter was, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.” Matthew 19:28-29. Although the context of this scripture is worldly riches and possessions (as He had just addressed the rich young ruler in earlier verses) for me in the context of Portland fellowship, I interpret Jesus to say that sacrifice and obedience do lead to godly success.



One of the things that I express to people who ask this question is that the success rate is linked to the faithfulness of the Believer to follow Jesus. Walking in committed relationship with Jesus the Christ is the biggest success of my life personally. It is the success that I see reflected in the lives of many who are a part of Portland Fellowship. Abundant life, the fruit of the Spirit, the empowerment to make healthy choices, and maturity, this is the definition of success by our standards here at PF. It seems to be Jesus’ standards too. “Truly I tell you... you who have followed me... those who have abandoned their lives and their own desires for my sake... will succeed.”

We must not mistake spiritual success for worldly success or what culture deems as accomplishment. We don’t arrive because we have an opposite sex spouse, a stable job and home, and/or serve in ministry. Those are great things, however, we have all seen people whose lives on the outside reflect that stability, but in the secret place, there is lack of integrity or (Holy) Spirit success. We also must not believe that success requires a complete lack of struggle or temptation. Jesus himself endured temptation. Though I may be tempted in my flesh to fall into old patterns of thought or deed, this does not negate the work of His Holy Spirit in my life. Even if there is failure, which there often is, God’s renewal and transformation is not made null. I have seen faithful, committed believers **fall forward** in their vulnerability, and it is through grace, forgiveness, and repentance that I see them grapple with their sexual immaturity and move into a more complete wholeness.

But here’s the thing; when people call PF asking what our success rate is, I hear their hearts through the trembling of their voice, in the desperation of their words- searching, aching, yearning for... Hope. What they are really asking is, “Is there Hope?” They are most assuredly asking if their loved one can change, or if they themselves can be free, if transformation in this area is possible. In the midst of their pain and confusion, God so graciously gives us the privilege of being the voice they hear that says, “Yes friend, there is Hope. For you. For your loved one. For us all. There is a tremendous Hope.”

What people really want to know is Jesus powerful in this area? I find myself repeating, if Jesus had a resume, transformation is on it! From my life, and the lives of countless here at Portland Fellowship I see that Jesus is in the business of transforming lives. He takes lives that are surrendered to Him and makes all things new for them. There is hope! A hope that does not put us to shame (Romans 5:5). Let this Hope be an anchor for your soul, beloved. Hebrews 6:19 So what is our success rate? Let me answer that. “Truly I tell you... you who have followed me... who have abandoned your life and your own desires for my sake... you will succeed.” –Jesus

july - august calendar & services

tuesday nights in july & aug **emotionally healthy spirituality: summer series**

PF is offering a study through the book "Emotionally Healthy Spirituality" by Pete Scazzero. Our eight week study will include topics like: 10 symptoms of emotionally un-healthy spirituality, enlarging your soul through grief and loss, and growing into an emotionally mature adult.

The summer series is open to, and would be beneficial for anyone wants to join us: Taking Back Ground Alumni, family, current participants, supporters or new friends of Portland Fellowship are all invited to come. Classes start Tuesday, July 2nd at 7pm. Because we will be providing books for the study, there will be a \$10 fee for the series.

Please RSVP through:
cynthia@portlandfellowship.com,
or give us a call at
503.235.6364

**july 12 & august 9
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.

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.

(Continued from page 2)

Just as I knew I would be surrounded by support, I knew my husband would be shepherded by others who could intercede and speak into his life in ways that I simply could not at that time. God was so faithful to slowly reveal His truth each week over the two year program. Through Taking Back Ground I quickly saw that my husband had been filled with lies about himself and God from a very young age. Each of these lies were directly addressed with a vengeance through the truth of Christ in his Word, yet delivered with astounding grace and sensitivity. I came openhearted each week, and was greatly rewarded. The Lord gave me clarity from the beginning to see that I too had embraced many lies in my life that He longed to exchange for truth. While my childhood had not been as traumatic as my spouse's, I had my fair share of hardship and pain that I had tried to medicate through ways other than Christ. I realized that each of us had been created with a deep, desperate desire for the Lord. I have heard it said that there is a God shaped-hole in all of us, but I think a better description is a vacuum, desperately drawing in whatever is nearby. The constant reminder that homosexuality is a relational issue, rather than sexual, and that it is an attempt to meet a genuine, relational, God-given need gave me a paradigm shift so I could come to a place of total forgiveness.

For a season after the storm, I looked back, longing for our old dinghy. I asked God what was so wrong with it in the first place, and questioned why He could not have just let us sail along "good enough." He slowly, gently answered me, taking the time to show me how fragile our vessel had been. He lovingly explained that He wanted to build one for us, completely new. He wanted a lifeboat that could last for the rest of our days, one that was perfect, that would be set on a course towards Him. I had to allow Him to do it for us, with His tools, His supplies. Guess what. God made us a new boat. It is quite a bit different from our old one. It is not the materials I would have chosen, and things were arranged differently than I had them before. But it is better. It is a glorious sight when it comes into the harbor, even after a winter storm. There are no cracks to be seen, and all the cabinets are unlocked. We have not only a stunning, comfortable ship, but one that is also armed for battle, and stocked with provisions. I look ahead at years with my loving husband who is now daily pursuing freedom and holiness so that he can continue to keep the course, even on stormy seas. I am blessed that God wanted better for us than "good enough," and for the ministry at Portland Fellowship that He used as His tool to rebuild what had been destroyed.



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
Heidi Perry
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.