



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Terrified, Terrible and Terrific by terri chapman

Interestingly, my full first name is in all of these words: "Terrified", "Terrible" and "Terrific". I grew up very familiar with the first two.

Before I write another word, I want to make it clear that I have lived much of my life bouncing around off the perceptions of others. I now know that as a child I was not equipped to understand how the anger and resentment that others held deep inside did not mean I was always at fault. However, sometimes the message, verbal or not, seemed unmistakable—I was the problem and there was clearly something wrong with me.

Until I started at Portland Fellowship, and began looking at how I viewed myself as a woman, the six hardest words for me to say were: "When I was a little girl". I would find any other way to refer to my childhood, but never in those terms. It is crystal clear now that my disdain, hatred really, was because those words symbolized great vulnerability and fear. I now know it was a vow, I just didn't realize it: "Nothing would ever make me feel that vulnerable again." I had control of that. It was called armor, otherwise known as fear and hurt. It eventually came across in very unattractive hardness and with a strong angry demeanor that did not win or keep friends.

Satan always has a way of keeping us from reaching out for help, especially if it means a closer walk or commitment to God and a lifeline that puts us on track to healthiness and holiness. He will do anything it takes to allow us to delude ourselves. My 'delusion' was that I really didn't fit into a ministry which could address my sexual brokenness and because of that, I remained confused and silent. Again, these were my perceptions; "Everyone", "everybody", and other generalizing words kept me in more bondage. I didn't have a place.

Unbeknownst to me, my life circumstances were a 'set up' for same-sex attractions and brokenness from the start. When I was an early teen, I found out that the mother sleeping in the other room, the woman I had grown up with since I could remember, was not my biological mother. My father had been married before and my older brother and I were from that marriage. My biological mother had me when she was 17 years old and I was her second child. She was ill-equipped to handle two toddlers, so when my father left her, she eventually gave us up to him. Not long afterward, my father married who I now know is my step-mother and then they had my sister. In one fell swoop, my mother was a step-mother and my sister a half-sister. I was a freshman in high school and it didn't take any time at all to realize that most everyone else knew but us. Our family never talked about anything serious ever, therefore, I never knew. My resentment was vast, and later I realized it was the tendency of my family to avoid emotional issues at all cost. By the time my father told us this, I had been molested by a man 3 years earlier and had never told anyone. When I finally told this secret, of all people it was to my father that I told it, and his remedy was to vow me to silence so that my mother did not find out. I was led to believe and feel that the molestation was best left untold and clearly insignificant. Men were becoming dangerous, deviant, untrustworthy and weak.



Terri Chapman is a graduate of our Taking Back Ground Program.

My step-mother scrubbed us up, took us to church and made sure we were healthy and strong. What was not her strength was showing physical affection; my first memory of physical contact with my mother, in the way of a hug, was two months before I left for college. I love her, and this has changed dramatically, but the perception of her dislike of me was there. I suspect 'love' from a woman later filled that void.

In my 20s, I was approached sexually by a female friend. I now see how prime I was to become ensnared. This was posed as a "healthy" experience and one that would cause me to know more about "who I was as a woman". Of course, it did the opposite. I was confused and baffled by my acceptance of the behavior but the guilt was too much to bear.

I had already begun to drink heavily, which negatively affected my time in college as well as created legal issues.

After finding pornography, I felt a new level of shame which spiraled me down even further. I had suffered with mood problems since childhood and spent several months in psychiatric facilities and hospitals. As a mental health professional myself, I had ended up being admitted to facilities for which I was employed. It was a very dark time. I was treated as an inpatient for my alcoholism and have now been sober since April 16th, 1986. As long as I am on this side of heaven, I will struggle with my addictive nature. It seems I can rarely do anything that does not eventually become compulsive. Given that God knitted me in my mother's womb and knows the number of every strand of hair on my head, I am sure He is capable of helping me get through by surrendering these to Him and utilizing the successful friends and programs that go before me in recovery.

After hearing Jason Thompson and Anne Paulk speak at a conference in 2010, I finally decided that I was going to call Portland Fellowship, and did the very next work day. When I came in and spoke to Cynthia and explained my "unique" and "complicated" sexual history, she listened, explained the Taking Back Ground program, invited my participation, and ultimately said, "We just love Jesus here." I kept my terms for Jesus as "God the Father" or "Lord"; both of course, true and appropriate, but to say "Jesus" brought God way too close. Ironically, it's probably the opposite for most. My view of God was never the view of my earthly father, but I had never realized how even my verbiage kept God/Jesus/Lord and Savior, at arms' length. I have to wonder if many participants see themselves as having a unique and complicated story. Taking the risk to come in and talk with staff at Portland Fellowship began a personal, intense, sometimes painful, but ultimately life-saving journey.

Someone told me once; "You can't have a life verse out of the Book of Joel!" Being a bit rebellious, my retort was to proclaim that I most certainly could. So, popular life verse or not, here it is: "I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who

has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame." (Joel 2:25-26 ESV)

God is the Great Restorer, the Master Constructor. He not only performs (often painful) reconstructive "spiritual" surgery, He allows us to live our lives with our heads held high. Psalm 3:1-4 (ESV) has held interest to me lately when I think of the destruction and cycle of self-hate and shame. It says, "O Lord, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; many are saying of my soul, there is no salvation for him in



Terri and her father

God. But you, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. I cried aloud to the Lord, and He answered me from His holy hill." My head used to hang in shame. Now, Jesus, the "lifter of my head" keeps me walking a path that is steady and straight. When my head is bowed, especially out of shame, I wander aimlessly and typically end up in a dead-end of more life-altering destruction. I am stuck; I am again in shame; I am spiritually barely breathing. Jesus, You are the lifter of my head! Can't you see Him taking your chin in His hand, making you look Him in the eye? I hear Him say, "Shame is not your best look, Terri, my child. Look at Me instead, and live!"

At my first retreat, I surrendered my view that "all men were the same: dangerous, deviant, untrustworthy and weak." I had no respect for men at all. My perception was so skewed that I generalized to the point of exclusion. I knew that when push came to shove, the work (emotionally or taking action on my behalf) was never going to happen and men just needed to be set aside and let the real work get done...by women. My time at PF has shown me there are safe, holy, trustworthy and strong men, not only with some of the men I met in the program and in leadership, but that I likely knew many all along. My next retreat saw me give up a hold by abusers along with discontinuing to identify issues such as pornography and masturbation as solely male. This belief kept me in shame and made me feel that I did not measure up as a woman. I do measure up. I am loved by One who has no motive for harm. I am changed.

I am no longer terrified; I am no longer terrible; I am terrific in the eyes of my Lord, Savior, Master, Redeemer and King of Kings-Jesus.

frequently asked questions by drew berryessa

We continue this month answering another frequently asked question. This month I am responding to the question: **How do you respond when a family member “comes out” to you?**

Here at PF, we have the privilege of walking alongside several families that have experienced the revelation that a loved one is identifying as gay or lesbian. For the last 25+ years Portland Fellowship has been ministering to families in the midst of this critical time, and we are blessed to be able to help give insight and offer empathy to these hurting families. With that being said, every family is unique, and thus there is not a set formula on what to do when a family member comes out. The impact of a loved one's disclosure of their homosexuality will vary significantly based on the level of relationship. For example, if your son or daughter comes out to you, it will carry greater relational weight than if a distant friend discloses a homosexual identity. Regardless of the level of relationship, there are two aspects that need to be addressed when a disclosure of this magnitude is made: Your response to your loved one, and the impact this disclosure has on you personally.

So how do you respond to your loved one? In a few words: lovingly and respectfully. It is important to remember that although this disclosure is painful for you, the reality is that your loved one has come to the conclusion concerning their sexuality painfully, and over a long stretch of time. Additionally, it has no doubt been a slow, anxious process for them to muster the courage to share this disclosure with you. There is great personal risk in sharing this information, especially if it is clear that your worldview is in opposition to their understanding of their sexuality. Chances are that they may be bracing themselves for rejection and judgment. So what does a loving and respectful response look like practically? First, it will seek to listen and understand. Nothing shuts down relationship and communication like failing to listen. Even though you don't agree with your loved one's conclusions about their sexuality, they have experiences that have led them to identify as gay, most predominately, attractions to the same sex that they neither chose nor asked for. Choosing to listen will help you gain a better understanding of where your loved one is coming from, and it will help them feel respected.



It is important to communicate your love and acceptance of your loved one **as a person**. This is distinctly different than accepting or approving of their conclusions, actions, or future decisions. Although the moment that your loved one discloses their sexuality is most likely not the time to get into a deep discussion about your objections to their sexual identity (more than likely they may already know where you stand on the issue), you can communicate your love and acceptance, and respectfully and compassionately state that your convictions on the issues of sexuality remain intact, and that you can disagree on this issue and still love each other. There will be time later, when emotions have settled, to talk more candidly about objections; this probably isn't the moment.

What about your own internal reaction? When a loved one discloses their homosexuality, it will impact you in any number of ways. The most common response is that of grief. Joe Dallas, in his book “When Homosexuality Hits Home” explains this. He states, “You are experiencing the death of assumptions, and major assumptions at that. So in response to this death, as in response to death of any sort, you're grieving.” It is important to acknowledge that this will be a process of adjusting to the new dynamic and reality of the relationship. During this time, it is important to find a safe place to process your feelings of grief, and in particular, a place to process this which is separate from your loved one who has come out. Grief is a legitimate response, but it may not be helpful to the relationship with your gay loved one to share the depth of these feelings with them. A good counselor, a trusted pastor or friend, or a support group would be a much healthier place to vent your grief. Portland Fellowship offers a support group for Family and Friends of those who have adopted a gay identity. **The Hope Group** meets the second Friday of each month. This group provides a safe place to work through you own feelings and reactions, and helps better equip you to have a healthy and respectful relationship with your loved one. Additionally, The Hope Group offers families a redemptive perspective. People can, and do, submit their sexuality to the Lordship of Christ, experiencing His glorious transforming power. It is important to remember that we serve a God that does redeem the sexually broken.

may - june calendar & services

tuesday nights in may taking back ground

Our program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction.

monday nights upper room program

Portland Fellowship's live-in discipleship program.

may 5 grace chapel

Drew Berryessa will be speaking to the youth group.

may 16 teen challenge

Jason speaking at Portland's Teen Challenge program on the subject of Addictions.

may 10 & june 14 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.

may 28 taking back ground completion ceremony

Year-two participants and the 2012-2013 interns will be celebrating the completion of their discipleship programs. The evening will include food, testimony, and celebration. This private event starts at 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.

speakers, counseling and youth support

can be arranged through the office.



2nd annual conference June 21 - 22, 2013 - Oklahoma City, OK

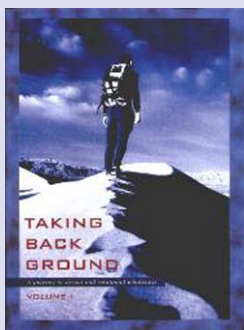
Join us for two days of discovering how His truth sets us free from sexual and relational brokenness. We will worship Him, share our stories of hope, and deepen our understanding of His truth. Our freedom is His delight!

Special guests include:

Dr. Robert Gagnon - theologian and author of *The Bible and Homosexuality*
Dr. Sam Storms - author, teacher, and pastor of Bridgeway Church
Cesli Vaccaro - therapist and healing associate of Leanne Payne
Nate Oylo - director of Outpost Ministries & Twin Cities House of Prayer

Additional day of training and renewal on June 20th. If you minister in the area of sexual and relational restoration, please consider joining us from 9-6 pm for this focused equipping time. For details, visit: www.restoredhopenetwork.org

tbg and intern graduation



On May 28, we will celebrate with the 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

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