



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

September / October 2013 volume 17, number 5

## Identity Theft by Patrick Silvis

*I can still remember my thoughts after I moved to Portland not too long ago: How do I introduce myself? Who am I if I don't have a title? What do I do if I'm not serving anyone? What if I have to explain why I'm at Portland Fellowship? Little did I know this was only the beginning of God destroying my false beliefs about my life and who I am in Christ.*

I have struggled with my sense of identity for as long as I can remember. One of the biggest factors in this confusion has been interactions with other guys. Growing up, there were several key points in my development where other boys ridiculed me and rejected me. As a sensitive boy who already had some effeminate mannerisms, this only made me even more insecure in my identity as a male. Wondering why my friends rejected me, I wondered if God had made a mistake and I should've been a girl instead (after all, that's what the neighborhood boys said I was). Thankfully, by God's grace I concluded that I was supposed to be a boy, but deep down I believed the lie that something was wrong with me, that I wasn't good enough to be included by other boys.

In my adolescent years, I was searching for older males to affirm me as a young man, as I hadn't received that affirmation from my peers. Insults like "gay," "fag," and "homo" were hurtful and confusing—*why are they calling me that? I don't want to date boys.* While insecure in my own masculinity, a brief sexual experience with an older boy confused me even further, and my desire for acceptance and affirmation from other males turned into sexual fantasies about men. At the same time, I was still interested in relationships with girls, and having grown up in the church, I knew homosexuality was a sin. *What was I to do?* Like any well-intentioned sinful human, I began doing more good things in order to avoid my internal struggles.

Though I grew up in the church and heard the Gospel many times, I began living out a half-gospel, where I lived like I was under the law instead of under grace. I thrived on helping other people and discovering I had many gifts with which I could serve the church. Instead of letting Christ transform me and my service being an outflow of His love and grace, I was serving with a hunger to be affirmed and accepted. Serving became my identity, my way of life—I was the textbook example of a multi-tasking, overcommitted, life-without-boundaries Christian. While this looks good on the outside, inside I was dry and frustrated with not having any solid peer group of Christian brothers to connect with. Many times



Patrick came to PF in 2012 to join the Upper Room Program.

I ended up resenting the very people I had so passionately signed up to serve, but I couldn't step down from those commitments because I had placed too much of my identity in them. *I'm good at serving. People affirm me when I do well. I'm making a difference.* Service itself isn't bad (it's very good), but I had become so committed to saying yes to everyone else that I began to believe the lies that my needs weren't important and that other people's needs were more important than mine.

Occasionally my homosexual struggle would rear its head, but I was so entrenched in the Christian ministry world that I had deceived myself with yet another half-truth: that my homosexual struggle was "not my identity." While I'm extremely grateful the Lord protected me from adopting a gay identity and lifestyle, my refusal to admit that I was struggling put me in a very vulnerable place. I was still craving male affirmation, and though I was participating in men's groups and Bible studies, I wasn't openly addressing my homosexual temptations. It took me almost having a sexual fall with another man while serving overseas for the Lord to confront me on my struggle. I can remember the Holy Spirit whispering in my ear: *"This is not who you are. You can go down this road, but it will destroy everything you've been working for and dreaming of."* I was extremely convicted and shortly thereafter I confessed to my leader how badly I was struggling. It was the hardest thing I've ever had to do, because I knew it meant there was no going back—no more hiding in the darkness, no more pretending to be perfect, no more covering up my struggle. I was terrified, but I knew it was what the Lord was asking me to do, and I knew that if He could give me the strength to resist temptation, He would give me the strength to walk in obedience.

The year following my confession was one of the hardest years of my life. There were many days when I had to talk about my struggle everything in me wanted to push it aside and continue doing missionary work as if nothing had happened. One verse I clung to during that time was John 8:32—*"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free."* I knew I had to continue telling the truth about my brokenness, and although I literally could not see how, I trusted that God would use my honesty and set me free.

Through the painful process of accountability and counseling, the Lord led me to Portland Fellowship. For the first time in a long time, I decided to do something for me, regardless of what other people thought I should do. Surrendering the identity of missionary continues to be difficult, but I am discovering the new identity in Christ that God had for me all along. God has been so faithful, and I'm starting to believe in the Scriptures that tell me who I am in Christ: I am *"fearfully and wonderfully made"* (Psalm 139:14). I am *"precious and honored"* in His sight (Isaiah 43:4) and His unfailing love for me will never be shaken (Isaiah 54:10). I'm beginning to rest in the truth that my worth is found in who I *am*, not in what I *do*.

Before coming to PF, I knew there were areas of my faith where I had some doubts and anger towards God, and here I've had to confront many of those. God continues to prove He is my father, my provider, my friend, my counselor and my comforter. I remember a key moment this past year where I had to forgive some key people from my past, and one of them was me. Forgiving myself was a huge step and for maybe the first time I was able to truly understand more of God's grace: *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). For so long, I had lived as though I could earn God's favor or somehow be good enough to cover up my homosexual sin.

Praise God that I don't have to—He already paid the price! I know if it wasn't for Him, I could very well have succumbed to the powerful temptations of sexual sin. Even today, there are times when the world and its message of "do what you want" sound very appealing. Yet God's Word reminds me of the truth: *"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it"* (Hebrews 12:11). In the midst of it all, I'm thankful that even as I continue to surrender my sexual struggle to the Lord, my identity is secure in Him.

*"Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**"*  
(1 Corinthians 6:9-11)



Patrick with the 2012-13 Upper Room Community on a trip to Mt. Hood.

## frequently asked questions by cynthia beaudry

We continue this month answering another frequently asked question. This month we are responding to the question: **Does Jason Thompson have a secret life?** (Disclaimer: Jason Thompson did not commission this nor is he aware of this article. He's actually on vacation now and so I am hijacking the newsletter while he is gone.)

Once I took a personality test. My result was Vigilant. The interests of a Vigilant Personality Type include: Letting nothing escape your notice; being aware of your environment; being a survivor; scanning the people and situations around you; being aware of mixed messages, hidden motivations, evasions and subtle distortions of the truth; assuming the roles of social critic, watchdog, ombudsman, and crusader.

When I first came to PF in 2008, I was skeptical of everyone. I always considered that my experience and exposure of growing up in NYC lead to my distrust of everyone. Credibility had to be earned in my eyes. My motto was, "you can't con a con artist". And although I wasn't a con artist, I had been exposed to all sorts of shady (corrupt) types of peoples and situations that I could readily spot them. So I came to PF, and as my Vigilant Personality Type states, I scanned the people and situations around me, and I let nothing escape my notice. I especially kept Jason Thompson under my investigative eye. It seemed that Jason T. had a pretty conservative and clean cut life - surely there was a deep dark secret lurking somewhere in the shadows. Bent on uncovering the truth, I did find something quite startling.

Jason Thompson has a secret life.

If you were to spy on Jason Thompson to catch him in his secret, you'd have to start early in the morning. The city of Portland at this time is still numb with night as the dew clings to everything desperately before the sun makes it break over the horizon. You'd watch him get his kids ready for school and kiss his adorable wife goodbye as he heads out the door. Everything is calm. Everything is quiet.



At this time, if you followed Jason Thompson, you'll probably find him humming in his vehicle to a song playing softly over the radio. Everything seems casual. He's playing it cool. You probably wouldn't think twice as he made his way down the highway into the city of Portland for work. You'd probably expect to see him drive and park in his Executive Director's parking space (a spot silently reserved by the dumpster) at Portland Fellowship. Only when he doesn't is when you would grow confused. Instead of turning on 19<sup>th</sup> for PF, he continues straight ahead. You might scratch your head. Jason Thompson is headed in another direction, to a place where he can be alone. He is, I imagine, anxious to be alone and away from prying eyes. That way, he has the freedom to indulge and satiate his appetite.

He drives a couple miles off course and pulls his vehicle into the obscure, poorly lit parking lot. Here is when things start to get interesting. Before Jason enters the building, he grabs something from his car, small enough to tuck under his arm, but too big to fit in his pocket. He keeps this item tucked out view, and looks around him before he enters. There are strangers in this place, which is good- he appreciates that.

At this point, you are wondering, *what is going on here? What in the world is Jason Thompson, a loving father and husband, and director of a ministry doing?* You see, this secret life of Jason Thompson is shocking.

This is when you see Jason Thompson order his coffee (black) and pay for it with some change from his pocket. After arranging his drink, you'll see him make his way to the back of the coffee shop to find a secluded spot on the sofa to read his Bible. And this is what Jason Thompson does alone... before his work day begins... every day. It is something quite outrageous to read your bible publically in a city known for its liberalism and anti-religious views. This is scandalous in our culture, reviled, and ridiculed. But there Jason is, satisfying his spiritual appetite, reading through the Bible in year, as he does every year. Do you know that Jason has read the bible in its entirety repeatedly every year since 2007? I say all this not to exalt a person, or put Jason on a pedestal (although if anyone deserves a pat on the back every once in a while it's him), I say

**(Continued on page 4)**



## sept - oct calendar & services

september 5

### upper room program

Portland Fellowship's live-in discipleship program, The Upper Room begins with our regular Thursday meeting, and then an evening of fellowship.

tuesday nights  
sept 10, 17, 24

### leadership training

Jason and Drew will be leading a series to prepare our leadership team for the 2013-14 Taking Back Ground program year.

september 13 & october 11  
**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.

october 1  
**TBG Begins!**

Discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions. Please call or sign-up online for your place in the program.

oct 26-27

### Drew Speaking

Drew will be speaking in the weekend services at Church of the Foothills in Cameron Park, CA.

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

### additional updates

[www.portlandfellowship.com](http://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 3)

this to illustrate the importance the Word of God has in the ministry of Portland Fellowship. Jason's secret life is a life hid in Christ, a life in the Word.

I don't know about you, but I sure do want to survive these times. It seems like everything in society is screaming pro-gay- pro-flesh anthems at me. How do I live in purity? (1 Timothy 4:12-13) How do I discern Truth?

How do I expose my own heart's attitudes and intentions? (Hebrews 4:12) We make our souls concrete against the winds of this world by being in the Word, and having a secret life in the Word. *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and you have a secret life (life that is hid) with Christ in God.* 2 Tim 3:2-3

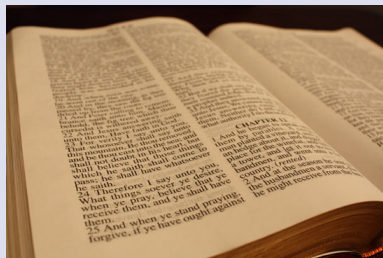
There are not many people that I trust and respect as much as I do Jason Thompson. I have looked for crookedness twice over in him; trust me, and each time I come up empty. What you see is really what you get with him, even behind closed doors. I value the Director of Portland Fellowship and his ability to continue faithfully, after all these years. The Word says, *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.* 2 Timothy 2:15 Jason is God's workman. There is nothing shady here at Portland Fellowship with the leadership, nothing at all to be ashamed of. Pray for our leader- for his protection and that he may be encouraged and blessed as he shoulders the ministry of Portland Fellowship. And may all of us have our own secret lives... in the Word.

## partnering in prayer

...for all those needing to attend *Taking Back Ground*, new and returning, that the Lord would lead thier hearts to contact PF and sign up for TBG.

...for the Upper Room participants that God has brought together this fall. Pray for unity of heart, a singleness of mind and a willingness to allow God to shape them as He sees fit.

...for continued support and provision of the ministries of Portland Fellowship. That we would see God provide for this work, and a continued trust in God's ability to protect and direct us.



**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](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.