



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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The Marred Image of the Father by Jason Thompson

There we were, my dad and I, sitting face to face in front of a packed group of Taking Back Ground participants, speaking on the topic: "The Marred Image of the Father". To make it personal, we decided we would not prepare the lesson together, but rather communicate our thoughts and reflections about our relationship in a real-time, raw, unrehearsed presentation.

As I began sharing, I reflected on my childhood and my relationship with my dad. It was difficult to put into words what I had experienced, because I saw him as good man who loved the Lord and was a stable father who provided faithfully for his family. Emotionally however, I struggled to know how to connect with him. This emotional disconnect between us would eventually cause me to question myself, my relationship with him and with Father God.

As we co-taught the lesson that night, we went on to detail various broken-father types, which are common to those who come to Portland Fellowship. Although 'father wounds' are a common to PF participants, I believe much of humanity struggles with issues regarding fathers. Unaware to many, the father wound develops a hunger and confusion that seeks resolution or some type of fulfillment. These are men and women who aimlessly seek self-affirmation through sexual conquests, gang affiliation, or through power, control and manipulation. And when these things don't fulfill, they will seek to numb their hunger through drugs, alcohol, entertainment or other various distractions. Without intervention, the cycle continues as they pass along to their children the very wounds they received from their own fathers. This wounded identity will not only impact the way he relates to his spouse, friends, and children, but it will also impact his relationship and view of God as Father.

Stopping this pattern of wounding requires understanding and humility for both the father and the adult child. The following broken-father types can be difficult to review when reflecting on your own life, but can be the first step to experiencing a newfound healing.

The first broken-father type shared with the group is the **'punitive father'**. This is a father who gave pain (emotionally, physically, and/or sexually), rather than love. The sensible reaction for this child is to avoid ongoing pain, so he learns to protect himself. The easiest and most effective way to protect one's self from an abuser is to avoid them all together. One of the participants shared that he feared his dad coming home from work. Whenever he heard his dad's car enter the driveway, he would run to his room and pretend to play, hoping his dad wouldn't notice him, or worse, choose to take his anger out on him.

Children of abusive fathers will seek to find peace, value and significance and will need to prove themselves to others. It is not unreasonable to understand that those who have been raised by punitive fathers would struggle to know God the Father as compassionate, loving, slow to anger, and full of mercy. Martin Luther once shared, "I have difficulty praying the Lord's Prayer, because whenever I say, 'Our Father,' I think of my own father, who was hard, unyielding and relentless. I cannot help but think of God that way."

Next we discussed the **'permissive father'**. This type of father seemingly wants the best for his child, but can be misguided in doing so. The father may be tired of the hard work of parenting or they wrongly believe that giving gifts or permitting all requests is equivalent to demonstrating love.

Although the giving of gifts can be a blessing, done without restraint, purpose, or forethought, can be detrimental. If given in replacement of love, the child begins to question if he or she is truly loved by dad and eventually by God. Always coming to the child's aid, to keep him happy, can limit his growth through the difficulties and consequences



of life. The child who gets whatever he or she wants can develop a sense of entitlement and demand. And when the sufferings of life come, the response is one of self-medication and escape.

The **'performance-based'** father communicates that it is not who you are, but what you do that is pleasing to him. This type of father can be seen in the macho, exaggerated example of masculinity or in the insecure man who vicariously lives his life through his child. Either way, the performance of their child relates to his own egocentric needs, and can come across as demanding, controlling and strict. The result for many is a child that grows up learning to play a religious game. The feeling, even if they know better, is that God is not concerned with the heart, but rather what he or she can do to please Him. They may appear to obey God, but are actually hostile, double-minded and full of pride.

Although there are other broken-father types, the final one we addressed that night was the **'passive or absent father'**. This is an enormous problem in our world today. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24 million children in America — one out of three — live in biological father-absent homes. Some of these homes are restored with a loving stepfather, but for many others, the absence of an involved father is far-reaching. Statistically, children without fathers are at higher risk for suicide, school drop-out, drug and alcohol abuse, being abused and being incarcerated. The emotionally absent father struggles with his own sense of worth and identity and will find escape in his own world of distractions like the internet, ministry, social activism, hobbies, or work.

It is difficult for a child when a father is physically absent, but it can be more challenging to know something is missing for those with a passive or emotionally absent father. He is present, but an unknown void exists, and the developing child is unaware.

Obviously, the father-wound does not always result in sexual identity confusion, yet these various wounds are predominant for those seeking freedom through the ministries of Portland Fellowship. It's not difficult to understand why those who struggle with same-sex attractions have deep father wounds and are looking for love, identity and affirmation in wrong ways. Identifying the broken-father types is only the beginning. The real hope and healing comes from understanding the true Father heart of God and His love for us.

The beauty of Christ is that He does not leave us in our broken state, but He *exchanges beauty for ashes; the oil of gladness for mourning; a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. He rebuilds and restores the places long devastated.* (ref. Isaiah 61:3-4)

For both father and son who can acknowledge wounds and wounding, a new hope can be found. This happens by emulating the true character of our Heavenly Father who is compassionate, who nurtures, who disciplines and fights for us.

God is a compassionate Father. When we emulate His compassion, we become emotionally healthier and care for the needs of our children and for others. In return, the child will experience a reflection of God and grow in emotional and spiritual maturity. The

compassion is reflected in how he nurtures us. For a developing child, this is especially needed between birth and five years old. A nurturing father is deeply rooted and imparts strength through gentleness and kindness. He is able to empathize with his daughter's experiences and validate her identity. A nurturing father will know his child uniquely, and honor and delight in her for the person she is. When the father empathizes, the child will feel secure and valued.

And as a result, the child will grow to bless and encourage others.

God disciplines us. "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent His rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, as a father the son He delights in." Prov. 3:11-12. As the father disciplines, the child develops an inner sense of security and structure. He will grow in godly character, make good decisions, and develop integrity and morality. It is an important reminder, that discipline is only effective when done in the context of love and nurture, which is

precisely how God disciplines us.

And God is our warrior, protector, and mentor. As our Father protects and defends us, fathers must emulate Him and fight for their children, fight for his or her identity in Christ, against the world system and against spiritual oppression. This happens through prayer, words of exhortation and living a life that models the life of Christ. In the end, the child will develop the ability to defend his or her own convictions, and in turn fight for their own family and for righteousness both inwardly and outwardly.

All these characteristics of Father God, when passed on from the father, will empower the child with endurance to make it victoriously through trials and temptations.

The night before our talk on the 'Marred Image of the Father', I rummaged through an old box of photos from my childhood. One after another I found pictures of me with my dad. There I was with him, taking walks, riding on his shoulders, and hanging out. During this talk, I pulled them out and identified his presence in my life and thanked him for all he offered, yet wondered why there was disconnect between us. As the conversation continued and dad shared his father-wounds, we both understood that his childhood wounds, having been abandoned by his father, created an emotional barrier. My perception of that barrier falsely told me I was unimportant and unloved.

But I was loved and admired by my dad. Over the years an exchange for these wounds has taken place. My dad and I would meet for coffee, share our lives, and join our hearts. He would be my mentor, my warrior and nurturer.

Although I am grateful for my dad's love and blessing over me, many who read this may never have the same opportunity for their dad's participation in their healing. This is where the greatest recompense is offered, by allowing God the Father to show His compassion, mercy, love, nurture, discipline and blessing over you. He will compensate, in His way, all you need from a Father who loves and cherishes you.



why my son is my hero a letter from a father about a current intern

My son has lived with the weight of SSA since before he can remember. The topic of “why” has filled textbooks, but I will simply write here that there is plenty of evidence suggesting that a father’s influence has much to do with it. I could fill my own textbook with pages about the path of regret, guilt, and trauma that I created for myself and walked through because of the role I played in contributing to this burden. My son has helped ME navigate that path (can you imagine?). In itself that is enough to make him my hero, but it’s only the beginning.

My son has decided that, instead of embracing these attractions and living his life according to them, he will embrace the cross of Christ and live for what he knows is right. He will spend the rest of his days pursuing God and rejecting the way the world would counsel him to go. Despite what some may think about SSA, it can be as pervasive and lifelong as hetero-sexual attraction. The choice lies in how you respond to it. Making this commitment carries a great cost - pervasive, and lifelong.

My son is my hero.

Despite the contribution I made to his burden, he loves me.

Despite the wounds he has suffered on my behalf, he says that I was a great father.

Despite my lack of fatherly effort, he has gladly assumed the road before him.

Despite what everything in the world is suggesting, he has decided to combat the tide.

Despite the attempts of the world and the devil to convince him otherwise, he has seen the truth, and believed it with his life.

In a day and age when some states are considering making it illegal to counsel people with SSA that they can fight it he has chosen to fight.

He has chosen this path and is living his life out loud.

Most heroic of all, his faith in grace is his confidence.

He knows the truth about God, love, and eternity. He is laying it all on this line – pushing all his chips into this one space. He knows that despite what obstacles and societal elements are against him, he has the God of the universe on his side, and He will uphold him with His mighty right hand. Because he honors the God of the universe, God will honor him. Because he believes that God is bursting with love, tangible in the form of Jesus’ death and the Holy Spirit’s help, he is able to see beyond this present struggle to an eternity that reduces even this earthly, lifelong fight to the slightest of inconveniences by comparison. His faith is like those of Hebrews 11, and he has seen his promise from a distance. “God is not ashamed to be called his God.”

He takes on the challenge, even if weak-kneed and swallowing hard, because he has been to the deep places of communion with God and knows the comfort and confidence that can come from there. He has had his REAL father whisper the truth about who he (my son) is – a sinner no different from everybody else, equally adored, and redeemed by Christ.

Is there any commitment, made by any son, that can humble his earthly father more, or make him more impressed? I fall on my knees and worship. My heart swells with love and I cry at the blessing of it all. What glory to God! What glory awaits my son! What wonderful pleasure God must feel at such dedication! What joy He must derive from giving my son and I such a gift! God’s amazing grace - His absolute, undeserved favor, has granted me the privilege of seeing such a work of glory and grace in my son’s commitment. Can anything glorify God more tangibly, more visibly?

healing the father wound a helpful resource

If you would like an additional resource on father wounds, its impact, and the healing that God offers, please see *Healing the Father Wound* written by Dr. Kathy Rodriguez.

Like restoring a vintage painting to its original splendor, God seeks to restore His father position with us, but this process can be hindered when we see Him through the distorted image of our earthly fathers. Since most people come from less-than-perfect homes, it is often difficult for us to see God the way He wants us to see Him, as a loving father. Many of us are living out the legacy of father wounds inflicted during our childhoods. *Healing the Father Wound* makes the connection between parental examples and their effect on the formation of our concept of God. *Healing the Father Wound* uses an integrated approach that weaves spiritual insights with practical realities. Readers will be taught how to address their father wounds in a systematic process that takes them from identifying four common types of inadequate fathers to developing empathy for their father’s circumstances without losing their own validity. Along the way, readers will also learn how to recognize a good dad, re-parent themselves, go through the forgiveness process, choose the kind of relationship they want to have with their dad now, and look at how father wounds transfer into intimate relationships. *Healing the Father Wound* is the perfect tool for anyone wanting to learn how to move forward toward emotional and spiritual maturity, regardless of their past.

Kathy Rodriguez, Psy.D., is a professional counselor and psychologist, specializing in treating the emotional wounds individuals carry from their past. She currently is an adjunct professor at Multnomah University Masters in Counseling program, select undergrad psychology courses, counseling courses for the seminary and offers counseling services for seminary students.



march- april calendar & services

tuesday nights in april
taking back ground
Our discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction, and for wives seeking encouragement and support.

thursdays
upper room program
Portland Fellowship's live-in discipleship program, The Upper Room, will resume on Thursday, January 9th. Please be in prayer for Graham, Cole, Joe, Jared, Julie and Patrick as they continue to work through this intense program.

march 14-16
tbg annual retreat
This year we will be going to Westwind Camp, outside of Lincoln City. This year we are welcoming members of our parents group to join us.

april 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.

march 21-23
drew speaking
drew speaking at Theopholus, a youth camp in Olympia, WA.

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.

development grant awarded

Juan Young Trust, a local granting foundation with the mission to "promote the health, education and welfare of children under 21 years old, in the state of Oregon." was instrumental in helping with the development of the www.reachtruth.com program in 2008.



Recently we requested another grant for \$4,000 for much needed maintenance, updates to the site, and computer equipment. We are pleased to share with you that the grant was awarded to Portland Fellowship. Special thanks to Scott Klusmann of Juan Young Trust for your belief and support in this work.

Reach Truth has close to a thousand participants and mentors that have utilized the program to date. There continues to be nothing like this program, which was specially designed for youth struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions.

One of my greatest joys is to see father and son, or mother and daughter signing up to engage in this journey together. Please consider sharing this resource through your social media, with your youth pastor and friends. By doing so, you may be a much needed conduit for hurting young men and women.

father and son retreat

On April 11-13, 2014, Trout Creek Bible Camp will be hosting a retreat for fathers and their sons.



Jim Baugh, a familiar name at Trout Creek, will be challenging attendees with a Biblical approach to being godly fathers and sons. In addition, you will have the opportunity to hear from individuals with knowledge and experience on a variety of issues relating to parenting and relationships. Messages and activities will be geared to sons, 8-years-old and older.

Along with encouraging talks, there will be opportunity to do activities such as: wall climbing, basketball, hiking, zip-line, paintball, games, carpet ball, fishing, gaga ball and more!

The cost is only \$50. For more information and for registration, visit www.tcbc.com



PORTLAND
fellowship

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