



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Hurt into Healing by Denise Shick

What was your biggest concern when you were nine years old? Was it trying to memorize your multiplication facts? Was it that the school cafeteria might serve you your least favorite vegetable at lunch? Perhaps it was something more serious- perhaps your parents were talking of getting divorced. My biggest concern at age nine was how to keep my daddy's secret, the one he revealed to me as we sat alone on the hill near our home.

My dad wanted to be a woman. He continued to share that he was not satisfied in a heterosexual relationship with my mother. Along with that revelation he included several sordid sexual details.

I was confused and hurt. How does a nine-year-old cope with such revelations? Not easily, I can tell you. I wanted a dad who would love and cherish me—who would make me feel special. I wanted to try to “fix” him so he’d be the kind of dad any normal nine-year-old would want. But I couldn’t fix him. And, as I soon learned, he didn’t want to change.

My mother was often in the hospital or at work, leaving dad to care for my brothers, my sister, and me. As I often watched him happily fold laundry, I struggled to understand why a man would enjoy the roles of wife and mother.

I began to reason that my dad’s apparent lack of love for me meant I wasn’t really his daughter; he and my mom must have adopted me. Often, when I was home alone, I’d scour the house—even the attic—for paperwork that would confirm my suspicions. But my searches were fruitless.

There must be some good explanation, I thought. After all, what’s a little girl supposed to feel when her father tells her, “If you see me sitting with my legs crossed over like women cross their legs, you’ll know that I am feeling this way [like a woman]”? I began to think I was to blame for his problem. I tried hiding my underclothes and any other personal items that I thought might incite his “feminine side.” That didn’t help either.

I was twenty-seven years old and married when my dad left his family to pursue what he thought would bring him his long-awaited dream life. I thought about him every Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter celebration. My birthday was on my parents’ anniversary, so I didn’t care to celebrate much. I remember hoping that my mother would forget my birthday and be spared some pain.

Thirteen years later, I was informed that my dad was dying from stomach cancer. When I found out that he was trying to reach out to his family, I was angry. Who did he think he was, deserting us and then looking to us for love and comfort? It hurt knowing that my dream of my dad coming back into our family as a husband, dad, and grandfather was about to die. I was also angry and hurt that he chose his weakness over his family, and did not try to seek help or therapy for his sexual disorientation.



Denise Shick currently serves on Restored Hope Network’s Board of Directors

I visited my dad often while he was in the hospital during his last months. Seeing him in a ladies night gown and slippers was difficult, as was seeing all the teddy bears in his room. But I was shocked as I watched him remove his bra. The nurses called Dad “her”, “she”, or by his chosen name, “Becky”, and when they did, I corrected them. I said “him”, “he”, or “my dad.” I looked at my dad with sorrow because of what the choices he made had done to him.

Throughout the lost years, while he pursued his elusive happiness, he took hormones to grow breasts, and he lived as a woman. If you had walked past him on the street or in a mall, you would not have recognized him as a man.

I learned after his passing that he’d been in a homosexual relationship. That revelation caused me still more pain. Then I remembered the way he’d looked at my boyfriends. At that time, however, I didn’t want to face the truth.

I have many sad memories from his final days in the hospital, but I also have some good ones. I was able to hold his hand and kiss him on the forehead, and gradually, by God’s grace, my anger turned to sympathy for him. I was able to forgive him before he passed from the cancer—forgive him for the pain that his choices had cost him and his family. I look at him now as a man who was filled with pain, and with little, if any, happiness.

Today, I have answers to my unanswered questions, now that I understand the root problem that caused the choices in my father’s life. I meet, pray, and help people like my father and their family members who are going through similar situations, and I can tell them they’re not alone. Gender Identity Disorder does exist, and we must not ignore those trapped in it. Don’t think this issue will never touch your world. I am living proof of what it’s like living with someone who is hurting deep inside with Gender Identity Disorder and same sex attraction. I’ve shared with you about the pain and confusion of living with someone who truly believed he was in the wrong body. Not everyone applauds at the end of the TV talk shows. Some of us cry, so don’t be fooled!

God had a lot of work to do within my heart and soul. I never thought it would be possible to be able to get beyond the anguish I felt and the disappointment I had with my father.



My heart was hardened through many years of harboring anger and sadness. I know now what God’s grace is all about, and I cherish the experience that I had on that last day with my dad as I tried to comfort him. Indeed, God did work within my heart and bring me to where He desired me to be in my own healing.

Many years have passed since the day my dad revealed to me the truth about himself. I’m a long way from being that nine-year-old child. I had long hoped that someday I would be able to help others with what I have lived through. I no longer want to keep it a secret. Keeping it a secret helps nobody.

My ministry now provides the service of connecting with others who feel they are alone or have a need to connect with someone who has “been there.” I’m there to support them with prayers and guidance. I assist them in finding resources, such as ministries, books, and Web sites. I take these steps as I work to equip churches to minister to those who suffer from Gender Identity Disorder and same-sex attraction—and to their family members.

As a child and young adult I couldn’t understand why churches were not ready, willing, and able to support people dealing with these issues. The truth is,

churches should be safe places to receive Godly counsel and love during the difficult time of facing these issues. Our loved one deserves the truth, and God expects the churches to live up to His standards. Speaking the truth can be difficult, but our loved ones deserve the very best, which means presenting the truth with God’s grace.

Writing the book *My Daddy’s Secret* was not an easy task. I have opened my father’s life and mine in hopes of bringing a deeper understanding of these issues. The very real pain that is inflicted upon people who struggle with these issues is difficult. The pain that the families deal with can seem unbearable as well.

After my dad passed away I had found this note that was addressed to me from my father:

Denise, I know I have done you wrong in many ways. I am sorry for that. But please “Don’t throw me away,” as though I never existed.

I believe in my heart I am doing this out of respect and love for my dad and for these words he wrote.

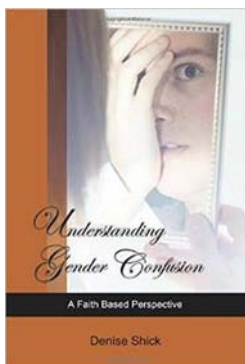
Denises’ father

my daddy's secret by denise shick - a book resource

My Daddy's Secret, the sensitive-often heartbreaking-true story of the effects of a father's secret sexual addictions on his family-particularly on his oldest daughter, whom he made his confidante when she was just nine years old. The author hopes this book will provide new insights into the pain such addictions inflict on families-and insight into God's amazing grace in healing those pains.

Denise Shick, an author, speaker, and the Director of Help4Families, a Christian ministry that compassionately reaches out to family members and churches, bringing a broader understanding of the emotional pain and spiritual confusion that people face when a loved one has gender-identity issues. Help4Families networks hurting family members with resources, Christian counselors and personal/group supports.

Denise leads a church-based support group for people with sexual addictions. Denise is the Administrator of family related issues with TGIF (Transgender International Fellowship). She has served as a program aid for an alcohol and substance abuse clinic. She also has 7 years experience with a Christian Pregnancy Center in the roles of Administrative Assistant, volunteer counselor, and implementing an abstinence program in which she had the lead role of the Abstinence Director. Denise has been married for 26 years and has four children.



understanding gender confusion: a faith based perspective by denise shick

Sometimes people think if they pray or wish hard enough, their transgender tendencies will just disappear. This is an unrealistic expectation. It is not reasonable to expect an overnight change in the area of gender or sexual confusion.

The problem takes years to develop. The restoration likewise takes a lengthy healing and restorative process-and some very hard work-which typically involves years of serious commitment.

For more information on these resources, and to read articles and learn of national conferences for those who struggle with transgender issues, please visit www.help4families.com

starting this fall...

We as a team have been diligently preparing for the fall and are excited to announce our upcoming programs.

Solid Ground: For a while now, God has burdened our hearts in shepherding the men of women of Taking Back Ground, post program. We understand deeply that discipleship is a lifelong process, and completing the Taking Back Ground program doesn't mean we have "arrived". In an effort to shepherd the Alumni of Taking Back Ground, we will be launching a group specifically for graduates of our program called **Solid Ground**. This will be a time of connection, encouragement, accountability AND fellowship. We will be meeting Tuesdays at 7pm starting in October. If you are an alumni of Taking Back Ground, we would love to connect with you again!

Living Waters: We are excited to announce that we will be hosting Living Waters, a discipleship and prayer ministry that addresses the roots of sexual and relational issues. Through worship, teaching, small groups and the powerful tool of intentional listening prayer we will spend 20 weeks confronting the depths of our brokenness and apply God's powerful love to every area of our lives.

This program is open to all! That's right, Living Waters is not only for those who struggle with same-sex attraction, but for anyone who struggles with sexual and relational brokenness. The program will begin Monday, October 6th at 7pm. For an intake appointment, please contact the office, office@portlandfellowship.com or call 503.235.6364.

sept - oct calendar & services

sept 2

radio interview

Jason Thompson will share about PF on the Georgene Rice Show.

sept 12, october 10

the hope group

Join us for our family and friends program for a time of prayer, encouragement, support and a great meal. We are returning to the second Friday of each month beginning at 6:30 p.m.

oct 6

living waters program

Living Waters begins Oct 6th. Contact Drew or Cynthia at the office for more details.

tuesdays in october

solid ground

Support program for men and women who have completed a Portland Fellowship discipleship program.

counseling available

PF will again have an intern counselor available for personal counseling.

Portland Fellowship is blessed to have a good relationship with Multnomah University and Biblical Seminary. We are an internship site for students completing a Masters Degree in Counseling. This fall, we have at least one student offering her services to PF. To learn more: visit www.portlandfellowship.com and click "resources".

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.

time well spent



As we conclude the summer series, Deeper Foundation, I can say with confidence that the Lord continued to show His power and presence every week. Our hearts were challenged in

knowledge and Truth as we learned about identity, forgiveness, lies about God, discerning if sin is better than God, renewing the mind, and God's armor.

We are honored to have walked a short journey with these faithful men and women as they shared their hearts with us this summer. Their honesty, consistency and encouragement blessed us as we were able to get to know them more deeply from week to week. Love covers all and I am so grateful that He is so very faithful to our obedience even when we feel so very lost and confused at times. He continues to reveal His great intimacy and kindness in our questions. Thank you to all who journeyed with us this summer.

prayer requests

...please pray for all those who the Lord wants to attend one of the fall programs this year, that the Lord would lead their hearts to contact PF and sign up for Solid Ground or Living Waters.

...please pray for those in our Upper Room program, that God would continue to refine them into His image, and that they would continue to surrender to His sovereign hand.

...please pray for those in our Family and Friends group, that the Lord would comfort those who are mourning, and that He would lead the prodigals home.

...please pray for continued support and provision of the ministries of Portland Fellowship, that we would see God provide for this work, and continue to trust in God's ability to protect and direct us. Pray also that God gives the staff wisdom and His insight as we enter into this new season of ministry.



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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