



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Friends,

update june 2015

Last year I went to a men's retreat on the Oregon Coast with the theme of "Manhood Defined." That title was especially intriguing to me since I work full-time in a ministry serving men who are struggling to understand masculinity (and, of course, women who are seeking to understand womanhood and femininity). As the speakers shared wonderful truths about living Godly masculine lives, through faithfulness and perseverance, I was left wondering. "Yes," I thought, "but those attributes can also be assigned to a woman." I was left pondering the *difference* between a man and a woman. Is it simply the Y-chromosome, body parts and cultural labels that separate men from women? Or is it something more profound?

"So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them." —Genesis 1:27

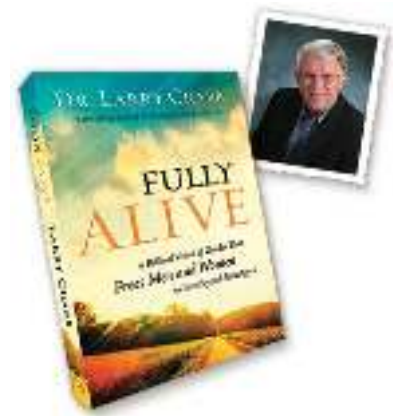
In this passage we learn that God created us as gendered beings to reflect who He is. Furthermore, we learn that we are made in His image. But what is the nature of this image to which God is referring? First and foremost, God Himself is *relational*. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit live as one in an eternally unified relationship with one another. Likewise, when God created men and women, He created us as relational beings in order that we might be like Him, that is, in His image.

Our sex—the way God formed us in the womb—is the basis for how we ought to live out our gender. The reason I say "ought to" is that although we cannot choose our sex, we do have a choice in how we live out our gender. This is how some people have embraced a transgendered persona. They were born male or female, but have rejected their biology as the basis for their authentic self.

Gold medalist Bruce Jenner revealed to the world in April his choice to take on the identity of a woman, raising many questions in our society and in the church. Jenner certainly isn't alone in this choice as more and more men and women are seeking to embrace a gender differing from their assigned sex. We encounter this in our Hope Group, where many parents come seeking to understand their son or daughter struggling with his or her God-intended gender.

The problem with choosing to seek a gender different from the sex of one's body is multifaceted. In order to learn God's intention for making us in His relational image, we must think beyond the outward image and social constructs.

In his book *Fully Alive*, Dr. Larry Crabb uses the terms "relationally masculine" and "relationally feminine" to describe our God-designed genders. Crabb's description of a masculine man calls attention to the *motion* of the masculinity of God, reflecting the manner in which God pursues us by moving towards us. Through this movement we see the *incarnational* beauty of God. God intends a boy to grow into his masculinity and confidently move in his own life, and then move into the lives of others. This movement is not the same for all men, nor will all men move with equal confidence, but all are meant to advance the



"He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners."

ISAIAH 61 : 1

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Kingdom of God. Sadly, many boys experience deep wounds and fears that keep them stuck, and they are unable to embrace the movement of God and find fullness as men.

Along with God's masculine attributes, we also witness a feminine aspect of God: His *invitational* beauty, which is reflected in women. Crabb goes on to explain how a woman expresses femininity by being open to *receive*. She doesn't demand of others, but much like Jesus, she is welcoming and inviting. Her receptivity is attractive and she draws all to her. She expresses the heart of God who desires to receive all who seek Him. But this reflection of the femininity of God, as with the masculine reflection, has been greatly damaged by relational wounds and is in need of repair.

The answer to gender confusion is not to resign to one's wounds and make them the basis of a new identity, but rather to submit those wounds to the faithful Healer. He is the only One that can meet those deep needs and restore His intended purpose for identity and gender. The good news is that He not only *can* restore, but *desires* to restore the wounded masculinity in men and wounded femininity in women. His desire is not to leave us in a place of relational brokenness, but to enable us to embrace the true relational heart of God.

For our summer series this year, we will be looking further into gender and God's intention for expressing masculinity and femininity. We will be using Larry Crabb's video series and workbook, *Fully Alive: A Biblical Vision of Gender that Frees Men and Women to Live Beyond Stereotypes*. The summer program will be on Tuesday evenings in July and August, 7:00 p.m., at the Fellowship House. If you would like to join us, please email, call or log into your profile at www.portlandfellowship.com to sign up.

May the Lord bless you in the knowledge and love of God.



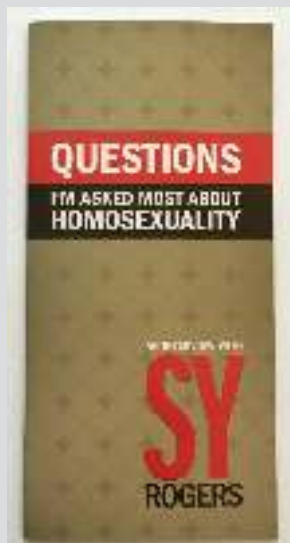
Jason Thompson
Executive Director

Sy Rogers Pamphlet:

A Resource for Families and Churches

We are excited to share a valuable resource from Sy Rogers with you this month. Sy has been working in sexual redemption ministry for over 25 years, after experiencing his own transformation from his homosexual and transgender struggles.

We pray that you will be both blessed and encouraged by the enclosed pamphlet. It covers some of the most frequently asked questions about homosexuality, and has in-depth information on where homosexuality comes from, what we can realistically expect from support programs, and some common misconceptions about homosexuality. If you or someone you know is wrestling with the hard questions about homosexuality, Scripture and God's redemptive power, this educational and hope-filled interview with Sy is a great resource, filled with wisdom and understanding.



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events calendar

june 2
Vancouver Bible Institute
Jason will be teaching a class in
Vancouver, WA

june 12
Hope Group + Wives Group
For Wives, Family and Friends.
Dinner will be provided.
6:30 p.m at the PF house.

june 26
Hope Home Groups
Opportunities to connect with
other family members for prayer
and support. Call office for info.

june 23-28
Restored Hope Conference
Jason will be attending the
Restored Hope Network annual
conference in Lancaster, PA

**Speakers, counseling, youth
support and personal support**
can be arranged through the office.

Check website for additional updates
at www.portlandfellowship.com