



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Bought With A Price by Adrienne

As I sat and scrolled through my Facebook page news feed, I was grieved at what I saw.

A few months ago when the marriage equality bill passed, people could show their support for gay marriage by having their profile pictures on Facebook highlighted in rainbow colors. I looked at my friend list and noticed the ones that had their pictures highlighted. Some who were showing their support weren't just my friends, but were Christian friends. I am not writing this to make judgmental statements or pass judgment on others; to the contrary, I am writing this to share my story and my experiences, and what I know to be the undeniable truth of Jesus and His work in my life.

Ever since I was little, I struggled with same-sex attractions. For me, struggling with this was a very private and lonely struggle. I grew up in a Christian home, went to church every Sunday and attended Christian schools up until high school. My experience of being in same-sex relationships wasn't a positive one. I never believed that what I was doing was right, and I condemned myself a great deal for it. There was a real lack in my sense of identity, and I constantly felt guilty for being in one particular relationship. At first, I identified with that same sex relationship, and even identified myself through the lens of that experience. Throughout the relationship, I constantly tried to end it, but couldn't seem to do it, and it lasted a little over a year. During that time in my life, I dealt greatly with depression, however, in all of that the Lord revealed Himself to me.

One day I decided to go over to my parents' house, and before I went in, I grabbed their mail for them. In the stack of mail was an envelope from Focus on the Family, and on the outside were the words "Can homosexuality be prevented?" I opened up the letter and read it. It was there that I found out about the book *Love Won Out*. I called the bookstore to see if they had a copy and they did. As I read the book, I can remember feeling like I could relate to their stories. It felt good to have an outlet in understanding my own feelings, while gaining insight about my own struggles. It was at this point that I learned what surrender to God looked like and what it meant to give up something completely to Him. I remember praying to God, asking Him to get me out of the relationship I was in and turn her heart away from mine and toward someone else. A friend of mine at the time called me up to tell me about an upcoming job fair. Since I wanted to stay in my line of work, but work different hours, I went to the job fair, applied for a job and was hired. I started working evenings at this new company and on one occasion, I had to back out of seeing a comedy show with my girlfriend and some other friends. My friend gave my ticket to someone else, a woman my girlfriend left me for. In all of that, the Lord heard me and answered my prayer.

It was through the book *Love Won Out* that I found out about Portland Fellowship. I remember



Adrienne with
Anne Paulk, co-
author of *Love
Won Out*.

the first night I went to Portland Fellowship, I was feeling scared and wasn't sure what to expect. The night started out with praise and worship music, and I remember thinking to myself that it was kind of like being at church. That first time I was there, we were asked to write about what our "Egypt" looked like (what our struggles looked like), and this was how it looked for me: *"I am scared and insecure. I lack in faith and hope. I don't have much self confidence. Sometimes I worry that the Lord doesn't want me. I feel angry at God sometimes for my lack of understanding even though I know He is not to blame. I find myself having all these feelings of insecurity and sometimes jealousy, whereas I never felt that way before. I fear I will always struggle and fear falling into temptation. I don't feel strong emotionally. Things that never seemed to bother me before bother me now. I feel with my faith I have lost the light in my eyes, and I don't know where to go or what to do. I am sad and lonely. There doesn't seem to be anyone to talk to and I am lost."*

This was back on October 3, 2002. I have kept it all these years because I can look back at that time in my life and see how drastically and wonderfully God has changed both me and my life.

During the time that I was seeking God, I remember listening to the radio on KPDQ and hearing the verse from Isaiah 1:18 spoken on the program: *"Come now, let us settle this," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool."* Though I had heard that verse before, I really heard it in that moment and I remember being very excited about it. That Jesus could take my sins and make them white as wool was amazing to me. I started going to church again, and for the first time I read through the entire Bible in a year. I looked forward to spending time with God and reading the Bible. I remember looking at it like I was reading a history book, yet at the same time, so many verses I came across were like He was specifically speaking to me. Another verse I read that really impacted me was 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: *"Do you now know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies."* I can't imagine anything more beautiful than being loved by the living God and knowing that He loves



you, and not only that, but that He bought you with a price. Knowing my sins, it seems unbelievable. I think sometimes it's easier to believe in a condemning God, one who looks on me with contempt instead of forgiveness, and justice instead of mercy. I will say this, though: when I was in the lifestyle, I condemned myself a great deal, but God did not.

There are very personal things that the Lord did for me during that time in my life, and none of them were out of condemnation, but grace. When I first started going back to church I remember feeling that I didn't belong. I knew the friendships I had at that time were with people who were in the lifestyle, and I knew the Lord wanted me to walk away from them. The friends that I had then in my life weren't really friends at all. I remember praying one day at church that if I was where God wanted me to be that someone would introduce themselves to me. It was there that I

met a good friend of mine who invited me to her Bible study. I didn't end up going, but the following Sunday a girl in the same Bible study invited me to go. As time went on, I joined a Tuesday morning women's Bible study group, and it was there that I met my friend Cheri who is my closest and dearest friend today. I look back at that time in my life and I see how so much has changed. I am blessed with beautiful Christian friendships. I have met so many wonderful people at Portland Fellowship, and I was even blessed to meet Anne Paulk, one of the authors of *Love Won Out*. I remember praying that one day if it would be God's will that I would meet her, since her book meant a lot to me, and I did!

Soon after I left the lifestyle, I bought a ring with the words "Fear Not" on it. It was my promise to God, that with His help, I would never go back to living that lifestyle. I still wear it today, and it continues to remind me of what He has done for me. I know that there is a lot of confusion people have with regard to homosexuality, and some Christians maybe even believe that it is ok. What I can tell you, without any doubt in my mind, is that in loving kindness the Lord brought me out of that lifestyle, and that I was bought with a price. I am not perfect, and I don't have it all figured out, but I will continue to follow in the way of the Lord.

Addressing the Issue: “How Should We Respond?” by Patrick Silvus

Many of the responses and inquiries we receive here at PF can be summed up in one question: “How should we respond?” Though seemingly a simple question, it carries tremendous weight, as many Christians are wrestling with how to engage our culture today. I cannot speak to each individual circumstance, but there are several ways in which we can prepare ourselves to respond Biblically to sexual brokenness.

First, and foremost, we must connect with God. This might sound simple, but speaking from personal experience, it is all-too easy to jump into a debate or ask other people for advice instead of turning to God first. Matthew 6:33 says, “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*” If we are seeking the Lord first and staying in step with Him, His Spirit will guide us. What’s more, God has wisdom, knowledge and understanding stored up for us if we search for them as for hidden treasures (Prov. 2:4-7). Jesus tells us, “*When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say*” (Luke 12:11-12). Do you believe that? Many times we worry about defending ourselves or preparing that perfectly-crafted statement to simultaneously convict and comfort someone. How often we try to do the Holy Spirit’s job for Him! He will give you the right words—are you willing to trust Him in this?



Next, we must do the hard work. One reason why homosexuality is such a big issue for Christians today is that we haven’t done the work of learning about it or addressing it. If you are truly seeking to respond Biblically to this issue, you must be committed to doing some hard work.

Are you unclear about what the Bible says about homosexuality? Dig into the Word. Are you having trouble interpreting the Scriptures? Talk to your pastor. Read commentaries. Seek Gospel-centered, Biblical teachers who can instruct and guide you on this issue. Remember to be “wise as serpents but gentle as doves”—there are many conflicting doctrines on sexuality. Be wary of deciding that one person’s interpretation is the final authority. It is not enough to simply claim God’s original intent for sexuality; we must learn more about *how* and *why* God’s design and law matter.

Are you confused about where homosexuality comes from, or how it develops? Do some research. Listen to people’s stories. Read testimonies about God’s redemption and transformation. Learn as much as you can about human growth and development. The more we understand about ourselves and how God designed us, the better equipped we are to engage in meaningful conversations about God’s plan for sexuality.

Are you uncomfortable speaking to someone who supports homosexuality? Take some time to examine your own heart—take the log out of your own eye before addressing the speck in your brother’s (Matt. 7:3-5). Press into fellowship with other believers, and wrestle through the hard questions: *What do I believe about sexuality, and why? How does God call believers to treat non-believers living in sin? How does God call us to respond to fellow Christians living in unrepentant sin? Am I uncomfortable because someone’s decisions go against my preference, or are they actually against my Biblical convictions? Am I willing to be vulnerable with my own sinful struggles? Am I willing to suffer loss of relationship for the sake of the Gospel? Am I willing to live in the tension of loving someone I don’t agree with?* As we connect with God and stay in step with His Spirit, He often reveals the ugly parts of our own hearts. As we surrender our failings to Christ, He washes us clean and gives us life and truth to speak to our loved ones.

Finally, we must obediently testify to the work of Christ crucified in our lives. The Bible says the saints will overcome “*by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony*” (Rev. 12:11). What does that look like? For some of us, we are afraid of offending people or turning them away from Christ. Yet God calls us to lovingly speak the truth He gives us. Jesus promised to give His Spirit to us, to guide us into all truth (John 16), and the Spirit is responsible for convicting and counseling. Don’t be afraid to speak what is true! It will actually free you from your prison of fear and worry (John 8:32). Even as we face trials and persecutions for the truth, take heart—Jesus has already overcome the world (John 16:33).

On the other hand, many of us tell others the truth about their sin without communicating the compassionate love of Christ that we ourselves have received. It’s humbling, but sharing what Christ has done for us requires us confessing our own sins and highlighting just how *good* God is. Remember that it’s the *kindness* of God that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). You may find that communicating God’s grace and kindness towards someone is more effective in leading them to repentance than just communicating God’s wrath.

No matter what circumstances or questions you’re facing, our prayer for you is that you would press into the Lord, do the hard work and testify to the truth in love. We trust the Holy Spirit will give you the right words to say.

november - december calendar & services

tuesday nights in november taking back ground

A powerful discipleship program that equips those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions to walk in freedom.
7-9 pm.

thursday afternoons
upper room community
PF's intensive live-in discipleship program. Participants meet weekly for teaching, discipleship training and prayer.

november 13 & december 11
the hope group
Join us for a time of prayer, encouragement, support and a great meal.
6:30 p.m.

november 27 & december 18
home groups
Friends & family of SSA-strugglers connect, share and pray together in host homes. Groups are currently in Vancouver, Tigard and Oregon City.

november 9
skype teaching
Patrick will be sharing with a parents group in California via Skype.

november 15
salem preaching
Jason will be sharing a message at a church in Salem, OR.

additional updates

www.portlandfellowship.com
Please take advantage of your online profile. If you don't have a username, please email or call.

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

Final Opportunity: Portland Fellowship Matching Grant

We are in the final weeks of our Matching Grant! Through the end of November, 2015, an anonymous donor through the National Christian Foundation is willing to match donations up to \$50,000. This means that when you donate a special gift in any



amount to Portland Fellowship, your contribution *doubles*. For example, if you give \$100 toward this grant, your gift effectively becomes \$200. We are excited to report that we have received many generous donations for this challenge, but we still have more than half-way to go if we are to hit 50k.

This opportunity will end on November 30th, so if you've been thinking and praying about partnering with us for the Matching Grant, please consider doing so soon. You can mail the matching grant response card back with a check, or donate online by signing in to your profile at www.portlandfellowship.com. You are welcome to call the office and we can assist you with that process.

We are truly grateful for this anonymous donor and for each of you as you consider your partnership with us. Thank you for continuing to make it possible to offer support for those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions as well as friends and family.

Prayer Request: Online Resources

Please continue to pray as we work towards improving our online resources. Portland Fellowship is partnering with another ministry to create an online video teaching series on transgender issues, and we need wisdom, guidance and protection as we follow the Lord's leading in this area.

We are also in the process of creating a separate Hope Group Online website, launching a Spanish resource page and updating our systems so supporters like you can access our online resources via mobile/smart phones. These are exciting changes that we hope and pray will make it faster and easier to access the hope-filled resources we offer. Please pray the Lord would strengthen and guide the staff and volunteers who are working to update and improve our online resources.



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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