



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Friends,

update august 2016

Years ago, after my wife and I had 2 kids, a minivan, and a little house, God reminded me of something He had put on my heart several years earlier: adoption. He let us know we weren't done yet and brought us three more children through adoption. This didn't happen overnight though, and God helped us work through our fears. Basically, we wanted to know exactly how it would work out before we started, but God didn't tell us. He just told us to obey and that He would take care of the rest. I love those adoption commercials about how you don't need to be a perfect parent to adopt. They strike a chord with me because my wife and I are anything but perfect. We have a perfect God, but we struggle along with everyone else. When you adopt, people seem to think you either have super powers or have simply lost your mind. We're still a work in progress and I don't know what lies ahead. I do know however that God will be there. And that is all we need.

"Which ones are your real kids?" This is a question that sometimes gets asked of adoptive parents. I never assume that people who ask this have any ill intent, but rather, just lack the right words at the moment. The question, though, is an interesting one. If some of the kids are real, what does that make the other children? What is the difference between the biological kids and the adopted kids? Or is there any difference at all? To be sure, there are distinct genetic differences. For example, my adopted son has a far better chance at a full head of hair than my biological son. They have different birth stories, and started out life in different ways. But that was then. What about now? Who are they *now*? Specifically, whose family are the adopted kids now part of? Who's the Mommy? Who's the Daddy? I believe that at the point of adoption the identity of the child changes—beyond legal guardianship, the family identity of the child changes. This is a point which I am adamant and passionate about.

When our adoptions were finalized, we received a pile of paperwork, everything related to the kids. I thought that was it, but months later we received some more documents, ones that are still very significant to me—documents that I keep locked away in our safety deposit box, in fact. They are birth certificates, one for each kid. But what's fascinating to me is that they are different from the old ones. Very different. We expected the name changes, but didn't expect anything else to change. If anything, I expected our names would be listed at the bottom in a footnote or something. On the new birth certificates, however, I am listed as the Father and my wife as the Mother. There is no reference to the adoption—no asterisk, no additional forms, no tiny subtext or fine print. In fact, other than names, dates and eye color, there is absolutely no difference between the birth certificates of my biological children and those of my adopted children. It's as if we were there when they were born. It's as if we were the real mom and dad. And the beautiful thing is, now we truly *are* the real dad and real mom to EACH of our five children.



Ben Brown serves on the
PF Board of Directors

"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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When we accept Jesus, we become part of a family that will never end. We are adopted by God Himself and become legitimate heirs. Our spiritual birth certificates are replaced with new ones, and God's system of record never changes (and thankfully does not require painful trips to the Social Security office). Our Father is listed as God. We are His *real* kids. If you don't know Jesus, I can assure you that my Dad is stronger, more gracious and more generous than any earthly father you might know here on earth.

The reason I share this story is because I've found that PF focuses on our identity in Christ *before* focusing on our behaviors. This ministry isn't here to change people. It's here to remind people who they already are, to remind people that they are a "real kid" of God. When we truly know who we are (and *whose* we are), then we don't struggle as much with the things that take us away from God. Our identity in Christ is at the core issue of our humanity, and I respect this ministry for focusing on it.

I've been around Portland Fellowship for many years, and I have seen people come and go, *but God who started this ministry is still here*. His truth and His grace continue to convict, transform and empower struggling individuals and families to walk in the healing work that Jesus offers through the Cross. It's why I got involved here, and I imagine that's why you're involved, too. Thank you for supporting the Lord's work here at PF. Your support allows this ministry to continue shepherding, challenging and encouraging the brave men and women who enter our discipleship programs and support groups. Through PF, we are continually reminded that God *can* redeem and restore our identity in Him—we are His real kids!

In Christ,

Benjamin Brown
PF Board of Directors

PF Open Group Night

Our final Open Group Night of the summer is almost here! On Tuesday August 16th, from 7-8:30pm, we will be opening our doors for people to come and connect, hear testimonies of God's transformational power and learn more about Portland Fellowship. Light refreshments will be served afterwards.



We are excited to introduce new people to our ministry, as well as support those who are going through our programs. If you are a local pastor, lay leader, financial supporter or even just someone who's curious about what actually goes on here at PF, we want to invite you to come and experience a taste of the incredible work God is doing in our midst. We encourage you to prayerfully consider inviting a friend, neighbor or relative who hasn't heard about PF before--this is the perfect opportunity! *Please call or email to RSVP by August 12th.*



Taking Back Ground 2016-2017

We are currently accepting applications and completing new intake meetings for this year's Taking Back Ground discipleship program. If you, or someone you know, is interested in joining or learning more, please call or email us today! The program meets Tuesdays, from 7-9:30pm, and runs October through May.

Portland Fellowship is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 nondenominational organization. We are exclusively supported through private donations, support services and offerings. Thank you for your gifts.

events calendar

august 4

Patrick Speaking
Calvary Chapel Southeast.

august 10

Cynthia Sharing
Cedar Mill Bible Church.

august 12

Hope Group
For Family and Friends.
Dinner will be provided.
6:30 pm at the PF house.

august 16

Open Group Night
Invite a friend!
7-8:30 pm at PF.

august 26

Hope Home Groups
Connect with other family members for prayer and support.
Call office for info.

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

Check website for additional updates at www.portlandfellowship.com