



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## My Long Battle For Freedom by Jerry Heacock

*I trusted Jesus as my Savior in first grade. That same year, my teacher told my parents*

*that I spent too much time with the girls and needed to play more with the boys. I felt different from other boys, especially because I liked music instead of sports. After third grade, an older boy began some sexual activities with me, which went on for a year until he moved away. That was my first introduction to sex.*

In my teen years, my attraction to other boys greatly increased. My sexual thoughts were obsessive, yet I didn't act on them due to my fears of rejection. During college, however, I had some limited sexual activity with strangers, which later led to more frequent encounters while I was in Germany with the Army. I was a chaplain's assistant, living a double life. I knew my behaviors were sinful and kept asking God's forgiveness and begging for victory.

After returning to Portland, I began attending seminary. During my first three years, I was sporadically going to gay bars. I hated myself and was afraid of others finding out. In fact, my fear of discovery was one of my greatest terrors. Ever since childhood I had carried this dark secret with me, horrified that someone would find out the truth. While I desperately wanted freedom, I was equally terrified of having to be honest about my homosexual struggle. By God's grace, eventually I confided in my friend Dan, and while we did become closer friends, the intense struggle of living a double life continued to be overwhelming. Finally, I confessed my duplicity to one of my seminary professors.

After talking with my professor, I hit the lowest point of my life. I had revealed my darkest sin and my fears consumed me. *"Oh God, I can't go on. I'm worn out from the struggles for so many years. I have no hope now. For years I've begged You to change me and free me from all homosexual temptations. You have not done that, and may never do it. I'm so ashamed and guilty and afraid of what others will think of me. The only way I can end this battle is by ending my life. Oh God, where are You? I feel alone and You're silent."* As these thoughts continued that day, I found myself isolating and feeling numb inside. That night, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1974, I decided to commit suicide by slashing my wrists. As I lay on my bed mentally composing letters to my loved ones, I suddenly fell asleep from exhaustion.

Today I believe it was no accident, but rather God intervened that night and put me into a deep sleep. What a surprise for me to awaken the next morning—alive! Over the following weeks, God supernaturally filled me with new hope and a strong desire to live. I withdrew from seminary and went to counseling for almost a year to overcome my sexual addiction. This helped me stop the outward behaviors, though I continued to struggle with my thought life.

During this time, I began dating a woman from my church named Rosie. I told Rosie of my sexual struggles before we married in July of 1975, and God blessed us with an intimate relationship in our marriage. Sadly, three months after our wedding I began having infrequent sexual encounters with men. Over the next three years, whenever I failed and asked for forgiveness, Rosie readily forgave me each time. Rosie's unconditional love and forgiveness reflected God's character to me, alleviated



*Jerry is one of the original founders of the ministry that would become Portland Fellowship.*

some of my fears and helped restore my hope.

Over time, God used His Word to renew my mind. I memorized the whole book of Philippians with Rosie's help, and God used it to set me free from my same-sex addiction. The Lord was changing me from the inside out. I was overwhelmed with His love for me, which helped remove my fears of other people knowing about my struggle. My homosexual behaviors stopped and Rosie and I grew much closer. Increasingly, I wanted to share my story and offer hope to others, yet I didn't know what that would look like—*How? When? Where?*

Of course, God already had a plan, and in 1980 I was asked to speak at all three services at Hinson Baptist Church. My mind and heart raced with many thoughts and feelings: *"I can't keep it a secret any longer. I must tell everyone what God is doing in my life. But how can I face my greatest fear head-on and tell everyone about the secret sin in my life? Yet, I want to share my story to offer help and hope to others who struggle like I have."* I wondered how people would respond, because nobody had ever publicly confessed their homosexual struggle in our church, but I also knew God wanted me to trust Him and be completely transparent.

As I shared at Hinson, God filled me with His courage, love and peace. The congregation in each service readily forgave me and overwhelmed me with their loving support. I never could have done that in my own strength, and I truly experienced God's presence like He promises in Isaiah 41:10. Though my pastor didn't know how the church would respond, he predicted after I shared my story that I would *"experience a freedom you've never had before."* Praise God—he was so very right! In the days that followed, Rosie and I were assured of people's love and gradually some people began to share their own struggles with us. We were both greatly relieved and encouraged; for the first time, we had the freedom to talk openly about our lives.

Right away we began getting requests for help. We began to meet with people individually, but it quickly became overwhelming. As a result, we started a weekly volunteer ministry at our church called "Reconciliation" for people struggling with SSA. I completed my Master of Divinity, and during the 1980's I was given many more opportunities to encourage others in this struggle: I shared my testimony on television twice, Don Baker wrote a book about my life called *Beyond Rejection*, and there was even a feature article on our ministry in a local newspaper. This resulted in calls and letters coming in from all around the country and other parts of the world, asking us for help.

What a great joy it was for us to witness people coming and finding new love and hope in the midst of their struggles!

We wanted to quit our jobs and do ministry full-time, but the funding wasn't there. Eventually, Rosie and I needed a break and we stepped aside, turning the ministry over to Phil Hobizal. Under Phil's leadership, the ministry became a non-profit under the name of Portland Fellowship. We didn't know if this would be a temporary or permanent break from ministry, but we agreed to stay open to God.

Our marriage continued to grow and blossom. What a joy it was for me to experience freedom from my sexual addiction! In 1991 I began ministering as a chaplain at Baptist Manor in Portland. Though it was challenging at times, I wanted to

continue serving there for a long time. God, however, had other plans that would seriously test our faith. One Sunday after church in 1997, Rosie had a massive stroke, which paralyzed her right side and affected her speech and mobility. At first I didn't understand how serious it was. Soon, however, my mind was flooded with questions. *"Will Rosie survive? If so, how long will her recovery take? Why is this happening? Oh God, where are You?"* All my thoughts were on Rosie. We'd been married over twenty-two years and she was my closest friend. Both of our lives had been fast-paced and exciting; now, time stood still for us. I felt alone, and missed being able to communicate with her at a deeper level.

Over the following weeks, I slowly realized God had reduced us to complete dependency upon Him and others for everything. At times I would kneel by my bed to pray, but all I could do was groan to God (*Romans 8*). When Rosie came home from the hospital, she was placed on total and permanent disability and I quit my job to care for her. Later, Rosie became very depressed and attempted suicide in 2003. Since then, we have experienced moving, changing jobs, unemployment and more health issues. Now, I realize God used Rosie's stroke as a test to strengthen our faith and our marriage. With God's help, we have both persevered and drawn closer to Him and each other.

Despite these difficult circumstances, I praise God for His freedom and healing—where once I was dealing with sexual addiction and homosexual fantasies, I now truly only desire a deeper intimacy with God and with my wife. This July, Rosie and I will celebrate 41 years of marriage, and the Lord has allowed me to continue working as a chaplain. My long battle for freedom from sexual addiction and fear has brought me closer to Him through His Word (*John 8:31-36*). Where once I felt despair and hopelessness, the Lord has done what seemed impossible and gave me a new heart for Him, *"For nothing is impossible with God."* (*Luke 1:37*).



*Jerry and Rosie on their wedding day.*

## Happy. Healthy. Holy? by Cynthia Beaudry

Here at Portland Fellowship, I have the incredible privilege of coming alongside some of the most remarkable women. I am so grateful to watch them grow in deeper relationship with Jesus while finding their true identity as daughters and co-heirs with Christ.

Recently, however, I am finding a specific concern repeatedly coming up as I mentor these women. It is through many conversations and prayers that I have deliberated over this issue. With the current rise of churches embracing homosexual behavior and identity as natural and acceptable, there seems to be a trend of “Christians” (who once stood firm in biblical beliefs) not only accepting the cultural standard, but also engaging in homosexual relationships, while still maintaining their statement of faith. As I mentor the women of PF, women who have made substantial sacrifices to submit their sexuality to Christ, I am seeing an increase in confusion as they watch their fellow sisters fall away and embrace a gay identity.

These once-firm Christians are counselors, professionals, sisters, mentors and beautiful daughters. It grieves my heart that the women of PF wrestle deeply as they see their friends falling away to pursue the fleeting, tangible pleasures of sin, instead of persevering for the delayed, intangible rewards of Christ (*Hebrews 11:25-26*).

The confusion looks like this: *“Cynthia, I have a friend. She is gay. She still goes to church. She is a counselor. She talks to me about boundaries and emotional health. She seems so healthy. She has a girlfriend. I guess I am confused. They look so happy.”*

This is the question that I am dealing with, the question that I’ve deliberated with other leaders about and contended with the Lord through prayer: *Does being happy and healthy mean someone is also holy?* The truth is, many Christian counselors, mentors, professionals and pastors are very gifted in their fields, and as a result live their lives with visible happiness and health. It’s easy to think that these people aren’t living in sin—we often assume that people who don’t have “messy” lives or have all the answers must not be living in sin. However, some Christians in helping roles may wear their professional health badges as shields to prevent people from questioning the integrity of their heart. Still, seeing a person’s life on the outside we often wonder: *How can we argue against what seems happy and healthy, especially to those who are hungry for both?*

I want to verify that it is a very valid thing to be confused about. Satan has an effective marketing strategy. It has confused me too! If you are watching the infomercial for Gay Christianity for a split second you may ask yourself, *“Did God really say...?”* Remember that those were the very words of Satan to Eve (*Genesis 3*), and his message is the same today. This is why it is important, more than ever, to be in community with the Remnant of God, for the continual reminder that He still demonstrates His power through His Spirit by the work of the cross.

Church of God in Portland and beyond, you who are sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be His holy people (*1 Corinthians 1:2*), please hear my heart: Happy. Healthy. These do not equal Holy. Never. Not in a million years. Remember that the standards of the world for wisdom, influence and strength are foolishness to God (*1 Corinthians 1:27*). The wisdom of God is in Jesus Christ, who is our righteousness, holiness and redemption (*1 Corinthians 1:30*). When what the world calls healthy goes against what God calls holy, we must obey the Word of God and trust that His ways are better (*Isaiah 55:8*).

To those who are finding it hard to keep hope when your friends are falling away, and to those who are finding happiness more appealing than holiness, I want to tell you that I am so genuinely sorry for your pain and confusion. Many will feast on the multiplied loaves and fishes (the blessings of God) but will turn away when called to feast on the flesh of the Son of Man, drink His blood and partake in His suffering (*John 6:53*). I grieve with you. I pray with you. And I invite you. Some will forfeit holiness for “happiness.” I say we can have something greater.

We can be both healthy *and* holy. We can walk in the difficult way of transformation (*Luke 14: 25-33*) and be filled with incredible joy. We invite you to join us and live for something greater than our own happiness: Christ and His righteousness.



## may - june calendar & services

### tuesday nights in may taking back ground

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

may 5-8

**heart change workshop**  
Jason will be attending a workshop/training on deeper healing and heart change.

may 13 & june 10

**the hope group**  
Join us for a time of prayer, encouragement and a great meal.  
6:30 p.m.

may 27 & june 24

**home groups**  
Friends & family of SSA-strugglers connect, share and pray together in host homes. Groups are in Vancouver, Tigard, SW Portland and Oregon City.

may 26

**urc graduation**  
The Upper Room Community participants will be completing their nine-month intensive discipleship program.

june 24-25

**restored hope conference**  
RHN's annual conference outside Chicago, Illinois.

### additional updates

[www.portlandfellowship.com](http://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.

## New Home Group: Southwest Portland



We are excited to announce the launch of our newest Home Group in Southwest Portland! Our Home Groups offer personal, Biblical

support to parents, family members and friends seeking help in relating to their loved ones in the gay lifestyle. These groups meet the last Friday night of each month in homes around the Portland metropolitan area. They provide a great opportunity to connect with others who are also seeking wisdom and understanding. Each group offers prayer, encouragement, accountability and fellowship.

The new Southwest Portland Home Group will be meeting at Portland Christian Center, in their Hospitality Center. Light refreshments will be provided. If you or someone you know would like to join this group, please contact leaders Darryl and Tana at: [thines@pcctoday.com](mailto:thines@pcctoday.com).

## RHN Annual Conference: HOPE 2016

Portland Fellowship is a member ministry of Restored Hope Network. This year's annual RHN conference will take place on June 24th & 25th, just outside of Chicago, IL. There will be dozens of breakout sessions, worship and special guests like Janet Parshall, a national radio and television commentator, author and advocate for the preservation and promotion of family values. For more information on pricing, registration and other details, please visit: [www.restoredhopenetwork.org](http://www.restoredhopenetwork.org)



**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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