



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## Reflections from a Parent of a Gay Child by Dr. Jerry Bassett

*Jerry is a volunteer leader for Portland Fellowship's Hope Group, which offers support, education and encouragement to friends and family members of gay loved ones.*

I am a father of a gay son. This reality has been difficult for me to internalize, rationalize and even emotionally accept. My searching for answers—learning to navigate a new relationship paradigm relating to my son, and yet hold onto Biblical faith in a gracious, just and loving God—has been a work in progress. The Lord has been transforming me as I learn how to love my son as Christ loves us. When first told about my son's homosexuality, I was confused, lost and upset. I had tried my best to teach him the right way he should go, to help him bond with other boys and to show him that I loved him. *How could this happen?!* Like many parents, I've always loved my son, desired the best for him and wanted to bond, understand and relate to him. Yet, I also struggled with finding a balance between enforcing firm discipline and giving him freedom to make his own choices (even poor ones).

Looking back, I realize I had the same reaction many of the parents who come to Hope Group have had. Despite our best efforts, somewhere along the way our children developed these feelings and began acting on them, often without our knowledge. Once the initial shock wore off, I was faced with the task of examining my own heart and pondering my words and actions towards my son. It was humbling to admit that there were moments I missed connecting with my son, times when I communicated anger and rejection instead of love and support. Thankfully, God is gracious, and as I've learned about sexual and relational brokenness, I've come to understand that while I influenced part my son's struggle, I am ultimately not responsible for his decisions or actions. If you are a parent struggling to understand how to love your gay son or daughter well, I pray some of the insights the Lord has taught me in this process will be a blessing to you.

**Parenting is hard.** We too often place immense pressure on ourselves to be perfect parents and on our offspring to be perfect children. Remember that **you are not a perfect parent, but neither are you a bad one.** We all make mistakes, but we often fail to remember and embrace what we did well. Take time to celebrate the victories and the good things you've done for your children. When you do have to look at your mistakes, know that **you had influences on your child's struggle, but you alone did not cause this. You cannot control a person's identity or their choices (your children included).** Whatever impact you've had on your child, positive or negative, they have their own journey and are responsible



*Jerry is a regular attendee and volunteer for PF's Hope Group.*

before God for their choices. This isn't to say that we should sit back and condemn our children for their behavior—we should be the first ones asking for forgiveness and seeking to understand them. And yet, we can't blame ourselves if they choose to continue living in sin. Still, their behavior may grieve our hearts, and **we need to forgive our children for the disappointment they have caused us**. It took me a while to realize my disappointment in my son's choices was adversely affecting my relationship with him—I couldn't freely love him unconditionally. When I went to the Lord and forgave my son for disappointing me, it freed me to love him with no expectations or strings attached.



**Our children's struggle with homosexuality is an opportunity to learn more about them.** In trying to “fix” my son, I told him all of the “right” things—as a physician, I knew the medical facts about the negative consequences of homosexuality. Yet I missed one key truth: **knowledge is useful, but knowing our children's hearts is priceless**. When my “right” answers didn't change my son's feelings or behaviors, I realized I was missing out on what was going on in his heart. I have begun to ask more questions, seeking to understand and listen more instead of jumping to give advice or state my own opinions. I learned that **though truth is important, it is our children's own perceptions that matter**. I discovered there were times when my son actually felt rejected by my attempts to tell him the right way to go. Though I was speaking the truth in love, my son perceived that I was rejecting him through my attitude and approach. Seeking to know his heart has helped me be more loving, transparent and open in communication than my preaching ever did. I further learned that **peer acceptance or exclusion can drive people's behavior**. It grieves my heart to understand now how my son's struggle to find peer acceptance has driven him into rather dark places. It is also hard to accept that **we cannot choose our children's friends**. There have been many times when I wished I could remove negative people from my son's life, but **there is a limit to what we can do**. Thankfully, God knows our children's deeper needs. **We need to pray, surrender our loved ones**

**to God and let Him work.**

**Our sorrow is an invitation to press into the Lord and into community.** Initially, my son's homosexuality had me praying for his immediate repentance and transformation. Over time, I've come to realize God uses the pain of our children's choices to remind us that **we must seek God for ourselves**. God used my son's homosexuality to reveal my own struggles, pride, failings and sin. Though I wanted this to be fixed quickly and neatly, the reality is, **life is not static—just when everything seems stable, new problems may cause pain and confusion**. My son's homosexuality was not the only crisis I faced: divorce, family illness and the financial stress of my private medical practice all intruded to affect my life. Yet

**God uses our pain as a training ground to better equip us to deal with the difficult and harsh realities of life**. It is not fun, but God truly works all things together for the good of those who love him (*Romans 8*). **One of the ways He ministers to us in our pain is through the power and wisdom of other people. Trying to navigate emotional land mines alone is difficult, exhausting and fraught with error**. There has been greater power, relief and comfort in knowing I am not alone in this struggle. Being able to confess, laugh, cry, repent, hope and pray with other parents on the same journey as me has been invaluable.

While I never would have asked for my son to struggle with homosexuality, God has used it to change my life for the better. Having a gay son has made me a better physician. I'm now more compassionate and quicker to listen. Though my son's lifestyle has shown me there is an ugly, cruel, evil spirit in this world who wants to destroy us, it has also taught me to let God's love have control of my life, instead of trying to manage every possible outcome myself (*Matt. 6:23-34*). Though we may feel like we are wasting away, we don't lose heart, because “inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (*2 Cor. 4:16*). And though it may seem like there is no hope for your gay loved one, remember that what Jesus said still rings true today: “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” (*Mark 10:26-27*).

## Program Update: Upper Room Community 2016 - 2017

Meet the new participants for the 2016-17 Upper Room Community! Please be praying for their intensive discipleship year.



### **Roy Graves**

*I have been growing in Christ along with the Taking Back Ground community for the past year and it has been a life-changing experience. I was raised in a Christian household and accepted Christ in my teens, but it was in college that I began to develop an intimate relationship with Him. I was also battling sexual temptations, sins and unwanted same-sex attraction at that time, and I ultimately surrendered to those struggles. It took years of experiencing the tragic consequences of my sin and the emptiness of being separated from the Lord to bring me back to a renewed relationship with Christ. The Lord has shown me there truly is a way to overcome if I'm willing to turn from my sin and follow Him. The Taking Back Ground community has been a loving, supportive group that has helped me face my struggles head-on as I walk through this healing process. I am excited to join the Upper Room Community and dive deeper into the topics we've been discussing in TBG, and I'm looking forward to building healthy Christ-centered friendships with others committed to their walk with the Lord.*

### **Trevor Ebert**

*I have lived my whole life in Vancouver, WA, just across the river from Portland. I have gone through two years of Taking Back Ground and a year of Living Waters, and this year will be my second year of the Upper Room Community. What led me to Portland Fellowship was a conflict of desires between wanting God's truth about sexuality and what I wanted to be true. Knowing that my homosexual desires would endanger myself, others and my relationship with God, I found Portland Fellowship to be an environment that supported me in my discipleship process of living a life for Jesus Christ. My goals for this coming program year are to continue growing in healthy relationships, accountability and purity. I also hope to gauge what steps I am to take in continuing a life with God. Questions of schooling and ultimate vocation are on my mind; however, I know that God is my ultimate pursuit and He will continue to be gracious with me through this process.*



### **R.J. Polivka**



*I was born just outside of Chicago and spent the first sixteen years of my life in the western suburbs. As a junior in high school I moved to McMinnville, Oregon, with my family. My parents raised my five siblings and me with strong Biblical teaching. At about ten years old, I came to clearly understand my need for Jesus, and in an instant the Holy Spirit filled me and I began trusting Christ as my Savior and Lord. I started struggling with same-sex attraction in late high school, and eventually fell into a same-sex relationship as I was finishing up college. After a year of turmoil and secrecy I finally admitted my struggle to a couple of trusted people and one of them suggested I check out Portland Fellowship. I've now been a part of the Portland Fellowship community for a year and a half. God has used Taking Back Ground and the healthy relationships I've built here to free me from many of the sinful strongholds in my life. I'm excited to join the Upper Room Community, anticipating that God will use this year to revive in me purity, wholeness, and freedom from shame! I can't wait to learn more about His character and love for His children by living beside these awesome men.*

### **Taylor Schnuerle**

*I moved to Portland about six years ago from a small town in Idaho. I grew up in a Congregational-Presbyterian community where I attended church camp and youth group functions for several years. I was often the misunderstood center of attention, full of energy and rowdy. It wasn't long until I felt like I didn't belong there and started pursuing friendships at school. Eventually, I attended college and turned away from the Lord. I dove deep into the world of foolishness and suffered greatly. After dropping out, I began calling for God to hear me and to save me from my homosexual confusion. It was not long until Jesus answered with the message of the Gospel and I came to the Oregon coast. I was able to live with my aunt and get my bearings while looking for a Christian community. I eventually ran into an elder mentor who was able to guide me to PF, and have been astounded by the work Jesus has been doing in my life and the lives of others here. My future is in the arms of Christ and I will be with Him on this incredible journey wherever he takes me.*



## september - october calendar & services

### tuesday nights in september leadership training

This is a 3-week training course for anyone seeking to lead groups or programs here at Portland Fellowship (TBG, Wives Group, Hope Group, etc).  
7-9 pm.

### tuesday nights in october taking back ground

A powerful discipleship program that equips those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions to walk in freedom. To sign up, call the office or go online.  
7-9 pm.

### september 9 & october 14 the hope group

Join us for a time of prayer, encouragement, support and a great meal.  
6:30 p.m.

### september 30 & october 28 home groups

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

thursdays in september & october  
**upper room community**  
PF's intensive discipleship program. Participants meet weekly for devotions, teaching, discipleship training, group processing and prayer.

### 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 Program: Hope Group Online-- Transgender Series



We are excited to announce the launch of our brand new online video series, *Hope Group Online: Transgender*. This is a new track on the Hope Group Online website for family and friends who have loved ones embracing a transgender identity. This original series offers video teachings, testimonies and downloadable PDF worksheets for participants to work through their emotions and learn how to compassionately and Biblically relate to their transgender loved ones. Topics covered include *Dealing with Grief*, *Roots of Gender Brokenness*, *Forgiveness*, *Biblical Sexuality and Gender*, *Boundaries* and more.

The HGO: Transgender program is the product of collaboration between PF's Executive Director Jason Thompson and Denise Schick, Director of Help 4 Families. Help 4 Families is a ministry on the East Coast that offers education, hope and encouragement to parents and family members of transgender loved ones.

To sign up for the HGOT program, visit the Hope Group Online website at [www.hopegrouponline.com](http://www.hopegrouponline.com), sign in or register and then click the button entitled, "Transgendered Loved One."

## Taking Back Ground + Wives Group

Our TBG program launches this fall on Tuesday, October 4th! Taking Back Ground is a powerful discipleship program that equips those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions to walk in freedom by providing powerful worship, in-depth group discussions and small group accountability. If you are struggling with sexual and relational issues, please consider joining us for the Taking Back Ground program, Tuesday evenings, 7-9:30pm at the PF House. If you are not in Portland, please consider TBG online.



We are also launching a new section of our Wives Group on Tuesday nights for wives, girlfriends and fiancées of SSA strugglers. Come join us for encouragement, support and prayer.



The Fellowship Message is a monthly publication of Portland Fellowship, a ministry proclaiming freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ

### MINISTRY TEAM

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**Cynthia Beaudry**  
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**Patrick Silvis**  
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**Heidi Perry**  
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