

Dear Friends,

update february 2017



In a world full of strife, argument and hatred, it is so good to offer a safe and edifying place that upholds the truth of God in a way that demonstrates the love, grace, patience and kindness of Christ. Many times, this tension between holding to the truth of God and expressing love comes with great challenges. There is no greater place I've seen this tension than in the Hope Group, Portland Fellowship's Family and Friend's support program. Those who attend this group come because they deeply desire to love their children well and are now faced with the challenge of balancing the truth of God's intention for human sexuality with how they communicate this truth in genuine love.

Last month I had the privilege of sharing with the Hope Group the importance of listening well through empathic listening. Empathic listening is accomplished with both our ears *and* our heart. It's about taking the time to stand in another person's shoes and look at life from their perspective. For that moment, you view their life through their eyes. This does not mean you agree with their perspective or life choices, but simply that you understand what they are saying and even how they may be feeling.

The Lord is an empathic listener. Psalm 116:1 says, *"I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy."* He hears us, He acknowledges our pleas and He knows our hearts. Arguments and debates in relationships rarely accomplish anything good. To this day, I have never met anyone that came to know and experience the amazing grace of God because they lost a debate. Paradoxically, it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance. This is a remarkable truth that we can emulate through the power of God.

Over the years I've had very angry people express their hatred of me, their distrust in what God has done in me and their cynicism of the message of "hope and healing" in Christ. Even recently, individuals have come to my office with deep, legitimate wounds, have expressed these feelings in anger toward me. I have to be honest, it is very difficult to sit and hear it all, but more than anything I want to hear their heart. I want to know their pain, so that I might have an opportunity to love them in their hurt. Empathic listening allows me to begin that process.

*"You feel alone because nobody calls you." "When your dad said you disappoint him, you felt rejection and sadness." "Your heart is heavy because you lost a good friend."* Just hearing these words from a loved one has such power. Proverbs 18:21 reminds us, *"The power of the tongue is life and death."* Having someone empathically reflect your emotions to you when you're in pain can bring tremendous life and comfort. I don't want to suggest canned statements of empathy, but if you have the opportunity to stop and



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

ISAIAH 61 : 1

post office box 14841  
portland, oregon 97293  
telephone 503\_235\_6364  
fax 503\_235\_3896  
e-mail pf@portlandfellowship.com  
portlandfellowship.com

acknowledge what your friend, your child, or your spouse is both saying and feeling, then you have a chance to demonstrate a deeper form of love. By doing so, you are telling them, “*You matter to me! You are important to me! You are worth my attention!*”

Will empathizing with your loved ones change their opinions and positions on important issues that you consider deeply problematic? Probably not. But what it *will* do is show them respect. It will honor them as people who need a listening ear. And it will honor our Lord Jesus who offers His attentive and merciful ear to us. Then, through this loving process, we pray for their hearts to open for continued dialogue about deeper matters. I believe this is how hearts connect. This is how we will experience the promise of Malachi 4:6, where “*He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents.*” When we tune in to what our loved ones are feeling, we communicate that our heart is *for* them, even if we disagree with them. As we remember that “...*while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8), we can show people who may not be walking with Christ that He loves them, understands where they’ve been and cares about what they’re going through.

We are so deeply grateful for the Lord’s guidance and protection in this ministry, and for the opportunities we have to continue to share God’s heart of compassion towards our brothers and sisters who are struggling and hurting. Thank you so much for your continued prayers, support and encouragement as we witness Jesus “[*healing*] the brokenhearted and [*binding*] up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3) here at Portland Fellowship.

In Christ,



Jason Thompson  
Executive Director

## Prayer Requests



- Please pray for Jason as he helps represent Restored Hope Network at the NRB International Christian Media Convention this month in Orlando, Florida. Speakers will include Tony Evans, Shaunti Feldhahn, Eric Metaxas, R. C. Sproul and Lee Strobel. Pray for opportunities to connect with like-minded pastors and ministries, and for God to use the convention to help us grow as a ministry here at PF.

- Our Taking Back Ground retreat will take place this March. For many of the TBG participants, this will be their first TBG retreat experience. Ask the Lord to prepare their hearts to fully surrender everything to Him. Pray as well that the Holy Spirit unite us and that Christ would be our central focus that weekend.

- Please pray for healing for Veronica, one of the leaders of *Camino de Salida*, our sister ministry in Ecuador. She was recently diagnosed with cancer and has begun treatment. Pray also for the Lord to raise up more volunteers to help run groups at *Camino de Salida* when Veronica can’t be there.

**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

### tuesdays in february Taking Back Ground Wives Group

Discipleship programs for men and women struggling with SSA; wives of husbands who struggle.

7-9:30 pm at the PF house.

### thursdays in february Upper Room Community

Intensive discipleship program.

### february 10 Hope Group

For Family and Friends. Dinner will be provided.

6:30 pm at the PF house.

### february 27 - march 2 Christian Media Convention

Jason will be representing RHN at the NRB International Christian Media Convention in Orlando, FL.

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

Check website for additional updates at [www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)