



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Known by Rebekah J. Polivka

We all want to be perfectly known and loved. After all, we are created in the image of a God who longs for us to seek to know Him. But sometimes the desire to be known can take us through great pain. Since I was a young child, I have yearned to be known by someone and then loved in such a way that reflects their knowledge of who I truly am. This desire has affected my decisions, my relationships, and my vision for the future throughout my whole life. I do not pretend that I'm the only one who puts such great significance on being known. However, I am exploring the idea that my unfulfilled need to be known has been a driving force in my story.

I grew up in what many would consider a large family. I have five siblings and now a couple of siblings-in-law. Having that many children is not unheard of, and is certainly manageable for good parents. My mother and father were very good parents. They were both saved years before having any children, which meant we had the privilege of being raised in a home that treated the Word of God as valuable and necessary for everyday living. Jesus' name was used freely and we kids all knew the gospel before we could speak the words ourselves. I was saved during Sunday morning worship when I was 10 years old and then baptized a few months later by my dad. I couldn't be more thankful for my early salvation!

Due to the size of our family, me having to care for my younger sister when our twin brothers were born, and the differences between my personality and my mother's, I did not receive the attention from my mom that I so greatly needed and wanted as her daughter. Instead, expectations were put on me of who I should be, and I embraced them wholeheartedly because I was desperate to be good, to be loved. The part of my soul that craved being known was not met by my primary caretaker as I grew up.

It was in highschool that I started seeking to fill this hole, which I didn't know I had, with other people. My wish to be known and accepted played out in misguided attempts to know and accept those who were in worse situations than I was. It culminated with a friendship I had in 12th grade. She was a year younger than me and had an awful mother—at least I thought so. Turns out my friend's mother was not attuned to her daughter's heart and did not give her the affection she needed, the very things I was not getting enough of from my own mother. In an attempt to fill a void that was not mine to fill, I poured attention and affection on my friend. What came out of it? A codependency riddled with weird feelings and too much physical contact. When that friendship ended I was left confused, hurting and holding a secret that I swore I wouldn't tell anyone: I had been attracted to a woman.



Rebekah is a member of the 2016-17 Upper Room Community.

I kept the secret of my same-sex attraction for about three years. After high school I moved to Colorado for college. I built new relationships, but still felt like I was not known. I could not recognize that the root of that feeling was from my childhood. Instead, I thought I felt unknown because I held that secret about the SSA I had in high school. At some point I thought that I should probably tell someone. It was with a whole bunch of fear that I told one of my close friends about my shameful high school experience. Instead of her rejecting me like I feared, she walked over to her bookshelf and pulled out a book about same-sex attraction. To my surprised, she'd been struggling with SSA for years.

What followed my conversation with that friend was us willingly wading into deep waters. Rather than fleeing the temptation caused by our shared attraction, we instead dove into our friendship. We spent countless hours together, relating in ways that were way too intimate. Finally my desire to be known was being fulfilled! How could I walk away? We crept dangerously close to the boundaries between friendship and romantic relationship, healthy affection and sexual affection. Eventually, we threw the boundaries away altogether.

It was shortly after falling into sexual sin with this friend that I moved back to Oregon. The relationship was full-blown codependency at that point. We were each other's everything. Over the course of the next year I went back to visit multiple times. We always set boundaries for ourselves to keep from sexual sin, and yet, we still fell into sin when we were together. When I was with her, I was living in rebellion towards God; when I was away from her, I was living in all-consuming depression. It was after one of those trips back to Colorado when God humbled me enough to ask for help.

The first person I told, my high school mentor, was also the one who had heard of Portland Fellowship and recommended I seek their help. It was with unusual hope for the future that I walked in the doors one bright February day to meet with Cynthia. She did not hesitate to suggest that I join the Tuesday night meetings. And so with the guidance of Portland Fellowship, and the additional support of a wonderful Christian counselor, I began my incredible process of healing.

Joining Taking Back Ground did not miraculously fix me. When I started as a participant I was still in my

codependent relationship, and in fact, I even visited and fell into sexual sin with her once more while I was in the program that first year. I was battling, and often losing to, my newly-established habit of pornography and masturbation. I held a great deal of myself back from the process for several months. But I found that what keeps

a ministry like Portland Fellowship going are not the results, nor how fast the participants move through the process, but rather the continual grace that is demonstrated in such a way that Christ is glorified as supreme. It's not the program that saves people from a lifestyle contrary to God's beautiful, satisfying design. It is God who saves people from themselves and the empty promises of sin.

Since the wonderful day that I picked up the phone to call Portland Fellowship, my life has been transformed.

Even though I was a true believer before I walked down the painful road of homosexuality, I had not surrendered my greatest desire to the Lord—the deep longing to be known. Once I started surrendering other parts of my life, God started revealing that *I was already known*, by Him. David starts Psalm 139 by saying, “O LORD, you have searched me and known me...you discern my thoughts from afar...you are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.” Will any human ever be able to claim that they know me that well? Impossible! Only the Father who created me can know me that profoundly.

Where am I now? I'm living in fullness of joy because I'm living in obedience. When God asked for me to give Him my codependent relationship, it took years to comply, but I did. When God requested that I not satisfy my impulsive, broken desires with pornography, I agreed, but still have to choose to agree regularly. When God told me that taking the financial and emotional risk of living in the PF house for the Upper Room would be worth it, I laid down the life I had made for myself and followed Him. I'm living the abundant life. It is not because my life is perfect or I'm getting everything I want, but rather because as I surrender my needs to the Lord and let go of the things I'm holding to so tightly, He fills those places in my heart to overflowing and replaces my idols of security with healthy gifts from Him. Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10), and He has proven it to me.



Rebekah and her younger sister Ana.

Technological Resources for Purity by PF Staff

Living in a world that gives us continuous access to the internet has made trying to remain sexually pure all the more difficult. Here at PF, as we work to empower men and women to find freedom from pornography and sexual sin, we have utilized several hi-tech resources that we are excited to share with you. Our hope is that these resources will help you to protect your children from exposure to sexual immorality, will be a resource for anyone who needs extra help in the battle for sexual purity, and will protect the integrity of your home, church or business.

Netgear Router and the Genie App



Overview: In addition to a modem, many people utilize routers in order to connect their tablets, phones, laptops and other devices to their internet service. Certain models of Netgear routers have the ability to filter the internet stream entering the home. This means that no matter who connects to your internet/wifi, regardless of the person's device, your Netgear router filters out questionable material (and you can customize the filter settings).

How-To: When purchasing your Netgear router, make sure it has Family Filter capability with the Genie App. Once you set up the router, you will be able to adjust the filter settings for each of your devices or for the entire wifi stream. Downloading and using the free Genie App on your smartphone lets you monitor and adjust your router filter settings no matter where you are. You can purchase Netgear routers online or at your local computer store.

Special Features: We love how you can customize the filtering for each individual device. For example, you can have one filtering setting for your school-aged son's tablet, a different filter setting for your teenage daughter's phone and a different one for your laptop.

Mobicip Parental Controls Program

Overview: Mobicip is a program that allows you to safely filter web browsers on your devices and even monitor individual apps and web browsing history (depending on which version you use).

How-To: You can sign up by going to www.mobicip.com and choosing which package works best for you. The free version lets you filter your internet browsers on one device. For about forty dollars/year, you can filter and monitor up to five different devices, allowing parents/administrators to monitor individual apps, set time limits, manage filter settings from a mobile app, and more.

Special Features: In addition to offering 'Safe Browser' apps and easily-customized filtering, the \$40/year plan's ability to monitor specific app usage and web browsing history from individual devices gives parents or leaders a better understanding of how people are using the internet (not just what's being blocked). We've found this can be a great tool to help facilitate deeper discussions about internet safety, temptations and pitfalls.



VidAngel



Overview: You can stream and filter movies for just one dollar each. VidAngel allows you to choose which elements you want filtered out (nudity, profanity, etc.).

How-To: If you have a digital TV streaming device (Roku, AppleTV, Chromecast, etc.), you can sign up for VidAngel and begin watching movies. VidAngel gives you a list of questionable content for each movie, and you get to choose which items you want filtered out before you start watching. You have to buy your first movie for twenty dollars, and when you're done viewing the movie, you sell it back for nineteen dollars. Don't forget to sell each movie back once you're finished! Otherwise you'll pay the full price for one movie.

Special Features: Once again, customization is king! It's super easy to watch a fully-filtered movie with your school-age child, and then watch the same movie later with only a few filters on for your teenager.

january - february calendar & services

january 7 annual planning meeting

The PF Staff and Board of Directors will be gathering at the PF house to review 2016 and plan for the upcoming ministry year.
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

january 13 & february 10 the hope group

For friends and family of gay loved ones. Join us for a time of prayer, encouragement, support and a great meal.
6:30 p.m.

january 15 jason speaking

Jason will be sharing the message "Homosexuality--A Redemptive Response" with 26 West Church.
1-3 p.m.

tuesday nights 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 p.m.

thursday afternoons upper room community

PF's intensive discipleship program. Participants meet weekly for devotions, teaching, discipleship training, processing and prayer.
12-4 p.m.

additional updates

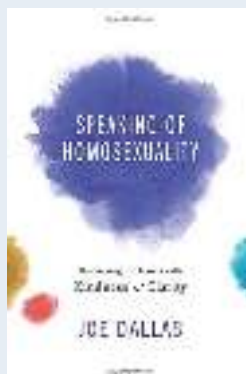
www.portlandfellowship.com
Please take advantage of your online profile. If you don't have a username, please email or call.

speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be arranged through the office.

Book Review: *Speaking of Homosexuality*

This past October, Joe Dallas published his most recent book, *Speaking of Homosexuality: Discussing the Issues with Kindness and Clarity*. Joe has written extensively on the topic of homosexuality from many different angles, publishing works such as *Desires In Conflict*, *The Gay Gospel?* and *When Homosexuality Hits Home*. In this latest project, Joe not only addresses the differences between pro-gay and traditional orthodox Christian views, he also gives instruction and guidance on how to graciously and lovingly engage with friends and family who don't agree with you.



Acknowledging that these types of conversations are inevitable in today's culture, Joe helps readers understand the views of people embracing a pro-gay stance and respond with compassion, empathy and conviction. At the same time, his book gives sample talking points, suggestions for online/social media interactions and tips for more effective in-person conversations with our friends and loved ones.

We recognize that many Christians are struggling to respond to our changing culture with grace and truth, and this book is an excellent resource to help us bravely enter these difficult conversations when they come up. While Jesus didn't promise that following Him would be easy, He did promise that He will be with us and that the Holy Spirit will give us the words to say at the right time (*Luke 12:12, Matt. 10:19*). Joe's book challenges us all to patiently listen to those around us who believe differently than we do, trust that the Spirit will give us the right words, and share the hope that we have in Christ when the time is right.

You can purchase *Speaking of Homosexuality* at your local Christian book store and anywhere books are sold online. We pray the Lord uses it to encourage, challenge and instruct you in your walk with Him and in your relationships with others.



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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