

Dear Friends,

update june 2017



Ministry is tough. Ask anyone who's been in the game long enough, and they'll be quick to tell you that it's no walk in the park. Ask them why they continue to do it, and you might hear something like this: *"Because God is good and I want people to know that."* You ask any Taking Back Ground leader, and I guarantee that you'll get the same answer, and more.

I have been around Portland Fellowship now going on five years, three years as a participant and now two as a leader, and I seem to have only scratched the surface of what God can do in people's lives. We leaders at TBG get front row seats to some of the most profound, most difficult and most transformative works of God. If I've ever doubted the infiniteness of Christ, I only need to look at the infinite number of ways that the Lord is redeeming His people here at the Portland Fellowship house. Truly, it can only be the power of Jesus Christ Himself that changes people in such radical ways, and yet He chooses to use His own broken people to assist Him in His work. It is an incredibly humbling reality, and it is the prevailing attitude of each of the leaders here at Portland Fellowship. I think all the leaders would agree with me when I say it is God's grace that has allowed any of us to be in the leadership huddles every Tuesday.



Cole has served as a Taking Back Ground leader for the past two years.

Each week, we leaders meet up before the participants arrive to reset our hearts and prepare to shepherd those that come through our doors. We all have trials and burdens (being a leader doesn't exempt us from that), so we need this time to share, confess and be reminded of the truth. It is our time to talk, so that we can then go and listen. I love that about the culture of Portland Fellowship: it's always been about practicing what we preach. Being able to share openly with a community is so vital to our walk with Christ, and something we stress often, so how refreshing it is to be at home with my brothers and sisters of the faith, sharing our hearts and lifting one another up. I covet our time together, and some weeks it is the respite I get before going upstairs to greet the participants.

I love seeing our group members trickle in throughout the evening. There is a wonderful sense of community that happens when you get to see the same faces each week, and it never goes unnoticed when someone can't make it. It's not because we like to keep track, but because we love them. Each person that walks through those doors is a reminder of the hope we so desperately carry in this ministry. Each person is so much more than a face. They are a story, a testimony and a battle being fought on the front lines of God's war on sin and the schemes of the devil (*Ephesians 6:12*). Every one of them comes in fighting a war in their hearts, and every time they choose to show up is a declaration that despite everything

"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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they are going through, they will choose to obey and worship The Lord (*Joshua 24:15*). It's not an easy fight, but the glory of our victory is beyond comparison (*2 Corinthians 4:17-18*).

And so with eyes on this victory, we continue to labor in the vineyard. It is the work that God has done in each of us that not only makes this ministry possible, but keeps us coming back week after week. It is the desire to proclaim freedom (freedom that we have tasted and seen) to the captives, and to bind up the brokenhearted (*Isaiah 61:1*). It is easy to find a piece of our own story in those of the participants, and our hearts' desire is to comfort those in affliction with the comfort we have received from Christ (*2 Corinthians 1:4*). I'll take the liberty and speak for my cohorts when I say that what being a leader at Portland Fellowship looks like is this: God is so, so infinitely good, and with all our hearts, we want people to know that. Even as we celebrate the conclusion of this year's TBG program, we look forward to the fall and to God continuing His miraculous work in a new group of participants.

Finally, we are so encouraged knowing we are not alone in this ministry, and that faithful supporters like you also desire people to know and experience the truth about God's goodness. Thank you for your prayers and your support for ministries like Taking Back Ground here at Portland Fellowship. Through you, people's lives are truly being transformed.

Grace and Peace,

—Cole Atkinson
TBG Leader

Program Update: Upper Room Community



Nine months of intensive discipleship. Thirty-six weeks of intentional community. Almost 280 days of surrendering to the Lord's transformational work. After all that, the 2016-17 Upper Room Community is drawing to a close. This year, Rebekah, Trevor and Roy were faithful to God's call to work through their wounds, defenses and false beliefs. They stepped up to the challenge of loving each other well as they learned to appreciate the unique ways God created and gifted them. They've wrestled through doubts, fears and aversions, but it has been so worth it to watch them grow into and embrace who God created them to be! Praise God for His faithfulness to the URC this year, and for the participants' perseverance and completion of this community discipleship program.

Looking forward, we're already recruiting for the 2017-18 URC program! We've updated the Upper Room logo and created a great promotional video for anyone interested in applying. You can check it out here: www.portlandfellowship.com/upper_room.php



events calendar

june 9

Hope Group

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

june 15-17

RHN Hope 2017 Conference

Restored Hope Network's
annual national conference
will be held in San Diego, CA.

june 21

Patrick Speaking

Patrick will be sharing and training
the summer staff at Camp Tadmor.

june 26

PF Board Meeting

Board members meet
to pray & plan.

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

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Check website for additional updates
at www.portlandfellowship.com