



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## "If the House Burns Down Tonight..." by Jill and Dave\*

*This month's testimony highlights different perspectives from a married couple who went through PF's Taking Back Ground program.*

**Jill:** I had finally found freedom. I was out of my 15-year marriage, living in a place of my own and sharing custody of my two daughters. I'd been looking forward to this moment, but what I couldn't understand was, if this was the freedom I had longed for—to be whomever I wanted to be, to explore dating women, to go out when I didn't have my girls with me—why was I on the floor of my living room in a puddle of tears? I was finally able to be honest with my husband and release him from our marriage that was caught in a web of lies. Yet, freedom didn't feel like I had imagined it to be.

**Dave:** Do you know the feeling of being around someone who tells you lots of really good things, but acts another way? We had been doing that for years. I wanted us to reach a place of truth-telling, but that felt like wading through chest-deep muddy water. Some days, the water was over my head, and I fought for one breath at a time. I would wake in the mornings to the darkness and feel old wounds from the years of lies and half-truths, broken open and bleeding. When she decided to move out, I moved out of the water right away onto dry land. No more dark water! I knew we were done, completely finished, and I felt a rush of relief. I felt lighter, stronger, clear-headed. I didn't know what the future held, but I knew it was not with her. With my grieving already done in the long silent years before, I was ready to move on. I slept deeply the night she left, and the next morning called a lawyer about divorce. It felt good to be without the cloud of lies and my wife's codependent female relationships that had filled our home for years.

**Jill:** Alone in my new place, with tears streaming down my face, I grabbed my computer and looked up Portland Fellowship. I'd heard about it before and laughed at the thought of a ministry that would walk with someone struggling with same-sex attraction. I wasn't laughing now. If my current situation was freedom, I didn't want it. I read testimony after testimony on the website, read about the programs and then decided I would do it. *But*, I was going to do it my way. I wasn't ready to be fully vulnerable or transparent, and I wasn't completely ready to leave the lies behind me. So, I decided I would do the online program. *God had other plans for me.* I tried three times to sign up for the program that night, and every time I would "somehow" get sent back to the beginning. There was a lesson here for me that would become a theme in my life: *I can't deal with my mess all on my own. I have to be transparent and honest, no matter how hard it is, no matter how much it may hurt others, and God is the only one who can make sense of my mess and heal my wounds.* I emailed PF



\*Names changed to protect privacy.

about the online program, and they invited me to come in and talk. Next thing I knew, I was at the PF house signing up for Taking Back Ground. Of course, on the day of my first TBG meeting, my car wouldn't start, and the only person I could think to call was my almost-ex-husband.

**Dave:** I was completely surprised when she told me that she was going to PF. I had previously suggested it as a possibility for us, and that I could go along, and I remembered cold silence. *Now she wanted to go?* I didn't trust that I was being told the truth—I thought it was another move to gain relational control. Honestly, I was too tired to think clearly. I said something like, *“Oh, that's cool, good luck with that,”* and hung up on her. Yet, a few days later I heard she'd done an intake at PF, and that her car wouldn't start, leaving her no way to get to her first TBG meeting. Something in me said, *“Don't do it! She's going to hurt you again,”* but another voice said, *“Take her—you'll see if this is for real.”* It was the oddest thing, dropping off the person I considered my ex at the PF house, and driving away. I had no feelings for her, and was confused by what was happening. Our marriage had burned to the ground. *Why was she forcing me to walk through the smoking ruins?*

**Jill:** *Why couldn't God remove the desire from my heart to be back in my marriage?* It had been destroyed; there was nothing there but a pile of ashes. I'd heard over and over how much pain I had caused. My husband looked me in the eye and said, *“I don't love you, I don't trust you and I'm not attracted to the person you have become.”* Still, I needed to share with him what I was going through and what the Lord was placing on my heart.

**Dave:** We were in the middle of divorce proceedings and every time we met, she would cry the whole time, while I was cold as stone. I had moved on. I didn't want to be hurt any more. It took one prophetic friend literally digging her finger into my chest and declaring that we were not through—that God was up to something—for me to take a breather from the divorce process. We separated in January, and it was the day before Easter when I told some friends about the changes I was seeing in my ex-wife. They asked if I had feelings for her. I admitted, *“My heart is like a stone; I have no feelings for her, and I can't see how I ever would.”* They simply asked if they could pray for me, and we knelt on their living room floor and prayed for a miracle. I remember thinking, *“Good luck with that, God.”*



**Jill:** I sent him a text asking if we could talk. I knew there was a lot of reluctance, but thankfully he gave me one last chance to share and pour my heart out. Trembling from head to toe, I asked God to calm my nerves, give me courage to speak truth and if it was His will, to let us begin to rebuild our marriage. The outcome of our meeting wasn't what I had hoped for, but it wasn't a “no.” Our agreement was, I would continue with the journey of healing and learning about my brokenness, and we wouldn't talk for a couple of months (apart from child custody details). Then, we would have a “re-meet date.” The more we didn't talk, the more I wanted to be with my husband. As God healed me and revealed to me the roots of my brokenness, and how I used control in co-dependent relationships to feel worthy of love, the more I desired to be with my husband. God said I was worthy, not because of what *I* did, but because of what *He* did on the cross. I wanted these ashes to become something beautiful, something restored.

**Dave:** I woke up Easter morning and—no joke—something had moved. The wounds were the same, the pain was the same, but it was as if my heart itself shifted. Love is different than trust. Love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Trust grows over time, yet can be lost in a moment. Like a tree or a flower, trust takes daily watering and care to grow. God worked a miracle in me, an honest-to-God, no-fooling-around, Jesus-laid-His-hands-on-me miracle. I sensed a renewed capacity for love in me that was not there the day before. Still, I wasn't sure about the whole trust thing. It's like considering whether or not to stay camped in the ashes where the house burned down. *Who in their right mind would do that?!* She had not stopped going to TBG for months, and so, hanging onto that single promise of rebuilt trust and the crazy prayer said over me right before Easter, I got dressed for our re-meet date. I felt like Charlie Brown running at the ball, hoping Lucy would not pull it away.

**Us:** On our re-meet date in June, we were nervous and excited, but we still had reservations. *Can we truly move forward with new love for one another, forgiving and willing to build trust again?* We had dinner in the spot where we originally got together. We introduced ourselves to one another as if we **(continued on page 4)**

## Tribute to Frank Worthen, Father of Sexual Redemption Movement by PF Staff

*On February 11th of this year, the father of the modern-day sexual redemption movement, Frank Worthen, went to be with The Lord. While we mourn his passing, we also celebrate the foundation he laid over 30 years ago for ministries like Portland Fellowship. Frank was one of the initial founders of Love In Action in California, and later, Exodus International. This letter we share here with you was written by Joe Dallas as a tribute to Frank, and signed by over 100 ministry leaders from around the world as a declaration of intent to uphold the principles by which Frank lived.*



Frank and Anita Worthen

Dear Frank,

All of us who minister to people affected by sexual brokenness are keenly aware of the debt we owe you, and the mandate to continue this work in ways that are Biblical, creative, and God-honoring. That's what we've seen you do; that's what we'll continue to do.

While we realize that ultimately "no other foundation can be laid than that which is laid, Christ Jesus", we also recognize the vessels He has used to lay foundations in our lifetime, and the one you laid is one which we all are continuing to build on. As we consider that foundation, some things stand out that we'd like to thank you for.

Thank you for daring to step up decades ago when it was unheard of for a Christian to even speak about these things (sexual and relational struggles). Thank you for wading into completely unknown territory without precedence or direct guidance from anyone but God, and for having the audacity to build an ark which has housed thousands upon thousands ever since it opened. Thank you for the guidance you've passed on to us, birthed out of your own lessons and efforts, and for the tools you developed that have impacted our own lives and now impact those we have served, and those they have gone on to serve.

We especially thank you for the consistency you've shown, both in your message and life. Also for the calm grace you've modeled when things got rough, along with your insistence that our work be doctrinally sound and that our personal lives match our public positions.

So those of us continuing this work make this solemn promise to you, Frank. We promise to speak boldly and plainly about the basics of the faith: that there is salvation in no other name than Jesus, that salvation and discipleship must go together, that God transforms and equips those He calls. We promise to always consider compromise in doctrine or conduct to be an anathema to us, and that when we minister we will always strive to say, as did Paul, "Our message and our preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor. 2:4-5).

That's your legacy, which we will always honor.

With deepest love and respect,

Joe Dallas

## Spring and Summer Conferences

### Tuff Stuff Ministries: Marriage Redeemed



Tuff Stuff Ministries is hosting a married couples conference in Lake Oswego on April 8th called "Marriage Redeemed--Restoring Hope." This conference offers encouragement and resources for couples seeking to restore their marriage after sexual betrayal. There's a discount if you register before March 29th. For more information, call 503-655-5534 or email [gmler@icmusa.org](mailto:gmler@icmusa.org).

### Restored Hope Network: Hope2017



This year's RHN conference will be held on June 16th & 17th in San Diego, CA. There will be powerful Biblical teaching, worship and inspiring life stories. Speakers include Joe Dallas, Janet Mefferd, Linda Seiler, Ron Citlau and more. There's a discount if you register before March 15th. Sign up online at [www.restoredhopenetwork.org](http://www.restoredhopenetwork.org).



## march - april calendar & services

### february 26--march 3 media convention

Jason is representing Restored Hope Network at the NRB International Christian Media Convention in Orlando, Florida.

### march 6 & april 7 pf board meetings

The PF Board of Directors gathers to plan and pray over the ministry. 7-9 p.m.

### march 10--12 tbg retreat

Annual retreat experience for PF's Taking Back Ground Program. Participants gather for a powerful weekend of worship, fellowship, prayer and surrender.

### march 21 & 23 jason speaking

Jason will be sharing with the Advanced Counseling class at Portland Bible College. 11 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

### april 14 the hope group

For friends and family of gay loved ones. Join us for a time of prayer, encouragement, support and a great meal. **\*No meeting on 3/10 due to TBG Retreat\*** 6:30 p.m.

## 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.

## (continued from page 2)

had never met. We talked and laughed, held hands and walked to the exact place we had prayed at the start of our relationship. "Re-meet" day turned into "replant the trust" day. It has not been easy. Choosing to be together is like getting the insurance money for our burned-down house, and instead of buying a brand-new house (the easy choice), we chose to rebuild on the ashes. There are ashes under the house still, but there is love mixed with the ashes—the strongest of foundations. And trust—that little seed we planted in front of the porch—is leaning its branches high up into our daughter's windows.

After dating all summer long, that fall we went to PF *together* on a journey that lasted two years in the TBG program. Part of watering the trust-tree is joining the journey with the one you love, admitting you are just as much in need of Jesus' healing hands. Both of us needed Jesus to heal our deep wounds, teach us intimacy, and break old sinful patterns. The worship, teaching, and small group time gave us a common foundation. It's been a long journey, but by God's grace, a few years ago we renewed our marriage vows to each other. Our trust-tree is bearing fruit! Lately, we've been singing a Switchfoot song in the car together: "...the wound is where the light shines through." It's like the songwriter knows our story! And then, we sing the next song: "...if the house burns down tonight, I've got everything I need with you by my side..." We sing at the top of our lungs, we sing it out the windows. People stare from their cars, but we don't care—by God's grace, we're together again.

## Prayer Requests:

- **TBG Retreat**—Please pray for the Holy Spirit to move among the participants and guide our time of fellowship, worship and surrender. Pray also for schedules and finances to allow TBG participants to attend the retreat.

- **PF in 2017**—Join us as we seek the Lord's vision, protection and provision for this ministry year.



**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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