



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

November / October 2017 volume 21 number 6

An Unwrapped Perfect Life by Leah King

Life is a gift from the Lord, but because of sin in the world, it is a gift that has no pretty or nicely tied-up bow on top. I think that is one of the greatest lessons of my life, and one that I am constantly being taught.

I came to know Jesus at the age of six, and was blessed to grow up in Texas in a Christ-centered home, with a family who fought for me both spiritually and physically. Yet, no matter how seemingly perfect a home and family may be, they are still tainted by the brokenness that sin brought into the world. In my own brokenness, I unknowingly strived for perfection by pleasing those around me: trying to make my parents happy by repressing healthy attractions to guys in high school; doing my best at losing weight so that people would see me as healthy and put together; and trying not to be a burden to anyone around me, any more than my crazy health issues had already caused me to be. No one knew how perfectionism trapped me, and to be honest, I didn't realize that I lived in insecurity and perfectionism for most of my life. Messy health issues, serving in ministry and being a good friend and family member to those around me took my full attention from what was going on deep inside my heart.

I am so thankful for the Lord's timing in refining me. He knew I wasn't immediately ready to face the reality that I was living in deep insecurity, guilt, shame and perfectionism. He knew it was going to be a long journey of breaking down walls to unwrap this perfect life I had in my head. He knew I had to open my heart and my very clenched fists to see that life doesn't have to have a perfectly-tied bow on top, but rather, there is beauty in a life completely undone, unwrapped, trusting that the Lord holds it together, even in its crinkled messiness.

In 2013, I was diagnosed with a massive brain tumor. No one knew what was going to happen, except that I needed immediate surgery, and that they needed to test and see if the tumor was cancerous. This began a season of the Lord literally ripping away every ounce of security I had clung to, "security" that had been developing over many years. Four years prior to being diagnosed, I was ending my freshmen year of college with a very broken heart over a boy I had liked. In order for my heart to heal, I had to walk away from some of the only female friends that I really felt I could be myself around. This was huge, because in middle school and high school, I always felt "less than" the other girls and only felt accepted by them when they needed a friend. Once they didn't need me anymore, they would move on, and I would be left with the few friends I had. This was a constant cycle for me. I was widely known, but never *truly* known, and never felt truly accepted.

After I lost my college female friends, in my sophomore year I met Jake. He invited me into his world and loved me like a little sister. He was safe and loyal, he met needs once provided by my



Leah serves as the Ministry Assistant here at Portland Fellowship.

female friends and he met my need for male affirmation. We literally did everything together. His four roommates even joked that I was their “fifth roommate”. Shortly after I met Jake, I found out about his struggle with same-sex attraction. Other than my uncle, I knew very little about SSA. I began to seek the Lord on this struggle as I saw Jake surrendering his to the Lord. It was so encouraging to me, and ultimately pushed me to face my own struggle with an eating order. Jake told me about Living Hope Ministries, where he was going for accountability in his surrender, and I soon found out that several others I knew were also at this ministry. In the spring of 2012, I remember sitting in my car, and in an almost audible voice, the Lord spoke to me and made it very clear that ministry with those facing SSA was going to be a part of my life for good, and that I needed to trust Him. I had no idea what that meant, but I desperately wanted my parent’s approval. When I perceived that I did not have their full support, I found it in my friend Jake. He became my source of approval and acceptance, rather than the Lord.



Fast-forward to 2013—I was in the hospital with chaos all around me, clinging to Jesus and trying to make sure everyone else was ok. Who did I find as my greatest source of comfort, other than Christ and my family? Jake. He was the first person I was able to be real with about what I was now facing with this tumor, and he walked closely with me through all of it. However, something happened between brain surgery and recovery—this friend and brother figure changed. I was home recovering, and without a shadow of a doubt, I knew that Satan was after Jake’s identity. When I asked him, he said that he was done fighting his sin and now embraced a life of homosexuality. My heart shattered in that moment. This man that I wrongfully threw my identity into had given up surrendering his struggle, and chosen sin over his life in Christ. I didn’t know what to do. *If so much of my identity is found in Jake, and he just gave away his identity to the world, where does that leave me?* I soon began to feel tremendous guilt that it was my fault he walked away from Christ. *Maybe if I had been a more attentive friend, I would have seen some sign, and been able to bring him back to Christ.* I knew in my head that it wasn’t my fault, but my heart wouldn’t believe it. This shame would sit silent, deep in my heart until 2016, when I finally confronted my guilt over Jake walking away from Christ.

No one in my life really knew of Jake’s struggle

because I protected him by hiding that fact. This caused me to build up a lot of walls when he left. *If the one person I trusted and protected can hurt me so much by leaving, maybe I shouldn’t let people get too close.* I was good at sharing enough for people to know about me, but not enough to be truly known. Subconsciously, I felt that if people really knew me, they would leave and hurt me. I knew that Jesus was good, but I hid behind that fact because it wrapped up all my hurts and bad habits with a pretty bow. No one knew that on the inside of that pretty wrapped up gift was a very wounded and confused little girl trying to be ok.

In 2016, I really began to face the fact that my life was not picture-perfect and that I had a big fear of men, rejection and hurt. I started facing the truth that I had been emotionally dependent on Jake. Because of that, it was easy to build up protective walls around my heart to prevent men from ever getting in. When friends would ask about my romantic feelings toward guys, I would say, “I just feel weird and have a lot of brokenness,” or “I don’t know.” Yet, I also found a great female community, who started to point out these areas of brokenness that my past wounds had caused. I still found myself with numerous friends who struggled with SSA, and walking with these friends as a sister in Christ and learning healthy boundaries was huge in my four-year healing process. How I was so broken and still producing fruit in different areas of my life, I have no idea, except that God is faithful and literally uses whatever He can to bring people to Himself.

As I worked through my relational wounds, God took me to a place of deeper healing and growth. I even received my dad’s blessing to serve in this type of ministry! More importantly, I knew that I had the Lord’s approval. 2017 came, and God brought me here to Portland Fellowship to continue healing and learning. He continues to challenge me to be vulnerable with where I am, and to strip down walls that I didn’t even know were built. The Lord is teaching me that vulnerability is good, and that it’s a way of life. Vulnerability is not a pretty wrapped-up gift—it’s way better. Presents with pretty bows are finished products; no one touches them or knows what’s inside them. Life like that is no life at all. I am learning that if being completely unwrapped and vulnerable means knowing Jesus more, then I hope my life never looks like a perfect gift with a bow on top.

Differing Views on Christianity, Identity and Homosexuality by Jason Thompson



When I first began serving at Portland Fellowship, for a believer, the message regarding homosexuality and identity seemed a bit simpler. For the most part, the Christian message was that we were created male and female, that our identity is found in Christ alone, and that sexual expression outside of marriage (between a man and his wife) is a sin, because it violates God's perfect plan and ultimately leads to pain and destruction. As the years passed by, and culture, unsurprisingly, continued down a path of confusion and distortion, I have watched many in the church also fall into that confusion. Last month, to bring clarity to this confusing issue, we here at Portland Fellowship created a one-page handout, which we summarize below.

On one side of this handout is the ideology we've categorized as "**Gay Partnership**". These professing Christians are gay-affirming and support and bless homosexual unions. Their general belief is that one is born gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered or one of the other fifty-four gender options available through Facebook. Their biblical view has been developed by a revision of Scripture in order to support a pro-gay theological understanding.

To the right of this extreme is another camp which we've labeled "**Gay Identity**". These are professing Christians who primarily believe that a person is born gay, yet believe that same-sex partnerships are prohibited in the eyes of God. Their identity is found in what they feel and desire, and since their desire is for the same gender, they choose to identify as LGBTQ+.

In contrast to these two categories, there are two other groups that embrace traditional biblical truth regarding sexual expression and identity. Yet, in these last two categories, there are some subtle differences in how each group proposes responding to the same-sex attracted person. We've labeled the first group of proponents for biblical truth and sexuality as simply "**Conversion**". This group does a great job at communicating that our identity is not found in our sexuality or desires, but in Jesus Christ our Lord. This group highlights our sin nature as the primary issue of sexual struggles, and calls everyone to walk in confession, repentance and trusting God as they seek to die to their fleshly desires. They primarily emphasize the importance of Christ's Body (the Church), while they don't necessarily emphasize additional support structures or healing resources (such as counseling or recovery programs).

The final category agrees with most of what the "Conversion" position communicates. This final "**Transformation**" category also believes that our identity is found in Christ, and that we must repent of our sinful sexual behavior. However, the subtle difference between "Conversion" and "Transformation" is that proponents of "Transformation" recognize the need for an intentional discipleship process that leads us to deeper healing, relational wholeness and even newfound desires that are being restored to what God intended. This process includes support from others in the body of Christ, which can involve counseling, recovery groups, discipleship programs and personal mentoring. It includes a deeper awareness that in addition to being a spiritual and sexual issue, homosexuality is also a relational issue, and therefore has both past relational wounds, and, more importantly, *future* relational healing.

As I mentioned, homosexual identity and homosexual expression have become confused through various teachings and different opinions. I believe it is wise to follow what is written in 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "*But test everything; hold fast what is good.*" Let us not settle for anything less than the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. My hope is that each of us will be able to surrender our sexuality, our identity and our behavior before the Lord, and find our hope in Christ as He continues His transforming work in us! To view and print our one-page handout, please go to: <https://www.portlandfellowship.com/resources/differingviews.pdf>

november - december calendar & services

november 10 & december 8 the hope group

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

november 9-11 wineskins conference

Jason will be the keynote speaker for the Wineskins Conference in Los Angeles, CA.

november 28 multnomah university

Jason will be sharing with a Human Sexuality class.

tuesday nights in november taking back ground

Powerful discipleship series for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions. Group for wives as well. 7-9 p.m.

thursday afternoons
upper room community
URC participants have fellowship, prayer, teaching and discussion. 12:30-3:30 p.m.

follow us on facebook!

Stay connected for updates, prayer requests and inspirational resources, Like and follow our page at: www.facebook.com/portlandfellowship/

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 set up through the office.

Year-End Donations: Non-Cash Assets

In this season of thankfulness, we are so grateful for God's provision to Portland Fellowship through you, our generous partners, donors and supporters. We joyfully receive each and every one of your gifts to God's ministry here at PF. We know that the Lord is pleased with your cheerful giving, and we take very seriously the responsibility of stewarding well all of the funds Jesus brings into this ministry.

As we look toward the end of 2017, we want to share some ways you might consider supporting the work of Portland Fellowship. While most people naturally donate to PF via cash, check or card, there are



additional ways you can use your non-cash assets to make tax-deductible contributions. In our increasingly cashless society, many people have resources and assets that might not be immediately

accessible, but can still be utilized to help support non-profit organizations. Here are some of the options you might want to look at when considering making a year-end donation to Portland Fellowship:

Work Place Campaigns: Check with your employer to see if they offer the option of matching your donation to a charity through payroll.

Gifts of Stock: Giving stock that has been held more than twelve months offers a two-fold tax savings: a tax-deduction for the full fair market value of the stock on the date of the gift, and capital gains can be avoided.

Estate Planning: Planned gifts allow you to continue to bless PF beyond your lifetime. These gifts are typically made through your will or estate plans to benefit us after you pass on to be with Jesus.

If you have additional questions about how to make a non-cash asset donation, we would encourage you to consult your financial planner or tax preparation agent.



PORTLAND
fellowship

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

MINISTRY TEAM

Jason Thompson
Executive Director

Patrick Silvis
Program Coordinator

Heidi Perry
Hope Group Facilitator

Leah King
Ministry Assistant

Kathy Grace Duncan
Board Chair

The Fellowship Message is sent free upon request. (An annual donation of \$15 is appreciated to cover printing and postage costs.) No part of this newsletter may be reproduced or reprinted without permission.

post office box 14841
portland, oregon 97293
telephone 503.235.6364
fax 503.235.3896

e-mail: pf@portlandfellowship.com
portlandfellowship.com

Portland Fellowship is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) nondenominational organization. We are exclusively supported through private donations, support services and offerings.