



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

January / February volume 22 number 1

## The Hope of Transformation by Patrick Silvis

*When I arrived at Portland Fellowship over five years ago, I didn't really understand what I was getting myself into. I was fascinated by the testimonies I heard through PF—*

stories of God's redemption, freedom from addiction and fantasy, and the blessings of healthy relationships. This gave me a hope that I had never experienced before. Like many believers, for so long it seemed like I only had two options—stuff my unwanted SSA deep down, white-knuckle my way through life and obey God by not acting on my feelings, or, embrace a gay identity and reject my faith, family and community. It was here at PF that I truly began to learn and walk in a third option: the process of transformation. I learned that I didn't have to embrace a gay identity, and that I could love and obey Jesus *and* work through my unwanted temptations. What's more, I began to learn that Jesus wanted to heal the emotional and relational wounds that contributed to my struggle. As I continue on this journey, the Lord continues to show me that transformation is His heart for each one of us.

Here at Portland Fellowship, we often receive lots of questions about our beliefs and practices regarding "transformation". Since the fall of Exodus International, many people are wary of hurting people struggling with SSA by promising them an outcome they can't guarantee, and rightly so—promising someone that they can quantifiably go from "gay to straight" isn't accurate or helpful. At PF, we don't presume to promise someone a specific outcome regarding their individual attractions, desires or temptations. At the same time, *God is still in the business of transforming lives!* Transformation looks different for each person, and it's important to remember that it is not a switch you can flip or a prayer you pray once—it's a process.

Through my own transformational journey, I have come to appreciate the numerous similarities this process shares with becoming physically healthy. Sy Rogers has said, "*What's true for the body is true for the soul.*" In order to better understand the emotional and relational transformation process we lead people through here at PF, we can examine the steps someone trying to lose weight and eat healthy might go through: dissatisfaction, daring to hope, detoxing, deeper healing and discipline.

What makes someone decide to actually begin the long journey of getting healthier? More often than not, it's dissatisfaction. A lot of us are content with where we are, and we don't want to experience the uncomfortable changes getting healthier will bring. Yet, for people who hit rock bottom and realize they aren't happy with their health or weight, these are the people who end up deciding to start getting healthier. They don't know exactly what it will look or feel like, but they do know that anything is better than their current situation. The same is true for people with



Patrick is the Program Coordinator on staff here at PF.

unwanted SSA who desire transformation—they may have managed their temptations, but they only seriously begin seeking help when they reach the end of their rope. Something athletic trainers tell their clients is the same thing we tell participants here at PF: “*You have to want this.*” If you don’t, you’ll easily become discouraged, and possibly abandon the transformational journey.

Daring to hope in something better is scary—it’s vulnerable. It takes courage to admit that you’re not happy with who or where you are, but it may still feel impossible to hope for a better life. For someone trying to get healthier physically, this is where talking with trainers, athletes or coaches is crucial. You need someone to guide you toward realistic goals, and seeing what others have achieved shows you what you can hope for. This is why we all love those makeover weight-loss shows—seeing other people achieve their goals and transform themselves physically gives us hope that it’s possible for us, too! The



same is true for those of us who’ve struggled with sexual, emotional and relational brokenness. The real-life stories of people whom God has radically transformed give us the hope we need to believe that He can do the same with us. Now, just like we can’t expect to have the same physical transformation as someone else (different genes, body types, metabolisms, etc.), we also have to remember that we can’t expect the same emotional and relational transformation as someone else (e.g. marriage, kids, singleness, etc.). Still, seeing God transform others allows us to dream, pray and ask God to grow us into the healthiest, holiest version of ourselves.

The word “detox” has become a health buzzword in recent years. “Detoxing” refers to removing toxins (inside and out) that affect our physical health. It’s based around the idea that our bodies are made for healthy or “clean” foods, and that as we remove unhealthy foods and toxins, our bodies will gradually self-heal and function better. The same is true for us relationally and emotionally. As we seek the Lord’s transformation in our sexuality, we have to remove the negative influences, habits and behaviors that we’ve indulged in. Some of us don’t even know what a healthy friendship looks like because we’ve been engaging in unhealthy relating for so long, and part of the Lord transforming our minds and hearts is being willing to lay down dysfunctional ways of thinking, relating and behaving. Like our physical bodies, the good news is that God has *designed* us to relate in healthy ways, and as we “detox” from destructive ways of relating, we may be

surprised at how we begin to desire and enjoy healthy ways of relating.

Unfortunately, for many people trying to get physically fit, they “fall off the bandwagon” after the detox phase. Simply removing unhealthy foods or habits doesn’t address the underlying issues that often accompany the negative behavior. A comprehensive physical makeover must include a deeper healing of one’s thoughts, beliefs and attitudes toward food, health, exercise and body image. With people seeking freedom and healing from unwanted SSA, this is also where many people “jump ship”. It’s one thing to stop acting out, surrender

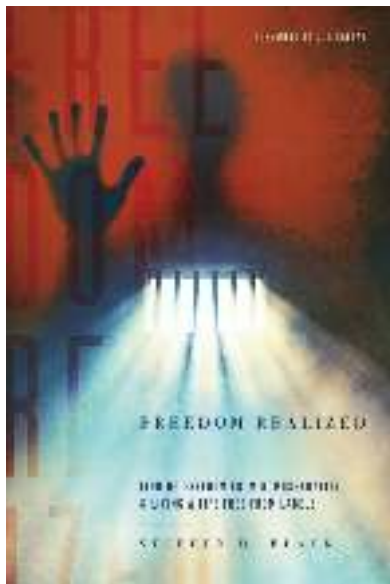
pornography or end unhealthy friendships, but unless you work through *why* you were immersed in those things, you may find yourself back in the same old patterns and behaviors. Like someone trying to eat healthy needs to learn about proper nutrition and what their triggers are regarding food, many of us need to unlearn lies and negative

thought patterns, identify and resolve our emotional wounds and triggers, and learn the truth about ourselves, God and others.

Finally, all transformational journeys are characterized by discipline. Learning new thoughts, behaviors and habits takes time, and we all need accountability along the way. People seeking to lose weight can learn all they want about fitness and nutrition, but if they don’t actually go to the gym or change their diet, they won’t experience the physical transformation they are seeking. Likewise, people with unwanted SSA can’t just learn about their emotional wounding, the truth of Scripture and tools for healthy relating—to experience the transformation they are seeking, they need to consistently renounce lies, walk in the truth and take steps to healthily relate to the same gender.

Here at Portland Fellowship, we don’t disciple our participants toward one specific measurable outcome; what we *do* disciple people toward is holiness and health. We recognize that, like physical fitness, true healing in our emotions and relationships takes time. It is a life-long commitment to a process of walking in the Lord’s design for our lives. While we know it looks different for each person, *we are adamant that the hope of transformation in Christ is real and available for all who seek it.* Like good trainers who are committed to helping people learn and grow in physical health, we are passionate about shepherding people toward the relational healing and freedom Jesus designed us for!

## New Resource: *Freedom Realized* by PF Staff



As a member ministry of Restored Hope Network, we have the blessing and privilege of connecting with other like-minded ministries around the country. One of our friends and co-laborers in sexual redemption ministry is Stephen Black, Director of First Stone Ministries in Oklahoma. Stephen recently published an amazing book that offers concrete evidence that Jesus can and does do a healing work in people's broken sexuality. We pray that this new resource may bless and encourage you, and offer you hope! To purchase a copy of Stephen's book or read endorsements from other ministry leaders, you can visit the website from which the following review is taken: [www.freedomrealized.org](http://www.freedomrealized.org).

"*Freedom Realized* is a passionate and convicting book that gives clear evidence that people, in fact, find lasting freedom from homosexuality and freedom from a life defined by 'gay' identity fallacies. This book is needed by church members and leadership as arsenal in their battle for truth in this day of 'hip-hop gospel relativism' and people dumbing down the power of the Gospel of Jesus and His available transformation.

Stephen Black was the Chairman of the Ministry Council of Exodus International in 2012, which subsequently failed and closed up because it denied its own mission and purpose to bring full healing and restoration to those seeking a sexual identity defined by Christ alone. It was during this time that Alan Chambers, President of Exodus International, began abandoning the Exodus International mission. Chambers started communicating an ambiguous and deceptive message which said that no one's same-sex attractions change, thus leaving people condemned to live a life defined by a gay identity. This was a dark time, as Chambers completely contradicted the message of true hope in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Chambers' proclamations, repeated daily by gay activists, compelled Black to see that the true banner of hope was being raised elsewhere by the then thirty-six-year-old First Stone Ministries and by other ministries that later joined the Restored Hope Network.

Polled over a period of thirteen months, respondents to a First Stone Ministries' survey from a twenty-five-year period of ministry (1990-2015) provided evidence that First Stone has indeed produced the healing available through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The results are amazing! The survey revealed the exact opposite of Chambers' gay-affirming proclamations. The truth is, many people have found lasting freedom!

*Freedom Realized* describes a behind-the-scenes unfolding of Black's and other leaders' attempts to restore righteousness to Exodus International. Unfortunately, it was not to be. Instead, in September of 2012, God raised up a new voice to offer hope to those seeking lasting change by forming and empowering the Restored Hope Network. *Freedom Realized*, in part, is a tribute to many of the courageous men and women of God who worked to form Restored Hope Network (such as Frank Worthen, who was a spiritual father in this move of God and who has recently gone to be with Him).

There are some unique and significant differences which distinguish *Freedom Realized* from other books dealing with overcoming homosexuality. First, this kind of survey has never been conducted by an 'ex-gay' ministry. Second, *Freedom Realized* takes a hard look at problems in 'ex-gay' ministry—what works and what doesn't. It shines light on why some people find lasting freedom, and why others eventually fall away and go back into darkness. Third, this book exposes some of the deceptive messaging from the mixture of antinomianism and psychology that lowers the bar of holiness and hinders the freedom that Christ's Gospel imparts. This book brings the light of Christ's holiness and love to the 'gay Christian' distortion. *Freedom Realized* imparts a powerful hope by showing how to access the power to find lasting freedom and practical helps for ministry. Finally, the book bolsters confidence to attain freedom through wonderful insights from seasoned leaders with over twenty years of experience in helping people overcome same-sex attractions and in living a life of holiness in surrender to Jesus Christ. These leaders convey sound truths in their messages on how FREEDOM is REALIZED! This book is offered to encourage your own soul, your friends, your family members and especially church leadership to hold the front line of holiness concerning transformational grace!"

## january - february calendar & services

### january 12 & february 9 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.

january 13  
**annual planning meeting**  
PF Board and Staff gather to pray, plan and prepare for the new year.

january 30  
**jason speaking**  
Jason will be the sharing in a class at the Westside School of Mission, Theology and Worship.

tuesday nights  
**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/](http://www.facebook.com/portlandfellowship/)

**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 set up through the office.

## Partnering in Praise and Prayer

As we move into a new season of ministry, we invite you to join us in praising God for what He's done over the past year:

- Several Hope Group participants have seen their loved ones repent, seek help and begin the discipleship process of surrendering their unwanted same-sex attraction to Christ.

- One participant who was uncertain about God experienced the love of God here at PF, and decided to follow Jesus.

- Marriages that were broken and hopeless have begun the reconciliation process and are seeing signs of hope again.

We would also greatly appreciate your partnership in bringing these requests before God's throne:



- For the Lord to comfort the hearts of parents whose children are choosing to marry their same-sex partners.

- For Christ to encourage and affirm those in our families, churches and communities who are struggling to embrace their God-given gender.

- For Jesus to continue His healing work in the hearts, minds and lives of the Taking Back Ground and Upper Room Community participants as they return to PF after the December break.

- For God to continue to convict and empower pastors and churches to preach the truth of the Gospel and call people to repentance and hope in the area of sexual brokenness.

- For the Lord to prepare and equip PF Staff, Leaders and Board Members to share the hope of transformation through Christ at various events and groups this year.



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

**KathyGrace 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](mailto:pf@portlandfellowship.com)  
[portlandfellowship.com](http://portlandfellowship.com)

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