



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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From Darkness Into the Light by Nathaniel Holmes

I was born into a Christian family in Plymouth, MA. I didn't attend church often, even though my mother did, so I grew up with an understanding of who God was but didn't relate to Him as a personal father. I was close to my mom, and a relationship with my dad was basically nonexistent.

I was verbally bullied a lot, being called a "girl" through elementary and "gay" through middle school. Being introverted didn't help, though I did have a few friends through those times. It was in middle school that I started sensing that I might be gay, but remained in denial of it, even though I had begun looking at gay porn on the internet at home. It was also around this time that a family friend started sexually abusing me when I went to stay with him on winter and summer breaks. Although I had a sense that it was wrong, I didn't tell anyone what was going on.

When I entered high school, I finally admitted to myself that I was gay, but kept it to myself. At this point, all the bullying had stopped, but everyone seemed to know who I was. Feeling like there was a spotlight on me, I closed up and tried my best to disappear. This was a hard time in my life and I longed for a relationship with God that would help me feel secure in knowing that I wasn't Hell-bound. I struggled with my same-sex attraction, at times being at peace with being gay and at other times at war within myself. I started coming out to my friends when I was a senior in high school, and received positive responses.

When I moved to Boston for college, I was desperate for community and also terrified of people. I had never been the best with having friends, and most of my relationships were shallow, coming and going with the seasons. Though the sexual abuse came to a stop through my decision, I still had intermittent contact with the abuser and did not confront what had happened. During my first semester of college, my parents began their divorce, and I lost contact with my dad. And it was around this time that I met my first of a few boyfriends and came out to my family, yet my thirst for God also kept growing. When I was in a relationship with a man, I never really doubted God's ability to love me while I lived a homosexual lifestyle, but when I was single I would despair of being alone forever and worry whether being gay was a sin.

Three years later, during my senior year, I met a man who changed things. His name was Tim, and while we dated for about eight months, I thought we would be together forever. When he broke up with me, my heart was shattered and I fell into the darkest point of my life. At the time,



Nathaniel is a small group leader for PF's Taking Back Ground program.

I was part of two Bible studies, one through Campus Crusade and the other through a church I was attending off-and-on. I knew that it was only God who could put me back together, and I threw myself at Him harder than I ever had before. I started going to more activities through Campus Crusade, and during spring break of 2010, I walked on a beach in Panama City Beach, FL, and asked God why I continued to seek Him. He told me in the clearest words: *“Because with me, you are never alone. When you laugh, I laugh, and when you cry, I cry.”* These words struck a chord deep within me, speaking a truth I had always known, but never quite acknowledged.

When I got back to Boston, I felt two callings: to reconnect with my dad and to find a church. Consequently, I wrote my dad a letter and began looking for open and gay-affirming churches in Boston. During this time, I met the last guy I would date, and it was with him that I was struck irrevocably with a disconnect within myself, and wondered what I was doing. I joined a church and began making friends there, and I was able to reconnect with my dad, even though there was awkwardness in the relationship. Not long after joining Fenway Church, my new friend, Harry, was on a Genesis 1 & 2 kick, and I was with him every time he talked about it. During one of the last times he spoke about it, I heard God gently telling me that living in and pursuing a homosexual life was sinful. Hearing and knowing His words were true, I stopped my search for a homosexual life partner, and brought my sexuality under the reign of the Risen Christ.

After I was baptized in November of 2010, I graduated college, and the next four years were a time of challenge, growth, and struggle with where God had put me. I was still drawn to men and I had no inclination for women. My relationship with my dad was still struggling to get off the ground—many of the weekly lunches we had were just sitting quietly across from each other. The biggest thing God did next to grow me was to call me out of Boston and into Portland, OR, in January, 2014. I was at a large New Frontiers church conference, comprised of young adults from all over the U.S. We were praying for church plants, and when they started praying for Portland and Austin, TX, I heard a voice say, *“Go. Work.”* I followed

up with the guy who was starting the Portland plant, and after conferring with friends and leaders I moved to Portland in December of 2014. I was thrown head-first into a budding church community, eager to find my place.

The following year, I was contacted by the man who molested me. Not knowing what else to do, I reached out to the church plant leader, and he helped me work out my response. I wrote three letters: one to my abuser, to cut contact; one to my mom, to let her know that I had been molested; and one to my father, where I told him how I had felt abandoned by him growing up and that I had been molested. I received no word from my dad about the letter until I was home visiting a few months later. My dad turned to his new wife and said, *“My son and I have to go for a ride.”* This was the first time I had ever heard my dad refer to me as his son, and I was nervous. My dad has a temper, and knowing this meeting was regarding my letter, I had no idea how he was going to react. Thanks to God’s providence, and to my utter surprise, my dad admitted that he had not been the best father. He told me how and why he had kept his distance from me, and said he was sorry. Knowing he was seeking my forgiveness, I gave it to him, and I could immediately feel all the tension in our relationship dissolve like snow on a summer’s day. My dad and I have been very close ever since.



In July of 2016, I met my now-wife, Melissa, and within a month we began dating. She shared with me about Taking Back Ground, and I started the program that October. As a result of going through TBG, I realized I had an unhealthy emotional attachment to one of the men in the church plant, who was also my roommate. I knew I had to move, and through the process of moving, I began to realize how unhealthy the church plant was. I proposed to Melissa in February, and after a painful confrontation with my church plant leaders, Melissa and I left to seek a new church in March. We eventually found a great church, were married in October of 2017, and we’ve been happily growing closer together since then. My life has been rough, with bright rays shooting through inky darkness. As I grow with Christ, the darkness is retreating, my healing being made complete, and I long for the day of my King’s return.

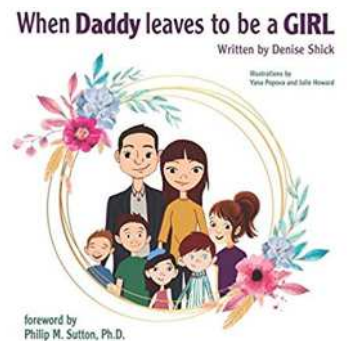
Children Responding to Gender Confusion by Jason Thompson

Navigating through our culture's redefining of gender, many of us are struggling to make sense of it all. If we, as adults (with wisdom, perspective and theological insight), are having difficulty making sense of this growing progressive ideology, how much more so do our children struggle to make sense of it?

My son, Cody, who is in fifth grade, was recently given the assignment to read a book on a girl's transgender identity, called *George* by Alex Gino. I've known of this indoctrination in the schools, but to see my son being given this assignment ignited a deep frustration for both me and my wife. Without freaking out, I simply asked my son how he responded to this assignment. He said that he told his teacher that he would rather not read the book, and instead wanted to talk to his parents (my wife and I) about this issue. Several other students did the same thing, which resulted in the teacher allowing their personal reading group to abstain from reading the book. We were super proud of our son for how he handled this, and we are grateful for the outcome.

I know that not every child will do the same thing, or even that other teachers would respond the same way, but regardless, it is crucial that we talk with our children about God's design for men and for women. We must not focus on the dysfunction of our culture, but rather highlight the beauty and distinction of male and female and God's image reflected in each of us.

Responding to this issue is a huge challenge. My friend, Denise Shick, has experienced this issue first-hand and has written several books from a biblical and redemptive point of view. One of her most recent is an illustrated book for children entitled, *When Daddy leaves to be a GIRL*. The following description of the book is from her website:



When Daddy Leaves to Be a GIRL can help children handle the emotional turmoil of learning that their parent wants to transition to another sex. In age-appropriate language, Denise Shick explores the fears, confusion, and anger a child may experience during these difficult circumstances. She offers children assurance that God sees their pain and loves them. She also gives practical ways to guide children toward emotional and spiritual wholeness.

To learn more about Denise's ministry, please visit Help4Families.com. You can also purchase this and other books she's written on Amazon. We pray the Lord continues to guide us all as we seek to teach, nurture and encourage our children with God's truth about gender and sexuality.

New Resource: *Are We There Yet?* by Patrick Silvis



We are pleased to share with you an encouraging new book by former PF staff member Drew Berryessa: *Are We There Yet? Sexuality, The Church and the Road to Transformation*. This is Drew's first book since beginning his public teaching and speaking non-profit organization, A Living Letter Ministries. Drawing on the lessons he's learned through his own journey of transformation, as well as years of ministry experience, Drew tackles some of the hardest questions Christians face today regarding sexual brokenness, including: *How do we respond in truth and love? How is homosexuality different than other struggles? Is simply having same-sex attraction sinful? How do we as the church walk alongside those with sexual identity struggles?*

You can order *Are We There Yet?* on Amazon in both physical and Kindle versions. To learn more about Drew's ministry, please visit www.alivingletter.org or connect with A Living Letter on social media (@drewberryessalivingletter).

november - december calendar & services

tuesdays in november taking back ground

PF's intensive discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction. Group for wives and fiancées also. 7-9:30 p.m.

november 9 & december 14 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 2-3 jason speaking

Jason will be presenting our Leadership Training program to leaders in Spokane, WA.

november 10 jason speaking

Jason will be sharing with the leadership team of 423 Ministries.

november 29 jason speaking

Jason will be presenting in a Human Sexuality class at Multnomah University.

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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

As we look toward the end of 2018, we want to share a unique way you might consider supporting the work of Portland Fellowship: gifting appreciated stock or mutual funds to PF through the National Christian Foundation Northwest.

Our partnership with NCF is special for two different reasons. First, giving appreciated stock to PF through NCF instead of cash or checks offers you a tax-deduction for the full fair market value of the stock



on the date of the gift, and capital gains can be avoided. Secondly, our partnership with NCF allows them to issue tax-deductible statements to you on our behalf. For anyone uncomfortable donating to Portland Fellowship directly and receiving a tax-deductible statement from us, this is an easy way to still support PF and receive your statement from an organization that has less public stigma than PF.

If you would to make a non-cash asset donation to NCF on behalf of Portland Fellowship, please call or email us and we will send you the form to fill out. You can also learn more on their website: www.ncfgiving.com/solutions/non-cash.

Update: Side Lot Patio Finished

Thank you to everyone who donated their time, financial support and prayers to our side lot patio project! We are excited to see God use this community gathering space in the years ahead.



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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