



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## From the Worst to the Best by Gregory John Nashif

*"...And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—John 8:32*

*"...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."—Philippians 1:6 (NIV)*

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles Dickens wrote, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." For me, my early years were the worst of times. I remember being molested at the age of seven by my babysitter's brother, who was over eighteen. I was bullied constantly on the playground for having tics and barking noises (I didn't know what was wrong). Kids would punish me, and never wanted to be my friend. My psychologist told my mom that I was just doing it to get attention, but years later, we found out it was something called Tourette Syndrome.

I remember a lost childhood and no bonding with the same gender, but continually having sex with boys and men, from when I was seven on into my teenage years. Over the years, I blamed myself for being gay, and hated myself as a man. I would pray to the Lord, "If only you made me a woman, I could find success in my life." Years in counseling and going through Portland Fellowship has taught me that it was not my fault that I was attracted to the same sex; the fact is, I was groomed to be gay by my early abuse and trauma.

As a teenager, I did go out with several girls—dancing, movies, etc.—and it was fun. I would bring them home to meet my mom and dad, but only to dispel the idea that I was gay. I went to an all-boys Catholic high school in Portland, Oregon. There, we learned in our religion class about homosexuality, and how wrong it was. Still, after hearing about it, I made the connection and realized that they were describing me. I accepted the fact that I was homosexual, and had no attraction to girls.

Many years later, I discovered a reality that took me into further isolation. I knew a man who struggled with homosexuality as I did, and the church we attended wanted him to share his testimony with them. I spoke with him about it, and warned him that he might experience a loss of friendships, that people may not understand, that they might try and keep their kids away from him. Still, he decided to go forward with it, believing that these were Christians and that upon hearing his story, they would rejoice with him.



Greg is completing his second year of *Taking Back Ground*.

My friend ended up sharing his testimony, and instead of rejoicing with him, these Christians indeed turned against him, and he eventually left that church, feeling humiliated and betrayed. In the midst of that trial, my friend called me and told me about a ministry that helped men and women through homosexuality. It was a small group located in Hinson Memorial Church, and it still exists today, now known as Portland Fellowship. Still, it would be many years before I would actually take the step of connecting with PF.

I was only twenty-nine at the time, but that one instance with my friend made me decide, without a doubt, to never share with anybody about my same-sex attractions. I really believed that “our testimony is not what we have done in the past, but what the Lord is doing for us now.” I decided to go it alone; I decided to play it safe.

Living with same-sex attraction was a life I hated. Here I was supposed to be living for Christ, and instead I was stuck in a situation that made me feel like less of a man. I had had a spiritual awakening, gotten married and had a child; yet as the years went on, I pretended to be this straight guy, never letting on to anybody about my struggles with homosexuality, for fear of retribution and rejection. I was alone.



Greg and his daughter Heather.

Fast-forward to the spring of 2016, when I was introduced to Portland Fellowship again. This helped bring me out of isolation, and the people there showed me and taught me how to love. People at PF taught me that even though I was sixty-five years old, it was not too late for me, that I could live a life of freedom and share that new-found freedom with others. I discovered that there were many others like myself, and I was not alone. That was the greatest victory—I was not alone, and I found myself in my “safe” space.

I almost did not get the opportunity to attend PF. I wanted to do Taking Back Ground online (which was only fifty bucks), and all I needed was a mentor. However, my pastor encouraged me to talk with Jason Thompson, and to attend the group in person. I told my pastor that I was on Social Security, and could not afford the TBG

program fees. Praise God, my pastor said the church would help pay for me, and they have!

When I met with Jason, I ended up sharing with him my life and who I was, and how much I hated this SSA, but sadly I just could not afford the money. He looked at me with a smile and some real kindness, and told me not to worry about the money—that I was the important person, and that there are those outside Portland Fellowship who contribute and help give scholarships to folks like myself.

The rest can only be described as “epic.” Since coming to Portland Fellowship, my loneliness and fear of being found out is totally gone. PF has made a big difference in my life. My friends tell me that the changes they see in me are amazing. And for the first time in my life, I am enjoying being a man, a man of God. I have come full circle, from the “worst of times”, and now it is for me “the best of times”. I have people who support me, a God who loves me, and have greatly learned that being alone and not wanting anybody to help is not the way to go. And what do you know, I even had a book of poetry published recently! Most of all, PF has given me the confidence to believe in myself, and to give myself what I have always avoided: grace.

However, the real thanks goes to those who contribute regularly to this ministry. Without you, I could not have found the courage to “come out”, as they say, and face my spiritual giants. May the Lord bless you all—thank you for blessing me. Through your efforts, I am finding my real self in Christ and the man He wants me to be.

*Some men hope to be / The greatest of mankind,  
Others reach for fame  
And sadness is what they find.  
Some reach up at crowded skies  
And try and touch their star;  
Still others try so very hard,  
To be greater than who they are.  
But all I know / Is who I am, / And what I hope to be.  
For all it's worth I think, / I would rather be just me.*

—Gregory John Nashif  
Twitch and Shout, Hallelujah, Amen

## The Power of Processing “Why?” by Patrick Silvis

Many of us have friends or family members who have rebelled against God’s design for sexuality and have embraced a gay or transgender identity. For those of us grieving our loved ones’ choices, we may sometimes find ourselves questioning why they aren’t able to repent and obey the Lord with their sexuality. Temporary and external changes in behavior may seem hopeful for a while, but when someone is seemingly unable (or unwilling) to walk the narrow road of sexual wholeness and healing, that nagging question comes back: “Why?”

Recently, I was talking with one of our Taking Back Ground participants, and he was sharing his frustration with a sinful habit he couldn’t seem to break. What he said was profound: “I need to understand why. I know myself—I won’t be able to change my behavior until I figure out *why* I’m doing what I’m doing.” We went on to process some of the events from his past that contributed to his current struggles, but I also began asking some deeper questions in an attempt to answer his “Why?” question: “When did you first engage in this sin?” “What need or desire has this sin been meeting in your life?” “Who has spoken lies over you, and how do those connect to this sin struggle?”



Today, there is an increasing number of people, churches and organizations uncomfortable with processing the deeper issues behind why someone might struggle with unwanted same-sex attraction. And yet, there is a popular acceptance and even endorsement of other support programs for addiction-based sin struggles. We would never discourage someone struggling with alcoholism from attending Alcoholics Anonymous to process the reasons why they struggle with abusing alcohol; on the contrary, many Christians would agree that uncovering contributing factors to alcoholism is the beginning of the sobriety process! The same is true for those struggling with unwanted same-sex desires and gender confusion. Simply “white-knuckling it” does not bring about deep healing or lasting change—it is only when we uncover some of the broken and painful roots to our unwanted and unmet desires that the Lord is able to speak truth to the lies those wounds caused us to believe.

Here at Portland Fellowship, we are often asked what we “really do” here, the implication being that we might be doing harmful “conversion therapy” or “pray-the-gay-away” sessions. Quite the contrary! Yes, we encourage people to repent, to stop their sinful behavior and to obediently follow the Lord, but we also walk *with* people and help them process *why* they are struggling. In this process of becoming more like Christ, sometimes God asks us hard questions, like He asked Adam and Eve in Genesis 3: “Where are you? Who told you you were naked?” This isn’t a witch hunt to blame other people for our brokenness, but it is an invitation to explore the underlying issues that contribute(d) to our sin struggles. He asks us to expose and confront the lies we believe about ourselves and about Him, and asks where those lies came from. Just like with Adam and Eve, He does this not to condemn us, but to save us from our own guilt, cover our shame and heal our brokenness.

In my conversation with that TBG participant, although we didn’t find any immediate answers, his willingness to process those hard questions gave me great hope for him. Jesus promises us in Matthew 7:7-8, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” How encouraging to know that as we seek to understand some of the factors that may contribute to unwanted same-sex attraction, God promises to meet us in the process and give us the answers that we seek!



## march - april calendar & services

### march 8 & april 12 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.

### march 8-10 tbg retreat

Taking Back Ground participants gather for a powerful weekend of worship, fellowship and surrender.

### march 19 & 20 jason speaking

Executive Director Jason Thompson will be sharing with Portland Bible College's Advanced Counseling class.

### thursdays in march & april upper room community

Teaching, discussion, processing and prayer.

### tuesdays in april 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.

### 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/)

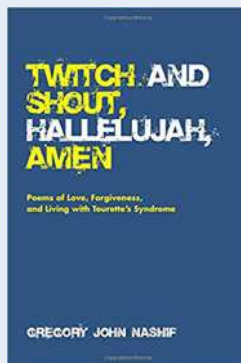
### additional updates

[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.

## Book Resource: *Twitch and Shout, Hallelujah, Amen*



We are excited to share with you an inspiring new book from the author of this month's newsletter testimony, Greg Nashif. *Twitch and Shout, Hallelujah, Amen* is Greg's first-ever published collection of poems, which capture the experience of living with Tourette Syndrome.

No matter what your struggle is, *Twitch and Shout* can encourage and inspire you to seek the Lord in all circumstances. You can order the book on Amazon: [www.amazon.com/dp/I532672977/ref=cm\\_sw\\_em\\_r\\_mt\\_dp\\_U\\_tLDBCbY6RKZB8](http://www.amazon.com/dp/I532672977/ref=cm_sw_em_r_mt_dp_U_tLDBCbY6RKZB8)

## Partner with us in Prayer

This spring, please join us in seeking the Lord's guidance and blessing. Please pray:

- For God to encourage and prepare the TBG participants for whatever He wants to do in them during the TBG Retreat. Pray also for Jesus to break down and destroy the idols, false identities and strongholds that participants have been holding onto.

- For PF Staff and leaders to stay in step with the Holy Spirit and listen to His voice as they serve at the TBG Retreat.

- For the Lord's peace, comfort and protection to cover Jason and his family, as his son Trevor's brain and spine surgery has been pushed back until May. Pray for the Lord to prepare the doctors and nurses, for full and complete healing for Trevor, and for a fast recovery with no complications.



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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