



# thefellowshipmessage

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## Owning My Gender by KathyGrace Duncan

*What does it mean to own something? According to Webster, the word "own" means, "belonging or relating to oneself or itself; that which belongs to oneself. To possess; have." To me, to own something means it belongs to you—to have possession of or control over it. To want to own something, you find value in it. With that definition in mind, what does it mean to own our gender? Let me see if I can explain.*

Many years ago, I had given the ownership of my gender identity over to a belief that being a woman was bad, that being a woman meant I would be hated and I would be vulnerable. These beliefs convinced me there was no value in being a woman. These beliefs also controlled the pursuit of the lie that I needed to be a man to be safe and acceptable. Eventually I transitioned into living as a man, and I suppressed my female identity with hormones for eleven years. Thankfully, God got ahold of my heart and He called me back to the woman He created me to be. I said yes to Him and began to lay down my false identity.

As I began the journey out from living as a man, I spent a lot of time in prayer and the Word everyday with the Lord. As this point, I only knew three things: first, God created me as a woman; second, I had to go back to what He had created me to be; and third, He was the only one who knew the way out, so I needed Him to show me the way. As I was focused on all the physical changes that needed to take place, The Lord let me know He didn't care about those things and that He was after my heart. He was wanting to address those things that were in the way of seeing who I was. Though I thought it was important to focus on going back to be the woman God created me to be, He thought it was more important I go forward into knowing my identity in Christ—how I am valued by Him and how deeply loved I am.

One of the things I did was to spend daily time in prayer with Him, and actually, I don't think I would call it prayer; I would call it conversations. These conversations established a deep, trusting friendship with the Lord. And because of that friendship, I knew it was safe to be honest with Him. I could ask Him anything, and He would answer. Sometimes it felt He was already there waiting for me! It was in this time that I dealt with significant issues, like the lies that impacted me and the wounding from them. Also in this time, I began to see the value of how I was created, and that it was on purpose, for a purpose. This revelation didn't come about because I focused on not living as a man, but because I was focused on what the Lord said about who I am. I began to believe how I was created was good.



KathyGrace is PF's  
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Leader.

In the process of figuring out what it looks like to own your gender, I think having people to walk with you is important. The Lord had brought me two mentors in this process. The first mentor took me through Psalm 119. There are twenty-two sections in that chapter, and each section has about eight verses in it. I would read the section and have the Lord show me the meaning. I would then also ask the Lord for a verse from the New Testament that fit that section from Psalm 119. This was an amazing assignment—by doing this, it stirred up a longing to know the Lord, and to be all He has created me to be. At that time, I didn't know that I was no longer being conformed to the world, but I was being transformed by the renewing of my mind. The second mentor would help me process what the Lord was saying or walking me through or talking to me about it. Both of them sat with me through some pretty rough stuff. The Lord used them as examples of healthy women, which unknowingly changed me.

Another avenue for learning to embrace your gender is to be involved in either a ministry or a small group at church. For me, it was both. The first five years I spent at the Portland Fellowship were vital. Everything I thought was true and stood on was shaken and fell apart (thankfully, not all at once). The things that did fall away made room for the truth, and a different place to stand. At both PF and my church, I found truth, accountability and learned about boundaries. These were safe, Spirit-filled places for me to just be. I also received affirmation in the changes that were visible, and encouragement to step out a little more for the changes yet to be seen.

As I embraced being a woman (and the truth that it was good), I began believing what the Lord said about who I am, and strived to be obedient to do the things the Lord said to do, something shifted on the inside, which affected the outside. As my heart transformation continued and my mind was being renewed, I was becoming uncomfortable with how I was dressing. I didn't look feminine in the clothes I owned. I didn't want to wear what I had. I

realized that my outward appearance was the expression of what was happening on the inside. Not only was I embracing being a woman, but my femininity was being revealed.

I had studied Psalm 139, which told me how I was knit together and how I was known. When I read through it again, I realized that when the Lord said that



*KathyGrace when she lived as a man (left) and after embracing her femininity (right).*

He knit me together, He did so with everything I would need to be a woman and to be feminine. Even though I lived as a man, there was a nurturing nature in me, and as I embraced who I was, that nurturing nature grew: I wanted the softer things. I wanted to wear make-up. I wanted to be beautiful. To grow in this area, I purposed to make friends with women who were feminine. A dear friend (who is, in my opinion, very feminine) knew of my background, and she took me clothes shopping. It was the scariest, most awkward and uncomfortable thing ever. With my heart pounding, I managed to seize the moment. She took me way outside the box, and after the sweating stopped, I found I liked the things she suggested I try on. It wasn't as painful as I anticipated, and it actually opened my heart to the process of embracing an outward reflection of my inward transformation.

I don't think femininity can be defined, though it is recognizable, and I don't think real femininity can be forced. I think as women, femininity is who we are and how we live. Femininity is the essence of being a woman. I think femininity is knowing you are beautiful and being comfortable with your beauty. It is knowing you are created in the image of God, and you can carry His beauty. Femininity comes from the inside out, and it is inviting. Femininity invites to you come and join and be a part. Femininity makes a place for you. Femininity is not afraid to be. I praise God that today, I can confidently say that I "own" my gender and my femininity—I know He created me a woman and has wired me to be feminine. In Him, I possess everything I need to live and thrive as a woman made in His beautiful image.

## Hope Group: Changing of the Guard by PF Staff

This fall, we are making a transition with the leadership for our friends and family Hope Group. For over two years, Heidi Perry has faithfully served as our Hope Group Coordinator, doing everything from arranging speakers, to cooking the monthly meals, to processing and praying with participants, and more. Heidi has diligently fulfilled and even surpassed her commitment to lead this group and is now looking forward to a season of rest, renewal, and pressing into what the Lord has next for her and her husband, Ron. Heidi shares a few words on her time and experience serving with the Hope Group:



Ron & Heidi Perry

*“It has been so wonderful getting to know all the parents, friends and family who come to Hope Group every month. We have laughed together, cried together, sought God’s wisdom and strength, and we’ve seen Him answer prayers in awesome ways. Thank you to each and every one of you who helped Ron and I on Hope Group nights. We love this ministry, and we know and trust that the Lord will continue to do great things in your lives. We continue to pray for you and ask prayers for our health, the Lord’s healing and guidance during this season of reprieve. —Heidi Perry*

It brings us joy to know that although Ron and Heidi will be stepping out of this specific role, they are not stepping out of our lives. Ron continues to serve as a leader in the Taking Back Ground program, and they both continue to bless us with their friendship and their willingness to assist us with volunteer needs.

Even as we say goodbye to Heidi, we are thankful for God providing the next Hope Group Facilitator just in time. We are pleased to announce that one of our Taking Back Ground leaders, Amy, will be taking up the reigns and steering the Hope Group into this next season. Amy is a graduate of the Taking Back Ground Wives Group, and she has been faithfully serving as a leader to the wives for the past five years. Now, after much prayer and discernment, both Amy and the PF Staff see God leading her to serve in this new capacity.

*“I feel so blessed to be able to serve at Portland Fellowship both with the Hope Group and with the wives in the Taking Back Ground program. I came to Portland Fellowship to better understand the ‘why’ behind the struggles of same-sex attraction and gender identity issues. While that certainly happened, God did so much more in my life. He opened my eyes, and revealed my own wounds and shortcomings and grew in me a deeper dependency on the Lord. I came to understand how much all of us have in common, rather than what makes someone ‘different’ in this area.*

*I feel so privileged to be at Portland Fellowship. It is an honor to walk with the men and women who come through the program, and to see their lives absolutely transformed. I am thrilled to work with Hope Group because that’s exactly how I feel when I come through the doors now—full of hope, because I have seen God move in amazing ways. I have seen Him break chains. I have witnessed what the mighty hand of God can do. Because of my time at Portland Fellowship, God has given me a heart for the friends and families in the church who long to understand how to love others with grace while upholding the truth. I look forward to developing relationships with the Hope Group family, praying with them and learning together how to love like Christ.” —Amy*

## november - december calendar & services

### november 8 & december 13 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 15-16 apologetics conference

PF staff will be sharing of the work of Portland Fellowship and an informative workshop at Cedar Mill Bibl Church's annual Apologetics Conference.

6:30-9 p.m. Friday

9a.m.-4p.m. Saturday

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 are also available.

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.

## With Thankfulness

Later this month, we will all pause, collectively, to give thanks for everything we have. As believers, we direct that thanks to God our Father, who is the giver of every good and perfect gift.

When we pause to reflect on God's blessings, we realize that He is not at all stingy, but generous in so many ways. He is generous with His love, His mercy, His forgiveness, His friendship, His financial provisions, and the list goes on. When we deeply reflect on these things, we can't help but respond with generosity in return, and that is what we have received from each of you: an outpouring, an overflowing of what God has given you.

As a staff and leadership team, we are intensely thankful for all those who pray for us, encourage us and stand alongside us with the truth and love of God for the broken and hurting person.

God has always provided for us at Portland Fellowship, and continues to provide through you all that we need to continue this kingdom work. We pray you will experience the blessings of the Lord in return.



## Prayer Partners

Prayer is a vital part of this ministry. There are several needs that we focus on each month, including prayer for leaders, TBG participants and family and friends with loved ones who have embraced a gay identity.



If you would like to pray, we have two prayer lists for you to consider: one for Taking Back Ground participants, and another for our Hope Group. Each list is sent in a confidential format. We invite you to join us by signing up through our website. Simply create an account or sign in at [www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com), then click on "Join a Program." There you can sign up to receive these emailed prayer needs. Thank you!



**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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