



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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A Look in the Mirror by Phil Hobizal

When you look in the mirror, what do you see? I know that in my past, it was the reflection of someone I didn't like: Nose too big, crooked teeth, etc. The complaints went on and on. I remember a day when I caught my reflection in a store window as I walked by. I was so focused on the image that I didn't notice the street sign I ran into. Ouch! Luckily, God's intervention into my life led to a mirror just being a mirror, and not a definition of who I am.

Image carries a lot of weight in this world. Your value may be summed up by how many followers you have on social media; or the number of "likes" you get on your latest posting; or how many friends you have or how popular you are socially; maybe even your occupation, physical appearance or monetary value—whatever matters to you as a measuring stick. It's like another kind of mirror that sends back a message of worth and value. And, if that has power in your life to define your worth, you will become enslaved to public opinion and acceptance.

Being accepted is a basic human need. We all need that core sense of having value. Fitting in and belonging creates a sense of freedom, which allows you to grow into your full potential. For many of those who struggle with their sexuality or gender identity, that basic need for acceptance has not been there to allow for healthy growth. Now, I'm not talking about the acceptance of the struggle, but of the unique individual who is struggling. The world has a definition of who we are to be, one based on conforming to its values, as well as the elevation of "self" as the primary goal of life. God made the decisions for our existence—our heritage, our family, our gender, etc. No sense of lasting worth can exist apart from these factors. To go against His hand is to create a false self—a self created in our own imagination, or that of the world.

When I was a kid, I preferred to do things that were often considered feminine activities. I was artsy. My brothers, on the other hand, were typical boys who participated in "sanctioned" male activities, like playing "war" and baseball, etc. I remember thinking that maybe God had made a mistake and that I should have been a girl. Added to that was the comment one day from an aunt, "You'd make a lovely girl." Confusion and anxiety set in. Junior high would be a turning point



Phil is the founder of
Portland Fellowship.

for me. Up until that time, I'd gone to a private school; now, I was in public school, and things changed. It was really the first time I heard comments like "faggot" and other such names aimed in my direction. I wanted to die. I had a plan to end my life, but one day in my science class, the teacher said out of the blue, "Anyone who takes their life is a coward." His comment stopped me, for which I'm grateful. Still, somehow I had to survive. This began the emergence of my false self—the person I wanted people to think I was, rather than the real me. It wouldn't be until I came to Christ that that persona would die.

Genesis 1:26 reveals that God "made us in His image." Though all of us are similar in body structure, we are uniquely different, yet made in His image. God then goes on to declare that His creation of us was "very good" (*Gen. 1:31*). Each uniquely-made human being is created with specific intent, and each of us is very good. That is awesome and mind blowing! I do not believe that God is only asking us to conform to His moral framework—He is also calling each of us to become that unique individual He designed us to be. A new life in Christ will bring about the moral changes, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us empowers us to be "becomers" and "overcomers". He knows the plans he has for us (*Jeremiah 29:11*). He was there as we were being formed in our mother's womb (*Psalms 139:13*). Your life is not a mistake. He has numbered our days on earth (*Psalms 39:4*), and He has things He wants us to do (*Ephesians 2:10*).

Self-acceptance is really an act of surrender—surrendering to the hand of God. Though I may think I know how my life should be, there is One who has a path that has a purpose—one that brings fulfillment. Isaiah 29:16 (NLT) says, "He is the Potter, and he is certainly greater than you, the clay! Should the created thing say of the one who made it, 'He didn't make me'? Does a jar ever say, 'The potter who made me is stupid'?" In the early days of my Christian journey, I remember standing in front of the mirror and being prompted by the Holy Spirit to thank God for how He made me. It was awkward in the beginning, but that

simple practice of affirmation led to seeing the good in me, rather than my shortcomings. Socrates was quoted as saying, "The mirror, a tool by which to 'know thy self' invite(s) man to not mistake himself for God, to avoid pride by knowing his limits, and to improve himself—not a passive mirror of imitation but an active mirror of transformation."



Phil around six years old.

I've found it's good, from time to time, to take a step back and assess my life. Personal reflection affords us the opportunity to make changes. Am I really living out God's calling in my life? Is Jesus the center of my existence? And do I know the power of living a resurrected life? Trusted friends can also add valuable insight, as we allow others to call out the good of who we are (*Ephesians 5:21*).

The bigger part of our story is that our time on earth is finite. God knows the number of our days. And one day, we will stand before Him as described in the parable Jesus told about the sheep and goats (*Matthew 25:31-46*). On that day, we will either hear "good job, enter into my glory" or "I don't know you". Another way to look at it could be, God might say, "You aren't the person I intended for you to be; instead, you have become a creation of this world". In that moment, it will become clear that our journey on earth was not meant to be for ourselves and our own pleasures, but to fulfill the vision that God has for each of us by His design. In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard writes, "What God gets out of our lives—and indeed, what we get out of our lives—is simply the person we become. It is God's intention that we should grow into the kind of person he could empower to do what we want to do. Then we are ready to 'reign forever and ever.'"

Honestly, some days I find myself looking in the mirror and wondering if I'm being all that God has called me to be. Still, I know this peace and satisfaction in my heart that God is the one working in me for His glory...I just have to allow Him to make me the best "me" that I can be.

Pacific Northwest RHN Ministry Resources by PF Staff

Each year, Restored Hope Network hosts a national conference. As an umbrella organization that connects member ministries like Portland Fellowship, RHN highlights member ministries from different regions around the country during their annual conference.

This year, PF's Women's Ministry Leader KathyGrace Duncan had the privilege of attending the RHN HOPE2019 Conference in Minneapolis, MN. As a representative of Portland Fellowship, she was able to share about the amazing work God is doing here in Portland and around the world through our online programs. KathyGrace also connected with other leaders from our region, and we want to highlight these important ministries for anyone seeking help for unwanted same-sex attraction or gender confusion in the Pacific Northwest.



KathyGrace (center) and other PNW RHN ministry leaders.

Mid-Valley Fellowship Albany, OR

Director: Duan Walker **Web:** midvalleyfellowship.org **Email:** support@midvalleyfellowship.org **Phone:** 541-928-2164



Mid-Valley Fellowship is PF's sister ministry that serves the Central Willamette Valley (Albany, Corvallis, Eugene, and Salem). MVF's discipleship programs help individuals obtain sexual and relational wholeness in the midst of a broken and confused world.

Tower of Light Ministries Kirkland, WA

Director: Jeff Simunds **Web:** www.toweroflightministries.org **Email:** jeffs@northshore.church **Phone:** 425-216-4443

Tower of Light is a Christian discipleship ministry serving the greater Seattle area. Tower of Light offers help and support to those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions, as well as parents, friends and family members. They also offer support in Spanish (también se ofrece apoyo en español).

Path of Life Spokane, WA

Director: Sheri Olsen **Web:** www.pathoflifespokane.org **Email:** info@pathoflifespokane.org **Phone:** 509-444-9035



Path of Life offers Christ-centered hope and resources for unplanned pregnancy and parenting support, relationship resource, post-abortion recovery, and unwanted same-sex attraction and gender clarification in the context of spiritual discipleship.

Higher Ground Ministries – Montana Billings, MT

Director: Scott Anderson **Email:** highergroundmt1@gmail.com **Phone:** 406-927-7477

Higher Ground – Montana ministers to men and women affected by sexual brokenness. They offer lay counseling and support groups for strugglers, help for family and friends, and help for those dealing with sexual identity confusion.

september - october calendar & services

september 13 & october 11 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.

september 5-8 staff planning retreat

PF staff will be spending some intentional time praying and planning for the upcoming program year.

tuesdays in september Leadership Training

Volunteer leaders will gather to learn and grow together in preparation for the upcoming Taking Back Ground program. 7-8:30 p.m.

tuesdays in october 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.

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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.

Taking Back Ground: Spread the Word!

As Taking Back Ground begins next month, we are currently accepting applications and scheduling intakes. TBG begins the first Tuesday in October and runs through May.



There are several ways you can help us promote this life-changing program:

First, if you or someone you know

is desiring a deeper discipleship process in the area of same-sex attraction, please contact us!

Next, pray about asking your pastor if you can share with your church or small group about Portland Fellowship's programs for Christians struggling with unwanted SSA.

Consider as well sharing PF's posts on your personal Facebook page. It might not be your personal struggle, but you never know who else might be encouraged by a testimony of sexual and relational healing!

Finally, please join us in praying for the Lord to lead the brokenhearted who desire healing to His ministry here at PF.

Partner With Us In Prayer

This month, please join us in praying:

- For new and fresh vision, energy and strength for staff and volunteers as they prepare for TBG.

- For courage and boldness for those considering the

Taking Back Ground program—that they wouldn't let doubt or fear stop them from pursuing deeper healing and intimacy with Christ.



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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