



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Friends,

update april 2020

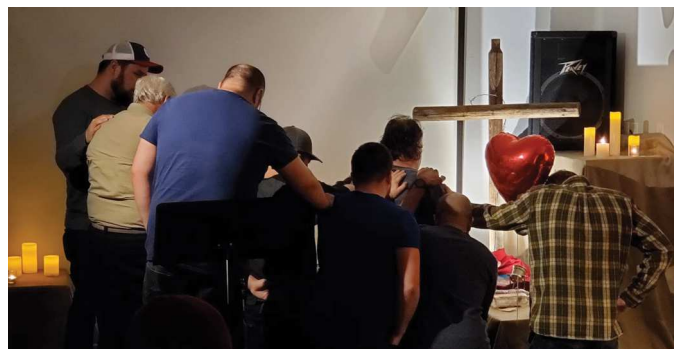
It's a beautiful thing when a man surrenders a mask. Every March, during the break between the second and third sections of the Taking Back Ground yearly cycle, the Portland Fellowship staff, leaders and TBG participants head into the wilderness. We make our home for the weekend in a cluster of lakeside buildings, surrounded by trees, fresh air and the quiet noise of nature.

We call it our retreat. We leave behind our routines, work, distractions, busyness and technology. We don't just retreat away from everyday life, but into rest and communion with God and His people. Arriving from all over the Portland area, from places as diverse as our stories, there's a supernatural alignment in the orientation of our hearts. We come seeking to be at home with Jesus, to hear His voice and learn from Him, to worship Him, and to lay ourselves before Him in humble surrender. We also come as members of a common community, co-laborers and co-strugglers who are loving each other toward holiness as we pursue wholeness in Christ together.

The weekend is filled with laughter, fellowship, games, worship, quiet time, meaningful conversations, Scripture, small groups and prayer. Essentially, it's an extension of our Tuesday nights at Taking Back Ground. At the Portland Fellowship house, over the course of the first two sections of the year, we have directed our hearts toward worship of the God who restores us, and the building of safe, vulnerable community where the worst about us can be brought into the light of God's redeeming grace. Our time away amplifies those aims. We sing more, take the time to let Scripture speak truth to our hearts, reflect and learn together, and bond as siblings in the Lord in a hundred different ways.

At this year's event, we reclaimed dodgeball as an expression of joy and community instead of a source of schoolyard rejection and terror. We read of the riches of God's grace and the fullness of life to which He's called us in Ephesians. We yelled about card games and drew spiritual principles out of Star Wars and Harry Potter.

Every year, surrender is the heart of the retreat. The spiritual peak of our time is the sacred space of the surrender service on Saturday night, when we bear witness to the Lord's work in calling each of us to lay down the things that most obstruct our wholeness in Him. These are not habits, actions or physical objects; yes, we bring tangible items to represent the surrender of our hearts, but God has been doing a deep work in us, beneath the level of behavior. He calls out our motivations, our posing and posturing, our wounds and our masks that keep us bound up in fear of man, fear of failure, fear of exposure and fear of inadequacy. We ask Jesus to reveal to us not the easiest thing that we could surrender, but the deepest, most important obstacle to remove. Standing before our brothers and sisters, we lay open our souls and our brokenness. Then, kneeling before the cross, we receive prayer, blessing, and love from the community that shows us what God's love is like.



PF leaders pray over participants as they kneel in surrender at the cross.

"He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners."

ISAIAH 61 : 1

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A few things happen at the end of each surrender service. There's an appreciative somberness as we file out of our meeting room. It has been a true honor to witness the confessions of our community, to pray for each other, and to laugh and cry together. There's also a sense of quiet wonder. *Can it really be that I am loved this deeply, in light of what I just confessed and laid down? Could this loving support be an accurate representation of God's heart toward me?* There's an emotional release valve that has been opened, too. Some of us are more than ready for a party—for dessert, loud games and a late night of reveling in grace. The build-up toward the surrender service has been weeks long, so for some people there's a deep sense of relief and exhaustion, and the only thing to do is to go to bed for a night of deep rest.

By Sunday morning, as we wrap up our retreat, a question hovers over the group: *What now?* We start to answer that together by sharing about what we have just experienced. Specifically and publicly, we speak of the strength and courage of our brothers and sisters, the moments that touched us most deeply, and we testify to God's goodness as He works among us.

What's next for us is to continue the journey. We may end the retreat and re-enter life as we knew it, but we're not going back the same. The places in our hearts that we surrendered no longer belong to us. We move forward being more profoundly known, supported and loved. We advance with more clarity and a deeper sense of the identity God has given us. We press into the calling on our lives with greater reliance on the Savior who faithfully, continually guides us into ever-increasing grace.

On behalf of the other Taking Back Ground leaders, the participants and the PF staff, thank you for your faithful prayers and support that facilitate God's healing work to continue through the ministry of Portland Fellowship.

*Mountains are still being moved / Strongholds are still being loosed
Bodies are still being raised / Giants are still being slain
God, we believe it, and yes, we can see that / Wonders are still what You do
—"This is a Move" by Tasha Cobbs Leonard & Brandon Lake*

In Christ,

Chandler
TBG Leader

Program Updates: Coronavirus



Like most organizations, due to the Corona virus we are currently unable to meet in person for individual or group support. Still, we continue to proclaim the power of Jesus to redeem and transform those struggling with unwanted SSA and gender confusion.

To that end, we are moving our Taking Back Ground and Hope Group meetings to an online format (Skype or Zoom calls), until it is safe to meet in person again. If you are a part of one of these groups, we will be communicating with you soon. You can also contact us via email for support.

We ask you to continue partnering with us as we seek to love the Lord and our neighbors during this difficult time. And, let us know how we can be praying for you!

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

events calendar

april 10 Hope Group

For family and friends of gay/
transgender-identified loved ones.

**Meeting online until further notice.*

7:00 p.m.

tuesdays in april Taking Back Ground

Group for those struggling
with unwanted SSA.

**Meeting online until further notice.*

7:00 p.m.

**Speakers, counseling, youth
support and personal support**
can be arranged through the office.

Check website for additional updates
at www.portlandfellowship.com