



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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A Story of Redemption by Hassan Al-Hammad

I was very young when my parents got divorced. I lived with my mom full time and would only see my dad every other weekend, so I didn't really see much of him. My dad didn't talk about his feelings, and we didn't even really spend a lot of quality time together.

As a child, I perceived my father as distant. I really wanted his attention, so I would do things to irritate him, because in my mind, negative attention was better than no attention. My dad physically abused me, and one time I made him so mad that he cornered me and just started stomping on me. That was a turning point. My mom had enough, and because my dad couldn't control his temper, she ended my relationship with him. As a result, from age thirteen until now, I haven't really had a relationship with my dad.

When I was with my mom, that situation wasn't any better. She was addicted to alcohol and pills, and used me as a crutch to take care of her at a young age. I didn't realize how bad it was until I was about fifteen, when I started having to take care of her to an unhealthy level. My mom wasn't the skinniest person in the world and she would walk around the house naked, which really turned me off to women all together. Sadly, when I was sixteen, my mom passed away from overdosing on pills. All of this pain, dysfunction, and lack of relationship with my dad led me to deeply question my sexuality. At first I thought this was just a phase I was going through, but as time went on, I continued to fantasize about pursuing affection from older men within the gay community.

Walking through the Taking Back Ground online lessons helped me realize why I was searching for a relationship with an older man. My mom and I were clinging together too much, which was problematic because as a boy, I should have been spending more time with my dad instead of having that emotional relationship with my mom. This really flipped the script for me. I had been so opposed to having a relationship with a woman because I believed I would need to be a caretaker for them, like I was for my mom. On top of this, I just wanted to have a relationship with an older man because I missed that with my dad. I remembered my father saying that he didn't want kids, and he told me that I was never really wanted. It makes total sense now why at a young age I just wanted an older man to love me, because I wasn't really wanted by my dad. All of this was extremely difficult, and I was desperate for answers.



Hassan is an alumnus of Portland Fellowship's Taking Back Ground online program.

The TBG online program opened my eyes to see how my lack of an earthly father impacted how I saw God. This rocked me to the core, because even as an adult, at times it has been a struggle for me to see God as Father. Instead of running to God the Father, I believed I would find satisfaction by running into the gay lifestyle. Thankfully, I never got into it fully, even though I did struggle with pornography. God got a hold of me, and I'm so glad He did, because if He hadn't I probably would've had an encounter with another man.

Initially, I chose to do this online program because I had nowhere else to turn. I didn't really want to participate in person, because I was scared of others knowing stuff about myself that I didn't even know. Thankfully, my pastor and I decided to do TBG online together. He hadn't dealt with anyone struggling with their sexuality, but he was a man that I trusted to help me get through this process. Trusting men has been really hard for me, because I believed that they, like my father, would just leave me. Even after my pastor agreed to mentor me, it took time for me to open up to him. I was ashamed that I was struggling with my sexuality, but I decided to do the online program because I thought, "What could it hurt?"

I've learned a lot about myself going through this process. The built-in accountability is a good thing, because if I'm honest, there are times that I want to run back to pornography. However, now I have people that I can talk to when I am struggling. One of the lessons on accountability helped me realize the need to share when I am struggling, because we are not meant to bear all of our burdens alone. We need others in our lives to help us through the struggle. If we don't include others, we let the enemy win. Scripture says that if we confess our sins to one another, we will be healed (*James 5:16*). If we keep our sin and struggle to ourselves, we will continue to struggle. I haven't told a lot of people my story, but I really feel like it's time to start sharing my full testimony on how far God has taken me. Sharing with you all is a big step for me!



Taking Back Ground online also really helped me grow in my intimacy with God the Father. The truth written in the program showed me how much our Heavenly Father really cares about me, and that this issue I was struggling with wasn't something He created, but was something that could be used as a beautiful tool to grow me and help others. I often asked, "God, why did you allow me to go through all the rejection with my earthly father? Why did you let me struggle with same-sex attraction?" Although I don't yet know the fullness of the

answer, I do know that God is calling me to simply be willing to encourage others struggling with same-sex attraction.

I am so grateful for how God used Taking Back Ground to fill areas of my heart that maybe my earthly dad couldn't fill. After I took some time to look back on what was missing from my dad, this program helped me to find and embrace my true identity in Christ. *He* is the one that brings clarity and healing to my sexuality and my masculinity.

For all of the people going through this struggle, know that there is hope on the other side! The enemy will try and lie to you and say that the healing isn't working, but don't listen to that. You are His son or His daughter, and He loves you very much. Please don't believe the lie that you can do this alone. It's so important that you share your heart with people who will walk with you.

I encourage you to take this seriously, because if you do, God will be there to help you through all the trials and struggles. Part of what really helped me get through the TBG program was the fact that I really wanted this healing. The change doesn't happen overnight, but if you want to get the healing that you so desperately desire, you have to put in the effort—dig deep in your heart and allow God to work. Be willing to fight, because this battle isn't easy, but it is worth it! As you walk honestly through this process with God and with others, I pray you will experience all God has for you.

Beyond the Walls of PF: Helping LGBTQ-Impacted Families by Patrick Silvis

In 2021, we've offered a series of interviews with Christians who are responding to SSA and transgenderism from a redemptive perspective. This month, we're talking with Denise Shick, Director of Help 4 Families and Living Stones Ministries.

Denise, how did God lead you into this ministry?

I shamefully put up a fight when God asked me to come forward and begin a ministry. My journey, like most others, was very painful. I felt shame about my dad's transgender behavior and his belief about who he was. Yet God didn't stop pursuing me. I felt pressure on my chest, like a boulder was on top of me, and I couldn't shake the weight. I cried out to God in my prayer time: "You either have to take this weight off me or open the doors."

Once I owned the responsibility that God had entrusted to me, He began to guide my steps. I called Focus on the Family, and they put me in touch with Jerry, who was their referral for transgenderism at that time. Jerry mentored and trained me for six years, and he gave me a love offering to begin a website for families: www.help4families.com.

Pastor Brad, from my home church, also came alongside me and trained me to do presentations for ministers and church congregations. Before long, I received permission to begin a support group for sexual addiction strugglers, and another group for family members. This was a big deal in the small town where I lived. Many asked me, "Why would you want to start this type of group?" Others gave looks of disapproval when they heard my testimony or where God was leading me.

Thankfully, God gave me the strength to march forward in faith. He then led me to write books, starting with *My Daddy's Secret*. The story behind Help 4 Families is one I treasure as I reflect on God's goodness and faithfulness. We're each responsible to God for what He assigns us to do. For many of us, that means sharing what God has done or is doing through our difficulties, so that we can encourage and minister to others who are hurting or seeking to truly know God.

Every ministry has its joys and challenges. What have been some of those for you and your ministry?

One of my greatest joys is witnessing growth in family members who came to us at such heartbreaking times, and seeing how they have grown in their faith and how God has blessed them as they pursue Him. Another joy is knowing where those who struggle with SSA or gender dysphoria once were, and seeing how God is now

moving in their life. Nothing is more rewarding than helping build up their faith.

It's challenging when family members drift away from God because He's not answering their prayers fast enough. Sometimes family members attempt to save or fix their loved one, and the situations surrounding them.

I understand their desire, but in my own experience, I had no one and nothing to cling to but God alone. He and I had many conversations through the years, sometimes crying together. Other times, He just kept asking me, "Do you believe?" Ultimately, God's grace was sufficient, and He met me right where I was.

What encouragement can you share with our readers who are impacted by transgenderism?

I know what it's like to have a loved one stray from God and His plan for their life, but I also know the rewards of persevering through the pain. I wouldn't have the faith I have today if it weren't for the trials I've suffered through. I had a difficult time getting out of bed each morning after my dad left to live as "Becky." I actually talked to my feet—I looked down at them and said, "You can make it to the door." I had to come to the end of myself, and I needed God's help like never before.

It's easy to say, "Yes, I trust the Lord" when life runs smoothly. However, our trust in God is usually tested when a loved one identifies as transgender. The challenges we go through can land us flat out on the floor, feeling lifeless. Many times, a trial rebuilds the foundation of our faith, making it stronger. I believe God wants us to ask, "What do you want to do in me, Lord?"

If you struggle to trust God through your trials, know that our God is faithful. He has marvelous plans for you!

*Denise's newest book is titled *Moving Forward in Hope: A Devotional for Families of LGBTQ Loved Ones*. To order this book and others by Denise: help4families.org/amazon-resources



november - december calendar & services

november 12, december 10 hope group

Prayer, support and encouragement for friends and family of gay or trans-identifying loved ones.
6:30 p.m.

To RSVP for Hope Group, go to:
portlandfellowship.com/rsvp.php

tuesdays in november taking back ground

PF's discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction. Support group for wives as well.
7-9:30 p.m.

november 11-13 kathygrace speaking

KathyGrace will be sharing her video testimony with The Global Rainbow Crossers Alliance (GRCA), which represents former LGBTQ leaders from 51 nations across Asia, Europe and the Americas.

december 2 patrick speaking

Patrick will be sharing with the Friends of Missions group at Cedar Mill Bible Church in Beaverton, OR.

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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.

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving..”

—Psalm 100:4



2nd floor bathroom: BEFORE



2nd floor bathroom: AFTER

to announce that all the repairs and renovations were completed just in time for the start of our fall Taking Back Ground program!

Thank you so much to those of you who sent in special donations to help cover these unexpected repair costs, and for those of you who continue to faithfully pray for and financially support the ministry of Portland Fellowship.

Our heart is for our supporters to know how grateful we are for you, and that we continue to put the Lord's work first and foremost as we prayerfully steward your offerings. Whether it's facilitating our discipleship programs, developing new online resources, or completing maintenance projects around the PF house, we strive to use your donations as the Lord leads. Thank you for continuing to give towards Kingdom work here at Portland Fellowship!

When the Levites were tending to their own fields instead of the temple in Nehemiah 13:10-11, Nehemiah rebukes them and asks, “Why is the house of God neglected?” We pray that the Lord would never need to ask us that question, as we seek to maintain and improve the amazing facility He has blessed us with here at the PF house.

Early this fall, we discovered a leak in one of the PF house bathrooms, which turned into a \$7,000 repair job. We are happy



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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