



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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From Lust to Life: My Story by Daniel Schwartz

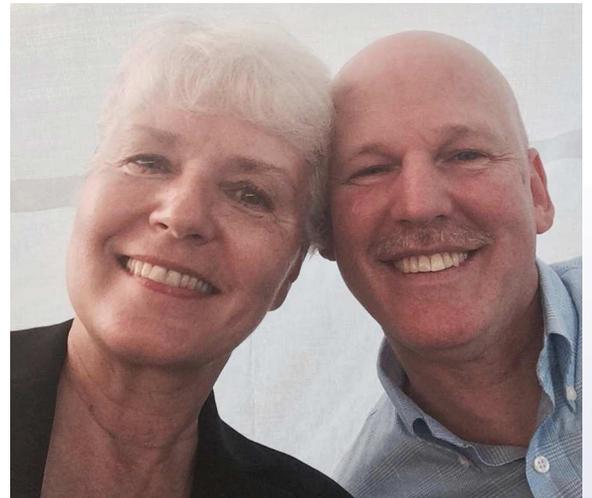
"I will remove the heart of stone...and give them a heart of flesh."—Ezekiel 11:19

As the youngest sibling of eight children, growing up in a sleepy town in Northern California was eventful and noisy. My dad worked three jobs to help pay the bills, and my mom mostly stayed home to ensure us kids were well-cared for. Overall, life was normal: Church every Sunday, sporting events to attend, and cooking meals at home every day, because eating out was awfully expensive. Some of my favorite pastimes were watching television, taking hikes in the woods, and playing with our pet dog, Skipper. One series of events, however, would serve to alter this young person's life for years to come.

One summer weekend, when my dad was able to schedule a vacation from work, our entire family went on a road trip to "the happiest place on earth", Disneyland, in Southern California. Upon arriving at a hotel near the theme park that our parents secured for three days, everyone was so exhausted from the ten-hour drive, all we could do was eat some fast food and quickly retire for the night. Due to my habit of sleep walking, paired with the whole family falling fast asleep within minutes, I was able to "escape" the hotel room I was in, only to find myself "lost" outside the room (not knowing which hotel room door to knock on so I could be let back in).

As I stood in the open hotel hallway, on either the second or third story of the building, I briefly awoke, only to realize that strangers were about to take me away from my safe environment. At that moment, I quickly entered a dissociated state of mind; to date, I am unable to recall many details of the several hours following my being taken from the hotel (God's grace?). Looking back, after many therapy sessions and hearing family stories of that fateful trip, I now know that sexual abuse occurred during the abduction; ever-present feelings of abandonment remain as one manifestation of this experience. Curiously, the one good thing about the whole ordeal: I was returned to my family the next day—dropped off at the hotel office by the same strangers who took me.

Fear, anxiety, lack of trust, and depression are off-and-on companions in my world, resulting from my past trauma. My present reality includes the inability to fully connect (emotionally or practically) with my earthly and/or heavenly father. Indeed, my early attachment wounds have proven to be formidable barriers to peace of mind and a calm spirit in my adult years. Fortunately, I do believe the strong Christian



Daniel is a Year Two participant in PF's TBG Zoom program.

mentors who have graced my presence over the years as they remind me of John 10:10—“*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I (Jesus) came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*”

For sure, my formative years on earth were a lot of things: joyful, typical, chaotic, scary. Through all the seasons in my life, I find one thing has made living most meaningful: being reminded of God’s love for me (*Jeremiah 29:11*). I freely admit today that, due to my past trauma, I sought pornography, masturbation, emotionally dependent relationships, anger and resentment, and fantasy to help me cope with life’s ups and downs. Employing such soothing strategies led me to feeling alone, bitter, prideful, and strangely tough or “masculine” (in a worldly way).

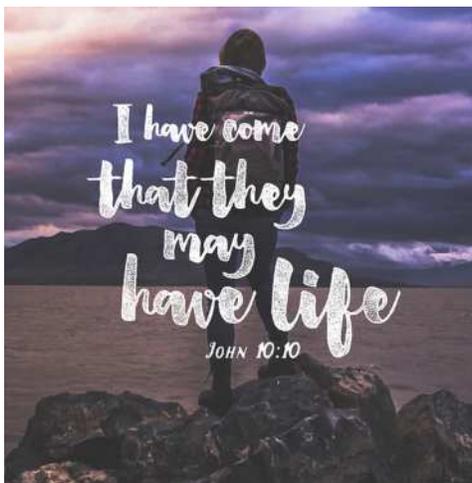
Fast forward to more recent times; many wise healers (thank you, ministry folks from HIS ministry, Portland Fellowship, Celebrate Recovery, Living Waters, etc.) have spoken truth into me over the years, which has resulted in God’s Word breaking down my false bravado. His goodness is now shining through the cracks in my defensive armor of pride, sarcasm and self-assuredness. Yep, as I become weak and embrace God’s truth (in Him I am strong; His ways are wise; Living in Him brings health and wholeness), I continue to sense a peace that passes all understanding (*Philippians 4:7*). I must mention that due to His divine intervention, God saw fit to bring a beautiful, godly woman into my life. I have been married almost thirty years now to Robin; her example of godly love has truly brought much healing into my life, for which I am most grateful.

My journey from childhood to middle adulthood could be summed up as unstable. My life motto for many of the past three decades sounded something like, “If I do everything you want me to do, and you are pleased with me, then I’m succeeding in life.” It is easy to understand how such thinking would ultimately play out in my life in dysfunctional ways. On a positive note, due to my parent’s modeling of what it meant to walk through life with Jesus, I always knew God wanted what was best for me, and all believers. Yet, how could a loving, caring God allow so

much pain to impact so many lives, specifically my own?

Indeed, I reached a turning point in my life that resulted in so much fear and anger being drawn out of me. Trauma left me feeling hopeless; indeed, life seemingly had no meaning and was empty, and God meant nothing to me. I perceived relationships as fleeting; true connection with others meant only fear and hurt. As God began to bring understanding into my brokenness, it became clear how the Lord desires mankind to adopt an authentic, God-given identity and obey the Creator (not the created). Pursuing

earthly pleasures did mask the pain of the world, but only for a short period of time. Trauma sought to make me feel abandoned, unloved, and unworthy; God lives to show this wounded warrior how accepted, cherished and special I am. To this day, He continues to refine and renew my heart and mind as I choose to follow him daily. PF’s “Be Still” daily reflections serve me well in this endeavor.



I spent many years and tons of effort trying to create a life that would drown out my past hatred and uneasiness of spirit. I utilized worldly means to obtain a sense of inner stability, to no avail. God’s faithfulness has led, and continues to lead, many “selfless disciples” into my path to remind me of His truth. As I bow to God’s mercy, kindness and wisdom, I am learning to embrace my real identity; I am now experiencing an inner strength that can only be described as truly a gift from God, as evidenced by the absence of conceit my newfound persona exhibits. God’s Word is alive; God’s children are worthy of love and respect; God will calm the mind and hearts of mankind; He is the provider of real hope and true healing.

May you, dear reader, experience His presence in a way that empowers your mind and calms your heart and soul so that you may rest in the peace of Christ from this day forward.

**If you or someone you know is processing past abuse or trauma, we would recommend the books “The Healing Path” and “The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse” by Dr. Dan B. Allender.*

The Transformational Journey (Part 2 of 6): Revealing the Wounds by Jason Thompson

Portland Fellowship proclaims the message of hope and healing for those with unwanted same-sex attractions. This six-part series presents an overview of why and how we make this powerful God-centered transformational journey. For part one, please visit: www.portlandfellowship.com/transformation.pdf

In the movie *Dolores Claiborne*, we meet Selena, a woman whose character is driven, angry and self-destructive. As Selena returns to her hometown, she discovers that her childhood was not as she remembered. Her gut-punching revelation came one day as she crossed over on a car ferry, a trip she took many times as a child. As Selena sat on the familiar bench, a painful memory came rushing back. She vividly remembered her dad sitting alongside her at a young age, forcing her to touch him sexually. The traumatic memory broke her hardened heart, and for the first time in her life, she began to contend with the pain of her past.



For those struggling with unwanted same-sex attractions (SSA), revealing the wounds and unmet needs of the past are often a crucial part of God's transforming work. Some disagree and say that looking at the past is not essential or helpful, and that we must, as Paul put it, "Forget what is behind and press on toward what is ahead." (Phil. 3:13-14) I fully agree with Paul; however, to "forget what is behind", we must first contend with it. This process starts by inviting God to search our hearts to reveal our wounds and unmet needs. As we do this, we become open to healing. And as healing takes place, we begin to find resolve, which allows us to forgive those who have sinned against us, surrender what has captivated us, and redirect our counterfeit relational connections toward genuine relationships. This is the process of forgetting what is behind, in which the past will no longer have the power to control or define us.

Not all destructive behavior and troubling feelings result from childhood wounds, as we have a sinful nature that will always lead us away from God's intention. Still, almost everyone I've known struggling with SSA has identifiable relational wounds. These woundings may include: an identity that was threatened or shattered (being called faggot, gay, butch or effeminate); a lack of affirmation or blessing (leaving a person feeling unappreciated, devalued, or undesired); unresolved loss of someone they loved (death of a parent, or rejection from someone deeply loved); chaos and turmoil (unstable homes or constant disruptions); and abuse and neglect (spiritual, sexual, emotional or physical).

These unmet needs and emotional wounds don't go away on their own, and, over time, they pollute the soul, affecting the whole self. If unchecked or unresolved, and without loving resources such as counseling, encouragement, and hope, the wounded person will experience life-long pain and struggle. These roots pave the way to uncertainty. For the uncertain person, life is inconsistent, unstable, and untrustworthy. There is doubt about God and relationship with others. If uncertainty continues on unresolved, insecurity arises within. The uncertainty progresses from, "I wonder if dad likes me", to "I'm unlikeable" or "I'm undesirable".

If someone bumps up against the wounded person's insecurity, a host of defenses will arise, like isolation, rejection, denial, and repression, to name a few. Defenses can be very helpful when a person experiences an attack, but the problem occurs when the defenses that once protected someone now keep people away.

When a person's defenses get challenged, the result is often hostility. This hostility shows up externally in various visible ways, such as emotional anger, physical aggression, or crying. It can also show up secretly, through self-harm, stress eating, the use of pornography, or sexual exploits. Another way hostility reveals itself is internally, producing anxiety, depression, sadness, and guilt. Of course, nobody enjoys these feelings, so eventually, the person acts out in ways that attempt to alleviate the unwanted feelings, and the cycle continues.

Here's the bottom line: those who seek sexual and relational connections outside God's intent are attempting to fulfill needs and resolve wounds. However, we cannot resolve the root problem by trying to fix the symptom. Behavioral modification, which is our effort to focus on and stop bad behavior, is never the answer. The answer is not in our fleshly efforts, but in God's Spirit, through our surrender to Him.

In Part Three, we will look at how surrendering our whole self to God (including our desires, confusion, pain, wounds, and needs) allows the Redeemer to transform us from the inside out.

march - april calendar & services

march 5
kathygrace speaking
Ignite Women's Conference
wcm.westernseminary.edu/ignite/

march 11-13
tbg retreat
Taking Back Ground participants gather for a powerful weekend of worship, fellowship and surrender.

march 11, april 8
hope group in-person
Prayer, support and encouragement for friends and family of gay or trans-identifying loved ones.
6:30 p.m.
portlandfellowship.com/rsvp.php

march 3 & 17, april 7 & 21
hope group zoom
PF's Zoom program for friends and family of gay/trans-identified loved ones.
6-8 p.m. PST.
portlandfellowship.com/friends_family.php

tuesdays in april
taking back ground
PF's discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction.
7-9:30 p.m.

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Get updates and inspirational resources on social media.

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[@portlandfellowship](https://www.facebook.com/portlandfellowship)
***Twitter:** @PTLDFellowship

additional updates
www.portlandfellowship.com

speakers, counseling and support for youth
can be set up through the office.

Prayer Request: TBG Retreat

Like many churches and non-profits, the past couple of years has pushed us to utilize Zoom for our programs. It has been an incredible blessing to have men and women join our Taking Back Ground program from all over the U.S. and abroad.



This month, for the first time, we will have our in-person and Zoom participants come together to join us at our annual TBG retreat at beautiful Camp Tadmor.

We are hopeful and expectant that God will do His mighty work in the lives of each participant who attends the retreat. The retreat weekend is an incredible opportunity to build deeper connections with God and each other and experience the power of profound surrender within a loving community.

Please pray for each person traveling and for Jesus to break down and destroy the idols, false identities, and strongholds the participants will surrender. We also ask you to pray for the PF Staff and leaders as we seek to stay in step with the Holy Spirit throughout the entire retreat.

RHN Hope2022 Conference

This year's Restored Hope Network annual conference, Hope 2022, will take place on June 9-11 at Ridgecrest Conference Center, NC. This special in-person conference will feature powerful biblical teaching, workshops, and inspiring life stories of those who have dealt with SSA and transgenderism and been transformed by the living God. Learn from some tender-hearted experts in helping others and supporting families. Speakers will include Dr. Julie Hamilton, Tamika Sanders, Jeff Simunds and Dr. Paul Hruz.

For pricing, registration and more information, please visit www.restoredhopenetwork.org/hopeconf.



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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