



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Is Jesus Enough? by Alyssa Roche

A phrase in my life lately has been "Jesus is enough". It's a simple sentence, but as it has sat in my heart, the weight of it has become increasingly noticeable. It is easily said, but have I truly believed it? My answer would have to be "no".

I grew up the oldest of two girls, in church every week, and in Christian schools most of my life. You would think "Jesus is enough" would have been tattooed across my eyes! In a way it was, but my heart became numbed to it.

My home wasn't the safest place to learn trust. My mom struggled with controlling her emotions, especially anger. I learned early it was safer to keep my mouth shut. My dad seemed incapable of protecting me and my sister from my mom's angry words and actions. Because of that, I did not allow either of my parents in to my inner thoughts and feelings. I stuffed my emotions as deep as I could. I often thought, "If this is what it means to be a woman, I don't want it!"

I hated being a girl. Girls were confusing and emotional, and I didn't know how to relate to them. Most of my friends were boys, and I was convinced that I was supposed to really be a boy. My dad spent hours teaching me how to dribble and shoot a basketball, and how to throw and hit a softball. This was the way I connected with him. I was going to be his athlete, and make him proud.

Growing up, I had confusing thoughts about certain female teachers and friends. I longed for connection with females in deeper ways. I didn't know how to, or what that meant at the time. I also knew I was supposed to like boys, but I didn't like them "that way". I felt different and broken. I remember desperately crying out to Jesus for help, but feeling so alone.

By high school I had mastered my "mask". I played sports, hung out with friends, even went on a few dates. I was involved in my youth group, and mentored in leadership roles. I knew the right things to say and how to act, but I was living on my own strength. My heart knew that wasn't enough. I was viewed as the "good girl" and considered "perfect" by many around me, but it was exhausting.

After high school, I attended a small Bible college, where I continued in sports. I made friends, but was struggling with knowing who I was and what my purpose was. I had a new roommate my second year, and immediately connected with her. She was different from other girls. By the time Christmas break came, we were inseparable. I had been desperate for a friend like her my whole life. She eventually introduced me to a physical relationship that felt so right, so normal. I finally felt known, loved, safe. It was enough—for a time.



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

It was like the enemy had been watching me, knowing I had been disillusioned in my definition of womanhood, knowing I had never felt known or understood, and knowing I coveted the friendships I saw around me. He whispered in my ear, “Is Jesus really enough for you? Wouldn’t it be better to have someone you can really see? To be touched gently and lovingly? Not in anger anymore...” And I fell into a hole that went deeper than I thought possible. Instead of finding happiness and freedom, I found despair and slavery. I became enslaved to my emotions—to the fear of others finding out who I really was, to shame and guilt. It felt hopeless.

I have learned multiple times in my life that placing my trust in people leads to pain and disappointment. Recently, my pastor has been teaching through the book of I Samuel, reminding us that Israel asked for a king so they “*could be like the peoples around them*” (1 Sam. 8:19-20). God warned them of the consequences and disappointments if they trusted in a man over Him. The Israelites still chose Saul, who thought he knew how to do things better than God, and threw himself and the whole nation into a tailspin of disobedience. I’ve realized I am like the Israelites. Instead of asking for a king, I had been begging God for a best friend. It felt like everyone else around me had one. I wanted to be “like the peoples around me”. Like Israel, my thoughts were twisted and blinded by my desire to be like other people. I saw so many around me have amazing friendships, and I coveted.

A year out of college, I met a man who treated me with respect and gentleness. I knew I had to tell him my story, to give him a chance to retreat. Instead of running, he eventually asked me to marry him! We are coming up on our twentieth anniversary, with two boys, who are seventeen and sixteen. They daily remind me of God’s work in my life.

This sounds like a happy ending, right? I thought it was, for quite a while, until all of those emotions that I had stuffed started surfacing. Since college, I had avoided close relationships with women. I had friends, but I didn’t let them “in”. This all began to change when my oldest son



reached youth group. We were going to a new church, and there was a woman there whose son was the same age as my oldest. While our boys were in youth group, we started hanging out. The more we talked, the more I liked her. After a few years I felt like I could trust her with my story. She listened with love and compassion. Sometime later she said something I didn’t think I would ever hear from any woman. She called me her “best friend”. Those two words, said innocently, set me on a journey that I never saw coming. It unlocked a space in my heart where I had hidden my emotions, and they started trickling out. It soon became a river, and turned into an overwhelming waterfall of emotions. I didn’t know how to stop the flow.

Other friends, noticing changes, encouraged me to see a doctor, where I was put on medication for anxiety/depression and encouraged to see a counselor. However, the counselor I saw didn’t believe in God, and certainly not one that would demand me to turn away from “my true identity”. She even told me to consider leaving my husband. That was crushing—an attention-getter that set me on a path eventually leading me to Portland Fellowship. Looking back, I can see Jesus guiding in ways that I didn’t fully understand at the time.

Thanks to a worldwide pandemic, that Fall PF offered their TBG program on Zoom for the first time. It has been a grace in my life, but it’s also been intense. Currently, I’m working through the second year and am struggling to learn to trust God and others, and to learn new thought patterns. I’ve had many questions answered as God has taken me through places in my heart that I hadn’t realized were so wounded. He has been teaching me gently and faithfully.

I am thankful He didn’t leave me where I was two years ago, or even six months ago. He has blessed me with an amazing husband, two boys I greatly love, and amazing friends who continue to show me show me God’s love and grace in tangible ways. Most importantly, I am learning each day that Jesus is the only fountain of living water. He is not a cistern I have tried hewing out for myself (*Jeremiah 2:13*), because Jesus is truly enough.

The Transformational Journey (Part 3 of 6): *Surrendering All* 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 parts one and two, please visit: www.portlandfellowship.com/transformation.pdf



As the story goes, Ivan the Great, the Tsar of Russia in the fifteenth century, fell in love with Sophia and desired to take her as his wife. But her father, the King of Greece, had one condition: Ivan must be baptized and become a member of the Greek Orthodox Church. Ivan agreed, along with five hundred of his loyal soldiers. Yet, there was a dilemma. To become church members, the soldiers would no longer be allowed to kill. After discussing the problem, they came to a resolution. They determined that when receiving baptism, they would hold their fighting arm and sword above their heads. This way, they could be *mostly* baptized, allowing them to become both church members and fighters.

Well, of course, any believer who understands baptism's purpose knows that's not how it works. Baptism is proclaiming that we choose to fully die to ourselves and live for Christ—not just a part of us, but every part of us. Yet, if we are honest, the story of Ivan's soldiers is, in many ways, our story. Instead of genuinely *surrendering* our sin and struggle, we live a duplicitous life, or we try to control our sinful choices by *committing* our behavior to God.

Commitment is a “promised devotion, a pledge, or dedication”. It is something we decide for ourselves and on our own terms. So, the problem with commitment is that we are still in control: we decide what and how much we want to commit. Commitment is not a bad thing, and in truth, it's a wonderful thing; as we read in Psalm 37:5, “*Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him.*” But before we commit, we must first surrender.

Surrender is different from commitment. Surrender is “to give up or relinquish possession or control of something; to hand over; to give up a fight; an act of declaring the defeat of our own will”. Real transformation demands surrender, not commitment. Surrendering is an act of faith, declaring, “Lord, I trust you, even when my feelings may say otherwise. I trust you with my identity; I trust you with my relationships; I trust you with my body; I trust you with my sexuality.”

One of the most powerful acts of faith I witness happens each year at our annual Taking Back Ground retreat. On that Saturday night, one by one, participants walk to the front of the room and surrender areas of their lives (like those soldiers' unbaptized arms) that have yet to be surrendered. Each comes prepared with a symbol or an actual item they are relinquishing to Christ, and lay it down at the cross.

Mark brought a rainbow flag, signifying the surrender of his “gay Christian” identity.

Terri presented a five-dollar bill representing the hush money her abuser gave to keep her quiet, thus surrendering the control the abuser had over her.

Brian cautiously surrendered his gun, effectively giving up his right to take his own life.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church of Corinth, “*Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now, you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*” (Col 3:5-10)

The most encouraging truth about surrender is what is on the other side of it. Our Father does not ask us to surrender just to leave us empty and needy. Instead, as we lay down the counterfeit—the things of the world and the desires of the flesh—we are free to pick up the Father's gifts, which are good, pleasing, and lasting.

In part four, we will see how our surrendered heart paves the way for God to take our wounding and brokenness, the ashes of our lives, and make them beautiful as He redeems them for His life-giving plan and purpose.

**may - june
calendar & services**

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

may 5 & 19
hope group zoom
Zoom program for friends and family of LGBTQ loved ones. 6-8 p.m. PST.
portlandfellowship.com/friends_family.php

may 7
kathygrace speaking
KathyGrace will be sharing at Pure Life Alliance's "Xposed: Biblical Sexuality" event at Cedar Mill Bible Church in Beaverton, OR. 9:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

may 13, june 10th
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

june 9-11
rhn 2022 conference
Restored Hope Network's annual conference. Ridgecrest Conference Center, NC.

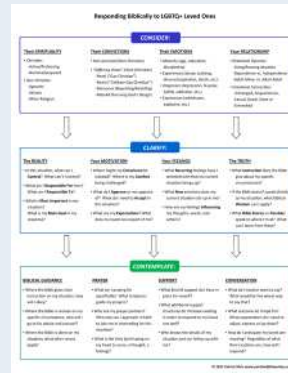
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additional updates
www.portlandfellowship.com

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

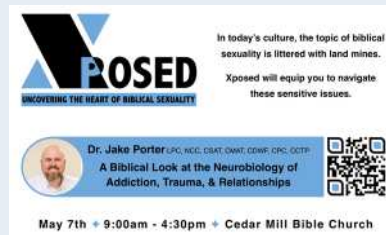
New Resource: "Responding Biblically to LGBTQ Loved Ones"

We are excited to share with you our newest resource for friends and family, called "Responding Biblically to LGBTQ Loved Ones". This packet walks through practical questions and topics to Consider, Clarify and Contemplate as you construct a biblical response to your LGBTQ loved ones. Here at Portland Fellowship, we don't have all the answers to each person's situation, but we hope and pray this resource offers helpful, practical guidance in how you go about relating to your gay or trans-identified loved ones. You can view and download the packet here:



www.hopegrouponline.com/resources/responding.pdf

Upcoming Conferences



from 9am-4:30pm. For more information and registration: www.purelifealliance.com



The Restored Hope Network HOPE 2022 conference 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 testimonies.

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



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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