



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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A Praying Wife by Trey Gay

When I was about eight, a male friend and I began to role play husband and wife. I recall being babysat with him by an older woman, and I believe she encouraged us to be intimate with each other. I remember writing that I loved "my friend" in the condensation on the mirror in their family's hot tub room.

Over the next several years we would repeat this, and as our bodies developed, so did the sex play. We broke down the good barriers between us that should have stayed in place. At that age, I didn't consider whether our actions would have consequences. I was too naïve to realize that I was playing with fire, addiction, self-hatred, and resentment toward others. I was giving in to the demands of the flesh. *"Don't you realize that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body." (1 Cor. 6:19-20)*

Masturbation and fantasy became dominate themes in my teens, a way for me to escape any pain I felt. I carried the shame and guilt with me at all times. I was very sensitive to anything said about me that sounded even remotely close to addressing my private struggle. Once, a cousin and fellow Believer outed me with the words, "Trey, you are a sissy." I wasn't sure if he was going to provide some words of redemption, or just let his assessment of me burn like the sun with no shade. However, I didn't stick around to find out. Instead of going to my father to affirm my true masculinity (*Psalm 139:14*), I let my emotions tell me what I already knew: "I'm gay and it's forever and there's nothing I can do about it!" I filtered so much of my interactions with my father through that lie that it eventually built up in me a hostility toward him. For example, when he would talk to me about how I was going to be the provider for my family someday, I would find ways to circumvent the idea that I would have to conform to a role that didn't fit me. These conversations filled me with fear over my future, like a ship with no sail.

Pornography became a prevalent force in my young adult years. It understood me, asked nothing of me, didn't judge me, and masked my fear of my future. I would go through periods of time when I wouldn't use it, but I lacked the commitment to stay away. I also lacked a strong Christian community to help me. I remember I had a Bible wrapped in plastic in my apartment, but I never did open it. I would hear inspirational messages of hope on the television, but I wouldn't open my heart to receive them.



Trey is an alumnus of PF's Taking Back Ground Zoom program.

Unfortunately, I did open myself to internet chatrooms and meeting up. I went to a few gay bars. The excitement of the hookup masked the pain I was feeling. I was looking for an escape—it didn't work. I was also turning more to alcohol and drugs.

Growing up, my family attended church every Sunday. I knew God had not given up on me. I began to pray for more of His presence in my life. He immediately responded to my prayer that He would be there as I walked out of the bondage I was in and into freedom. I accepted His leading, but I still left a "backdoor" available for whenever I needed it. I got back in church and let God minister to me about His grace for me. I met a great Christian girl and we married. However, I wasn't healed, and I was angry and violent. Eventually, she left and we divorced.



The Lord then began to minister to me about my homosexual struggle. I became aware that it wasn't so much about sex as it was about my relationships with significant people. I hadn't allowed God to work on the profound pain I was feeling. I was doing it alone, and my efforts weren't enough. Why couldn't I just shake it and move on? I still felt vulnerable around other guys, because I had not completely closed the door on my same-sex attractions. I was still struggling with finding in other men the love and affirmation I can only get from my Heavenly Father. I didn't want to admit that I struggled with same-sex attractions. I wanted to hold on to the masculine image I saw in other guys and desperately wanted for myself. I wouldn't own up to the fact that I was wounded from my past, and didn't know where to go or what to do about it.

I had some close friends encourage me to join a dating website. After a few months, I met an amazing girl. I instantly felt comfortable with her. She was so easy to talk to. I called her every night after we met the first time. After six months, we married, and we just celebrated our seven-year anniversary! I, like many others, believed that

being married would solve a lot of my problems about my same-sex attractions, but I quickly realized it wasn't a cure.

After two months, I opened up to her about my struggles with same-sex attraction and my past. Instead of shaming me, she sided with me. I am so thankful for her as my partner. My wife and her mother prayed for many years for her husband. She has had a lot of experience growing up with a violent father and other male friends that struggled with various issues, and she believes this helped her to prepare for me.

2017 was a difficult year: I lost my job, dealt with anxiety, and my wife lost her mother to cancer and had broken bones in both of her feet. I withdrew from her and wouldn't let her in. We separated for a few weeks, and then signed divorce papers. We were apart for six weeks before I moved back home with her on Memorial Day. *"She brings him good not harm all the days of her life."* (Proverbs 31:12) All I remember about those six weeks was that I was either venting to God, rebuking the devil, reading my Bible, praying or listening to worship music. I realized that God was healing me without me having to leave the marriage.

Two years later COVID hit, which allowed me to complete TBG via Zoom. The program gave me a new perspective on my SSA. I was able to explore the issues *behind* the attractions. Masculinity to me was "other": I idolized it. I sexualized it. I wanted to conform it to my needs. I realized that God will not force Himself into my thought life unless I open myself up and invite Him in. With His guidance and the work He is doing in me, I am no longer at odds with my own sexuality, but embrace it as a gift to be shared with my wife. I am now grateful for the sacrifices made by my earthly father and how they demonstrate the love of my Heavenly Father toward me. *"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 1:6)

The Transformational Journey (Part 5 of 6): *Living Out Our Freedom* 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 God-centered transformational journey. For context, please read the previous parts: www.portlandfellowship.com/transformation.pdf

After serving his sentence of thirty-five years for murder, Kevin was finally a free man. But freedom didn't come easily. As he reentered society, a host of obstacles awaited him: Getting a good job, reconciling with family, and finding respectable friends became a few of his many challenges. Even seemingly trivial things were frustrating—choosing what to eat, when to sleep, figuring out the internet, and learning the new social rules proved overwhelming. For Kevin, prison was predictable, and he knew who he was while there, but in his newly acquired freedom, he felt lost and uncertain.



I imagine that's what the Israelites experienced. After hundreds of years of captivity in Egypt, God sent His servant Moses to free His people. They must have been elated at the knowledge that they were no longer under the harsh rule of taskmasters, but shortly into the journey to freedom, they realized it wouldn't be easy. The wilderness was mysterious, the lack of their familiar food was unsatisfying, the timing of the journey was discouraging, and the constant need to depend on the Lord was undesirable.

Similar challenges and obstacles await those who find freedom from sexual and relational sin. As the Lord reveals His truth about the heart's condition and the captive person responds with repentance and surrender, an exciting new life begins. The old ways of doing things, the unhealthy relationships, the identity that gave a sense of belonging—all are now gone. The once-enslaved is now free to live a victorious life in Christ. Yet, unprepared and vulnerable, the flesh, former relationships, memories, and pressures from the world will all seek to entice the newly-free person to return to enslavement.

I remember one Friday night a few years into my transformational journey. The loneliness I experienced was so unbearable that the idea of venturing into the gay community to satisfy my relational needs seemed like the only answer, even though I knew it wasn't.

Consider this: A starving man will eat out of a dumpster to satisfy his hunger, but if that same man attends a beautiful dinner banquet, the dumpster that once satisfied becomes repulsive. My late friend Sy Rogers said, "What is true for the body is true for the soul." Meaning, if a man is *relationally* hungry for love and connection, he will seek to satisfy it in even the vilest places. However, suppose that same man chooses to enter into intimacy with God and His people. As he does this, he no longer hungers for unhealthy connection, because he is relationally full.

On that lonely Friday night, the old nature beckoned me to eat from the dumpster, but as I cried out, I heard from the Lord, saying, "Jason, choose today whom you will serve." I was faced with the choice to satisfy my hunger for connection my way, or obey God, no matter the outcome. That night, I chose obedience.

The remarkable truth was that God had every intention to meet my needs—but in His way and His timing. It is nearly impossible to receive a gift from someone when we turn away from them. But as I turned and faced the Gift-Giver that night, I received a special gift. Around an hour into my obedient solitude, the phone rang with friends inviting me to hang out. I hung up the phone and wept as the profound awareness swept over me that my potential act of disobedience would have caused me to forfeit that evening's blessing of genuine relationships.

Freedom comes with trials and struggles, but God will provide everything we need to succeed on this journey to wholeness. For the Israelites, He provided food and water, He gave them direction in the day and through the night, their shoes never even wore out, and the Lord never once abandoned them. The God that did that for the Israelites is the same God that will lead us through this transformational journey to wholeness.

In Part Six, we examine the need to safeguard this work, not allowing the enemy or the world around us to rob what God has done and continues to do in us.

september - october calendar & services

tuesdays in september
tbg leadership training
Volunteer leaders prepare for this year's Taking Back Ground program.
7-8:30 p.m.

september 9, october 14
hope group in-person
Support & encouragement for friends & family of LGBTQ loved ones.
6:30 p.m.
portlandfellowship.com/rsvp.php

september 16-23
kathygrace speaking
KathyGrace will be sharing in Washington, D.C. with the CHANGED movement.

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.
*For both Zoom and in-house.
7-9:30 p.m.

october 6 & 20
hope group zoom
Zoom program for friends and family of LGBTQ loved ones.
6-8 p.m. PST.
portlandfellowship.com/friends_family.php

follow us!

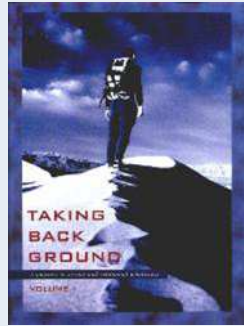
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additional updates
www.portlandfellowship.com

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

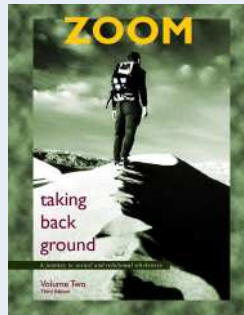
Taking Back Ground 2022-2023



We are currently accepting applications for our 2022-23 Taking Back Ground discipleship program. TBG is for men and women struggling with unwanted SSA, and we also offer a group for wives.

Here at Portland Fellowship, we continue to see God changing people's lives as they surrender their minds and hearts to Him, and as such, we confidently continue proclaiming freedom, healing and wholeness in Jesus Christ for those who follow and obey Him.

Taking Back Ground is an amazing opportunity to dive deeper into Scripture, process our wounds and relational deficits, and learn how to grow closer to Jesus with other believers. We are offering both in-person and Zoom group options. To learn more or to register, visit www.portlandfellowship.com or call us here in the office, 503-235-6364.



"The Journey" Series: Now Available

This past summer, we created and launched an eight-week discipleship series called "The Journey: From Captivity to Freedom". This program walks through the story of the Israelites' travels toward the Promised Land, and how that relates to our own journey out of sexual/relational brokenness and into the Lord's healing.



We are excited to announce that "The Journey" is now available for church, group or personal use! If you would like access to the video teachings and PDF worksheets, contact us here in the office.



PORTLAND
fellowship

The Fellowship Message is a monthly publication of Portland Fellowship, a ministry proclaiming freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ.

MINISTRY TEAM

Jason Thompson
Executive Director

Patrick Silvis
Program Manager

KathyGrace Duncan
Women & Transgender Ministry

Roy Graves
Multimedia Coordinator

Amy & Team
Friends & Family Ministry

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post office box 14841
portland, oregon 97293
phone: 503-235-6364

email: pf@portlandfellowship.com

web: portlandfellowship.com

FB/IG: [@portlandfellowship](https://www.facebook.com/portlandfellowship)

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