



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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The Gift of imMature and imPerfect Love by Marie

As I walked into my kindergarten classroom, my initial thought was, "What are all these kids crying about?" It took becoming an adult for me to realize these children were being separated from their mothers for the first time in their lives.

For me, separation had been my lifelong, albeit short, reality. After my father threatened to kill my mother, she fled from her marriage. I was three years old at the time. Although I have no childhood recollections of my father, my first memories involve events immediately after mom's flight for her life: walking into the lawyer's office in my mom's arms with the weight of divorce on her shoulders; the fence between me and my sister erected to divide our age grouped classes; the sadness on my mom's face as she rode the escalator while I was being held in my grandparent's arms on her first day of work—these impressions are just a few of my first memories of separation. It was around this time where age-appropriate struggles with my gender identity began.

My mom wanted to stay at home to raise us, but now, as a single parent with no support, she had to provide for us. It wouldn't be until the summer before the third grade where I specifically remember spending alone time with Mom. We were on vacation, and I developed a stomach ache. My grandparents and sister went out to see the sites while Mom tended to me at the hotel. I started to feel better, so Mom and I went to a shopping village. I can't remember the details of what we did, but I do remember the delight of having my mom all to myself, and wanting the moment to never end. When school started, it was as if I reverted back to a kindergartener. To mom's great distress, I cried every weekday morning for about a month, but my tears could not erase the fact that Mom had to go to work. Throughout the year, I had stomach aches and had to go to the school clinic, but instead of a mother's comfort, I found myself alone in a cot and given medicine. Third grade was also particularly cruel, as I repeatedly experienced rejection and ridicule by two female classmates and the adult woman teacher.

Even though this pattern of relational droughts, interrupted by vapors of connectedness with Mom, continued throughout my childhood and teenage years, let me make a truth perfectly clear: Mom loved me. She literally would have given her life for me. Thankfully, the Lord never called her to make this sacrifice. As an adult, I understand she laid down her life every day for me. As a child, I was unaware of this perspective. With all that my mom went through, she never went to counseling. Although left undiagnosed and untreated, I believe she struggled with depression.



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

When I was in tenth grade, a rift in my relationship with Mom formed, and it would not be healed until the Lord transformed my heart twenty years later during my time at Portland Fellowship. Mom and I were having lunch together when I was a sophomore—just the two of us—when she broke the news to me: due to declining health, my grandparents would be moving back in with us. I can still hear my mom say, “You look so forlorn.” I had to look “forlorn” up in the dictionary. As an adult, I see the beauty of my mom’s desire to take care of her parents. As an immature teenager, I could only see how this life change would impact me. Also during this time, with my growing gender identity struggle, I felt distant from God because of sin. In my young walk with the Lord, I had not yet learned God will never leave me nor forsake me. Now it felt like Mom was leaving me too.



My mom also lived in fear, and I believe she exhibited some obsessive-compulsive behaviors to get through the fear in her life. Between my teenage and pre-Portland Fellowship years, I responded to my mom’s struggles by distancing myself from her and being short-tempered. Let me make another truth perfectly clear: beneath my ungodly ways of relating, deep down in my heart, I loved my mom.

I was a Portland Fellowship participant from 2006-2008. By God’s strength and grace, I continue to walk in freedom. One unexpected fruit of the Lord’s working in my heart was the ability to relate to my mom in more loving, healthy ways, such as patience, kindness, and empathy. I use the past tense because I recently lost my mom, and I am still mourning her passing. God prepared my heart for her death by speaking to me in multiple ways that I would lose her in 2023.

Earlier this year, I spent some extended time with my mom. I called a friend the evening before the weeklong visit to ask her how I could show love to my mom, in case this was our last time together (which indeed it would be). After prayer, my friend’s word to me was, “presence, not performance.” My waking thought was God telling me, “I am giving you a gift. I am giving you what you always wanted!” —alone time with Mom. My arrival to Mom’s house was exactly ninety days before she would be gone.

Sure, we did things—Sunday: Mother’s Day (belated); Monday: Game Day and Hamburger Sliders; Tuesday: Doctor Day; Wednesday: Down Day; Thursday: Urgent Care Visit; Friday: Mom’s Birthday; Saturday: Tea/Coffee Talk; Sunday: Our last kiss goodbye—but more importantly, we were just present with each other. I knew I would not be able to visit on her actual birthday, and somehow I got the idea to paint her nails for her gift. As far as feminine things go, nail painting is pretty high on the list. I had never painted my own nails, let alone someone else’s. I didn’t know what I was doing. It was not perfect, but it was love. My mom actually fell asleep in the process, and I took the opportunity to simply behold her. When she awoke, her nails weren’t completely dry, and her movements added minor smudging to my already imperfect gift. When she left the room, I was so glad because emotionally I lost it, knowing my time with her was short.

To parents seeking support from Portland Fellowship, I would say, “Love never fails.” Sure, you have made mistakes; your love is not perfect, and there are ways you relate to your children that need to be transformed by God, but it is impossible to fail when you love (*1 Corinthians 13:8*). To dads, I would say, “Thank you for your presence.” Knowing what it’s like to not have an earthly dad, simply being there for your kids means more than you will ever know. To moms, I would say, “Do not grow weary.” Even though it may not feel like it, your children know you love them, and they love you. However, it takes maturity to receive and return love, and your children may need more maturing. Wait on the Lord, and He will renew your strength (*Isaiah 40:31*).

As I prayed for my mom in 2023, I was filled with thankfulness because, despite my inability to always perceive it, I have never lived a day of my life unloved. Now that my mom is gone, knowing we have an Eternal Father has taken on new meaning. God has not left us orphaned (*John 14:18*). Everything has changed, and yet, everything has remained the same. I am not alone, even though my world is different now. “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”—*James 1:17*

Let us learn to receive and give our Eternal Father’s love, being matured and perfected in Him.

The Transgender Struggle (Part 6 of 6): Male and Female...Only? by KathyGrace Duncan

PF proclaims the message of hope and healing for those with unwanted SSA and gender confusion. This six-part series explores transgenderism and how to respond biblically. For context, read the previous articles: www.portlandfellowship.com/transgender.pdf

You might be familiar with the Bible passage where, in the beginning, God creates man and woman on the sixth day. Genesis 1:27 says, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” Then, He blesses them and gives them instructions. Finally, in Genesis 1:31, the Lord calls everything He made, “very good”. It’s fascinating to me that after God created man and woman, He says what He created was “very good”. Why was this specific day “very good”? Was it because man and woman were created in His image? Did nothing else He created represent Him well? Or, was it because He created image bearers to represent on earth what is in heaven?



In Psalm 139:13-14 David writes, “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully **and** wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and **that** my soul knows very well” (emphasis added). David understood that he had been created on purpose, for a purpose. He also saw the intentionality of how the Lord created him male, and in his soul, David knew his gender was good.

These two passages, among others, were some that I camped on when transitioning out of living as a man. I desperately wanted to understand that how I was created was good, and that I didn’t need to change to be loved, to be safe, or to have value. As I studied all of Psalm 139, I began to see this intentional, relational God: He knew me. He knew where I was, so I couldn’t hide. He created me and wrote out the plans for my life, even though I hadn’t lived one day of them yet. I came to see, like David, that God had created me on purpose, for a purpose. He knit me together with everything I would need to be feminine, and then covered me in my mother’s womb with skin that represents how He wired me on the inside: a woman.

When I finally believed, and then embraced this revelation, I came to understand how “*marvelous [were] His works*”. I did know that full well! When I reflected back, I could see there was a toughness about men that I couldn’t imitate, nor could I live from there. And, there was nurturing, feminine side about me that I couldn’t hide either, because that’s the way I had been wired, intentionally. It doesn’t matter how many hormones you take or for how long—how you are created cannot be changed. I heard a story about a man living as a woman who submitted a “23andMe” DNA test. Because he identified as a woman, he checked the box “female” and sent in his DNA. A couple of weeks later, he received a letter thanking him for his submission; however, they could not process his request because the card had been checked as female. They explained that upon testing, the results came back as male. He was asked to fill out another card with the appropriate gender box checked.

Additionally, we weren’t just created to exist as male and female, but also to procreate. Back in Genesis 1, one of the commands given was to “*Be fruitful and multiply...*” (v. 28). The Lord created Adam and Eve to bear His image, and they were to then go and create other image bearers. What a tremendous gift, and at the same time, what a tremendous responsibility!

God makes His point about the importance of being created male and female in the story of Noah. After the Lord warned Noah about the impending flood, He gave Noah instructions on how to build the ark. God also told Noah what to fill the ark with: first, Noah and his wife, along with his sons and sons’ wives. Then, the Lord instructs this in Gen 6:19: “*And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.*” Even the clean and unclean animals, and the birds of the air—Noah was told to take seven of each, and they needed to be male and female (Genesis 7:2-3). The Lord in His wisdom knew that after the flood, there would need to be male and female of each living thing to re-populate the world (a fact that is confirmed today through modern science).

In my arrogance, I thought I could re-do what God had created me to be, and make it better. I thought there was a mistake in my gender and that I had to correct it. Thankfully, the Lord redeemed and delivered me from that thinking. Those plans that He had written out for me weren’t redacted because I went off on my own. In fact, He only ever saw me through the plans He had for me. I can honestly say Psalm 139:14 is true for me! And we pray that those who believe their God-given gender is a mistake will wake up to the beautiful truth that the Lord made them on purpose, for a purpose.

November - December Calendar & Services

tuesdays in november

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.*

6-8:30 p.m. PST

tuesdays in november

Hope Group

Discipleship series for friends & family of gay or trans-identifying loved ones.

**For both Zoom and in-house.*

6-8 p.m. PST

november 3

Cole Speaking

TBG leader Cole will be sharing with youth leaders at Grace Point Church in Canon Beach, OR.

november 11

Jason Speaking

Jason will be sharing at a leader's training for 423 Communities.

december 2

PF Leaders Appreciation

Appreciation night celebrating PF's Hope Group & Taking Back Ground volunteer leaders.

Follow us!

Get updates and inspirational resources on social media.

***Facebook & Instagram:**

@portlandfellowship

***Twitter:** @PTLDFellowship

Additional Updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com

Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

Fellowship Partners

Last month, we launched a new monthly giving program called "Fellowship Partners". This program is a way for you to intentionally support God's work in



people at PF, and for us to connect with you more personally. Our Fellowship Partners receive short video updates that include confidential testimonies, prayer requests, and updates from PF staff, volunteers, and participants.

If you would like to intentionally partner with Portland Fellowship and receive personal, confidential video updates, we would love to connect with you in this way. To become a Fellowship Partner, log into your account at www.portlandfellowship.com and click on "Make a Pledge".

With Thanksgiving

As we consider God's love and faithfulness to the ministry of Portland Fellowship this year, we give thanks and praise for the amazing things He's doing:



- We celebrate almost 100 participants going through our programs this year!
- We were excited to have over twenty-five people attend our first-ever PF Informational Webinars, and we've had follow-up connections with several churches and ministries.
- We are humbled and blessed to have almost seventy supporters in our new Fellowship Partners program.



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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