



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## A Lesson in Love and Surrender by Maggie

*Being a mom has been a true blessing. Thinking about all the stages of life my children would go through, and pondering my parenting role in each, has always taken up a huge piece of real estate in my heart and my mind.*

I prayed for strength and guidance to be my best as a parent and love my children unconditionally through the ups and downs. Yet, I didn't become a mother in alignment with God's design for me; I did all the premarital things that I wasn't supposed to do. Still, I asked for God's help to be a parent... a good parent. You see, I grew up longing for a relationship with God, but I learned about Him in a very legalistic way. Eventually, that legalism caused me to walk away from Him. I knew and stayed connected just enough to be able to ask God for help and forgiveness, but I never gave up control or surrendered to Him.

Although I wasn't walking closely with God, He still chose to bless me with a daughter and a son. This was certainly a divine gift! As a single mom, God repeatedly asked, "Maggie, are you willing to receive the children I'm giving you, *no matter what?*" Although I didn't really know what that meant, my answer was a quick and resounding "YES!" Though it was a way of seeking approval from my family, parenting was still a dream of mine.

My youngest and only son has always held a very special place in my heart. Our family was heavily populated with girls, so he was something rather "spectacular." His sister was ecstatic that she was getting a brother, even though they were from different fathers. We lived in the PNW, and my son's dad lived in NY. At my first ultrasound, something odd was detected—my son had a condition called Gastroschisis. "...*no matter what?*" I was now scared and feeling quite alone. Did I answer the invite to surrender my will? Not yet. My pregnancy was treated with extreme caution, and the birth turned into an emergency situation, but God's presence was evident in spite of "me."

After my son's birth, we relocated to NY with his father, which was disastrous. It was instantly evident that I had made a mistake. In this new blended family with his kids, my daughter, and our baby boy, my two children and I were clearly not accepted. After four years of turmoil and threats of violence, my two kids and I made the trek back to the PNW. Over time, I noticed my son's humorous and lighthearted attitude gradually fading. Although very young, he had been exposed to a side of his closest male role model that little boys should never see.



Maggie is a leader with PF's Hope Group Online Zoom program.

I was now faced with the task of helping my son find what he needed to flourish as a young man. As scary as this was, my heart was softening, and God's lure was becoming stronger. I sought out groups and networks for help. I attended a small church that offered programs for children and parents. They advised, "You'll never be able to wholly give your son what he needs from his father." I did the next best thing and continued to include him in church activities, hoping they would influence him positively.

My son was and is very much an introvert, a very soft-hearted and kind individual. Sadly, that didn't bode well up against his rough-and-tough young male *Christian* peers. The very boys I was praying would help my son find his identity in Christ with were the ones that bullied him. Furthermore, Garrett's grandfathers, the two most important male role models in his life, died ten months apart when he was only five years old. All these traumas fueled his growing insecurity, confusion and disenchantment with being a male.

Little by little, over the years, Garrett stopped vying for acceptance among boys. He found it elsewhere—among girls—and he spent much of his time with me. Along the way, he made a few "guy" friends, but his life always had a missing need. And as he grew older, I could see it more clearly. "...no matter what?"

By high school, negative friendships had joined the scene. I still had fairly good communication with my son and was able to help keep him "on track", but I was fighting the enemy, and I knew it. Garrett was being lured, and the enemy was succeeding. I knew something was out of balance when he never asked a girl on a date or to a dance. He was also uncomfortable talking about girls in a romantic way. When he was seventeen, what I had suspected for a number of years became reality: Garrett sat me down and revealed to me that he was gay. "...no matter what?" After a few quiet moments, I asked the common denial questions: "Are you sure?" "Why do you think that?" "You don't act gay." "Why don't we explore this before you decide?"

I did everything I knew to do, including consulting with a godly man with similar struggles. He and Garrett met and had a sensible conversation about why someone might experience these feelings. I was hoping that was the "save all" conversation. Garrett did work through a local ministry program that helps men with unwanted SSA, and I

was hopeful that he'd realize the enemy's lies weren't worth it. But I was wrong. I saw my son being compliant, doing what he thought would please me. He was exposed to godly counsel. He heard the truth. But his mind was made up, I guess way beforehand. Garrett saw a path, and he was going to take it.

His choice created heartache for me. It fractured the close relationship we had, something I thought was impossible. Still, even as the enemy was luring Garrett into darkness, God was strengthening my faith. I hadn't figured out the surrender piece, but I clearly sensed God drawing me out of my futile efforts and calling me to rely on Him.



After many a night of tears, hopelessness, mourning, feeling like I failed my son...God spoke. "Maggie, you're in dire need of my peace. You can no longer take the helm with Garrett, and you certainly can't go on without me! I need to write Garrett's story, and you are in my way." *Whoa!* Throughout my life, I thought surrendering the little "this and that's" were enough. No... God was giving me a true lesson in surrender. As much as I wanted to protect and shield my son from this darkness, I realized he needed to find his own place in God's favor.

There have been rough times, and painful gaps of no communication with Garrett, but I've found God's peace through it all. Connecting with people in similar situations at Tower of Light and Portland Fellowship's Hope Group has helped tremendously. My honest conversations with God have given me perspective and clarity. Praying over my son has given me hope—the reality of Garrett's salvation really belongs to God.

There are still days when I'm golfing and think, "I miss the kid who had such a natural swing as my golf partner,"...and hiking, where I wished he was with me, so we could talk and laugh...swimming in the pool, paddle boarding on the lakes, and so many other fun things we did. I don't know what the future looks like for him, or our relationship, but I will continue to pray over him. And God will continue to write his story.

If my prayers are answered on this side of heaven, that would be wonderful. If not, I have faith that God will follow through with His promise for Garrett's life, "...no matter what."

## The Transgender Struggle (Part 5 of 6): *Transgenderism—Is it a Cult?* 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](http://www.portlandfellowship.com/transgender.pdf)

Many parents that have had children enter transgenderism are convinced they've lost their kids to the "trans cult". Some have said that, "If it wasn't for this cult, my child would've been fine and there wouldn't be this struggle." But is that true? Is transgenderism a cult, or do some kids' struggles simply fit into the trans category, or under that umbrella?

Dictionary.com defines a cult as "a particular system of religious worship, especially with reference to its rites and ceremonies". It's also defined as "great veneration (reverence) of a person, ideal, or thing especially as manifested by a body of admirers". Looking at these definitions, I can see where the transgender ideology could be considered a cult.



As I continued researching cults, I was asking: *What's the psychology behind cults? Can cults change your brain? How do they recruit?* I came to find that though many cults operate differently, they all have one underlying thing in common: vulnerable people. Being able to manipulate and pressure people is the psychology behind cults, but it's also part of their recruitment tactics. Cults will come across as charismatic, engaging, and so welcoming that you can't wait to join. You feel like you belong. The recruiter becomes your new best friend. However, once you join, everything changes. By the time you realize that you've been manipulated, it might feel like it's too late to get out.

Cultic rituals and expected behaviors of members can have devastating, long lasting effects on the brain. If someone questions a procedure or a teaching from the leader, there is severe punishment. Critical thinking is not allowed or tolerated. In the article "How Cults Change Your Brain", author Annie Lennon explains that cults gain control over members by disabling critical thinking, and they try to freeze emotional processing. For those who are in search of identity and comfort, they are definitely taken advantage of. There must be absolute faith in the teaching, in the purpose of the group, and in the leader.<sup>1</sup>

Now, if I set those things over the transgender trend, it doesn't quite fit, at least in my mind. Yes, I can see the cult-like ideology, and yes, I can relate with those who are looking for belonging, comfort and identity. One main difference I see is that cult members are usually adults looking for purpose; with the trans movement, however, I see vulnerable children crying out for help, only to be offered false hope: *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"* (Prov. 14:12).

With cults, there's typically one charismatic leader, and it's a community living out of sight or off the grid. The leader is usually dominant, manipulative, and very controlling. There's often a religious component, with the leader claiming to have special divine revelation. All the cults I've read about include sex with female members, and some go as far as sex trafficking. With the transgender movement, however, there are many voices speaking the same deception—there's no single main leader. There's also no need for recruitment, because there is already an eagerness to join.

In the trans movement, I see broken people offering broken things to other broken people. And while it might not reach a cult-like level of mind control, it is true that critical thinking is very often disabled for trans individuals (at a very young age, in some cases). These people have absolute faith in what's being taught because, as they learn, they are celebrated and affirmed. They are rewarded for their unwavering pursuit of happiness. Trans youth are groomed to believe truth is an emotion, so if you feel a certain way, it must be true, and they become intolerant of those who feel differently.

Putting all of this together, while there are some concerning similarities between the transgender movement and cults, there are thankfully also many differences. I do see the transgender movement "ship" slowly being turned around. States are beginning to vote to protect minors from harmful chemicals and procedures that will scar their bodies for life. I'm seeing parents taking a stand against what's being taught in schools. Countries like Sweden, which was the pioneer for transgender surgeries, are now backtracking on gender affirming care. This is a miracle! Norway, Finland, Holland and the UK seem to be following in Sweden's footsteps, though here in the U.S. there is still much deception around trans issues (Prov. 14:12). I am praying for the youth to see themselves as the future leaders they could be, as the gems they are--diamonds in the rough.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.labroots.com/trending/neuroscience/15729/cults-change-brain>

## September - October Calendar & Services

September 9, 12

### PF Zoom Webinar

Free informational webinar to learn more about the mission, vision and programs of Portland Fellowship. Open to anyone interested.  
**9/9:** 10 a.m. | **9/12:** 6 p.m.

September 19, 26

### PF Leadership Training

Volunteer leaders prepare for this year's Taking Back Ground and Hope Group programs.  
6-8 p.m.

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.  
6-8:30 p.m.

tuesdays in october

### Hope Group

Discipleship series for friends & family of gay or trans-identifying loved ones.  
\*For both Zoom and in-house.  
6-8 p.m.

### Follow us!

Get updates and inspirational resources on social media.

\***Facebook & Instagram:**

@portlandfellowship

\***Twitter:** @PTLDFellowship

### Additional Updates:

[www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)

### Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

## PF Informational Webinar

We would like to invite you, your friends, family, & members of your church to learn more about Portland Fellowship. We're offering two

90-minute Zoom webinars to choose from (**Sat. 9/9 @10 AM PST** or **Tues. 9/12 @6 PM PST**).

Come join us for one of these webinars as we share Portland Fellowship's purpose and mission; clarify the various views of sexuality and transformation in the church; correct possible misconceptions about PF; present powerful testimonies of restoration; and provide resources for family, friends, and those seeking freedom.

[www.portlandfellowship.com/events.php](http://www.portlandfellowship.com/events.php)



## Hope Group 2023-2024



This year, we are moving our Hope Group for friends and family of LGBTQ loved ones to a weekly meeting! Join us Tuesday evenings (either in-person or on Zoom) as we process how to relate to our

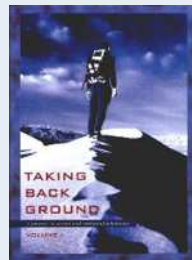
loved ones with both truth and grace. As this is not a drop-in group, registration is required:

[www.portlandfellowship.com/friends\\_family.php](http://www.portlandfellowship.com/friends_family.php)

## Taking Back Ground 2023-2024

Registration is now open for our 2023-2024 Taking Back Ground program (both Zoom and in-person). TBG is for men and women struggling with unwanted SSA and/or gender confusion.

[www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)



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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