



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Friends,

update april 2024

Every year, our Taking Back Ground participants and leaders have the opportunity to go away for spiritual renewal at our annual retreat. This year, I was reminded that this was our 25th time gathering in this way. Before Portland Fellowship's first TBG retreat, I remember the initial skepticism expressed by some church leaders about the idea of persons with same-sex attraction spending the weekend together. Many years later, however, hundreds of men and women have experienced the renewing presence of God as we choose to seek Him.

We live in unusual times. Back when PF started, we were relegated to a room in the basement (metaphorically), an unmentionable group of people who had to find their way through the back door of the church. To mention homosexuality brought whispers and a sense of shame for the struggle we had. I always liked to think that we were the part of the body that Paul referenced in I Corinthians that requires special attention and modesty.

Yet now...it's become trendy to identify as gay or bisexual. Even more so is the idea of our gender being some thing that is fluid, and sex reassignment becoming an acceptable option to feelings of inadequacy in our maleness or femaleness. Sadly, some of my own colleagues within the academic and church worlds have lost sight of an orthodox sexuality. I refer to it as situational theology—adapting our beliefs to the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

But God has not changed, nor has His Word lost its power to transform lives. PF has been (and will probably always be) a remnant ministry made of men and women who hear God's call to sexual purity and seek to follow Him. And so, for the TBG retreat, we step away from a confusing world to be alone with God and our fellow sojourners. Within the structure of set times of worship, Scripture studies, meditation, and just plain fun, it's clear that when we first thought of a retreat, it wasn't really our idea after all—it was His. The presence of the Holy Spirit primes our hearts for the deeper work God wants to do in us. For some, this is the first time to be with a group of like-minded individuals set on knowing God in the midst of a life-dominating struggle.

This year, our text was Paul's letter to the Philippians. It's a book rich in encouragement to "press on" through our shortcomings and struggles to find strength in God. And, as is our tradition, the Saturday night surrender service provided opportunity for this year's participants and leaders to surrender something at the cross of Christ.

I remember when we came up with the idea for the surrender service at our first retreat. We instructed individuals to pray and ask God to show them something that symbolized their struggle that they could, with explanation, publicly surrender to God



*The 2024 TBG
Surrender Service.*

"He has sent me to bind
up the brokenhearted, to
proclaim liberty to captives,
and freedom to prisoners."

ISAIAH 61 : 1

post office box 14841
portland, oregon 97293
503_235_6364

office@portlandfellowship.com
www.portlandfellowship.com

and receive prayer. It was a risk: *What if nobody came forward? Was God leading us in this?* Well, our first surrender time went close to midnight, as numerous broken men and women shared how God had touched them and called them to enter into a deeper commitment to Him. The types of items surrendered also confirmed to us that God was definitely calling us to lay before Him the things that so easily entangle us.

Its risky to follow Jesus—to be willing to identify with a cross, which is foolishness to this world, and chose a life of surrender to God. But true to form, God met us at Camp Tadmor this year as He has in the past, and we were changed for the better: from glory to glory into the image of Christ. (2 Cor. 3:18) We left the TBG retreat as witnesses to the world of God's life-changing power.



This transforming power isn't just for TBG participants—Maybe God is calling you to ask Him, “What would you like me to surrender to you, Lord?” We invite you to obediently respond to His call, and to share your surrender with a trusted friend or mentor. Be willing to risk it all for Jesus! Whatever idol you're clinging to, whatever need it's temporarily meeting for you, we remind you that there is immense freedom, joy, and peace as you lay that down at the foot of the Cross. God is a good Father, and He “...is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us...” (Ephesians 3:20)

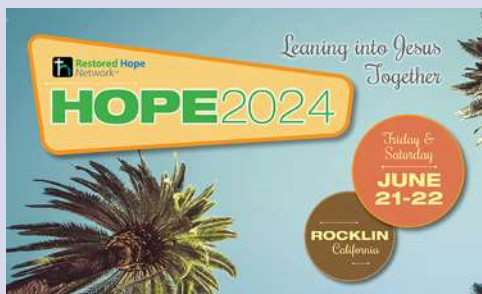
Thank you for praying, encouraging, and supporting God's work through PF's Taking Back Ground discipleship program. And, as always, we invite those who are not yet Fellowship Partners to join us so that we can further grow our reach and share the hope of transformation in Christ.

In Christ,

Phil Hobizal

TBG Leader, PF Founding Director

HOPE 2024 RHN Conference



This year's Restored Hope Network conference is HOPE 2024: *Leaning into Jesus Together*. We invite you to join us for this special in-person conference in Rocklin, CA, June 21-22, 2024.

HOPE 2024 will address same-sex attraction and transgenderism from a transformational perspective. Come hear biblical and relevant teachings, workshops, and inspiring life stories, all bathed in powerful times of worship.

Some of the HOPE 2024 presentation topics include: *Theology of Gender, Identity in Christ, Transformation for Same-Sex Attraction, Parents' Response to LGBTQ-Identified Children, and Endocrinology/Best-Practices for Transgender Patients.*

For more information and registration: www.restoredhopenetwork.org

Portland Fellowship is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 nondenominational organization. We are exclusively supported through private donations, support services and offerings. Thank you for your gifts.

events calendar

tuesdays in april

Taking Back Ground & Hope Group

Discipleship programs for Christians struggling with unwanted SSA, and for friends & family of LGBTQ loved ones.
6-8:30 p.m. PST

april 17

Jason Speaking

Jason will be sharing at Corban University's pastor's event Village Church, Portland, OR.

april 22

Liisa Speaking

Hope Group Facilitator
Liisa will be sharing with teachers at FCCT.

Speakers and personal support can be arranged through the office.

Check website for additional updates at www.portlandfellowship.com