



PORTLAND
fellowship

Dear Friends,

update february 2025

Recently, one of Portland Fellowship's ministry partners from Restored Hope Network, Debora Barr, approached us with an intriguing opportunity. As part of her doctoral program, Debora is conducting a research study on Christians who've participated in discipleship ministry for their unwanted same-sex attractions. Since this is exactly what we do here at PF, we were able to send out Debora's survey to many of our Taking Back Ground participants, both past and present.

This opportunity is intriguing because Debora is seeking feedback from participants who had positive OR negative experiences with PF-type discipleship ministries. The goal is to collect scientific data to better understand how ministries like ours help (or hurt) those who are wrestling with unwanted same-sex attractions.

There are plenty of voices in the world, and sadly, increasingly in the church, that claim Portland Fellowship's programs are harmful for those desiring transformation in their sexual thoughts, desires, and behaviors. Those opposed to PF label our ministry as "conversion therapy", and believe that instead of helping people, we're actually harming them.

Knowing this, we expected to receive some negative responses from people we sent Debora's survey to. We recognize that even our best intentions can't and won't help every single participant in our program. Sadly, we also know from personal experience that even those who experience a measure of God's healing and hope through TBG may later on begin to doubt or even speak against their experience at PF.

Since I was the one who emailed out Debora's survey, I have the distinguished honor of receiving people's replies. Even though I knew to expect some pushback, one response caught me off guard:

"Please delete me from your email list. What you do is an abomination to the uniqueness of each human God created."

My heart sank when I read that. Initially, my first thought was to address this person's deception, their belief that people are born gay or trans. Part of me also wanted to be snarky and address the irony of them using the word "abomination". Yet, after taking a breath and pausing for a moment, I realized I was grieving the fact that this person once believed in God's message of hope and transformation, but somehow became aggressively opposed to it. How did this happen? Obviously, I firmly believe in the mission and vision of Portland Fellowship, but feeling the weight of this person's anger did make me question: Are we really helping people?

I know I'm not alone in this painful introspection. So many Christian pastors, leaders, and parents wrestle through similar questions. We pray and seek God's will in our work and



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

ISAIAH 61 : 1

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relationships, trusting that He will use us despite our flaws, yet sometimes we hear later on that we hurt someone we love. What are we to do?

Thankfully, God's Word has plenty of encouragement for us: "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrew 4:16) We know we're not perfect, and all of us constantly need the Lord's forgiveness and grace in our work and our relationships.

My response to that negative email was to re-invite the person to fill out Debora's survey, even if they no longer agree with Portland Fellowship. My hope and prayer is that through loving and responding to them in grace, and not rejecting them, they will remember the truth and love of God they once experienced, and return to Him.

Funny enough, around the same time I read that angry email, we received an email from a different TBG alumnus:

"I wanted to send a message to keep you updated...I miss you guys! This past year...I started counseling back and boy that's been very healing and cathartic for me. I am feeling like I am seeing myself in a new light while taking responsibility for my actions. I thought about you guys for quite a while and how grateful I am for the time that you guys were in my life. I honestly don't think I would still be here if I hadn't come across your fellowship...Thank you for this ministry and what you guys did for me. I could never forget!"

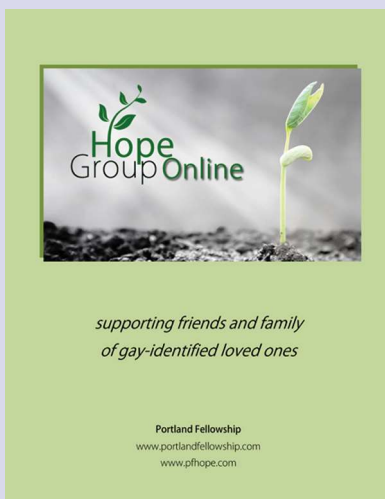
Coincidence? I think not! God knew the struggles in my heart, and specifically showed me that He continues to use Portland Fellowship to help broken people heal and grow in Christ. For those of you who faithfully pray, support, and encourage us, you know that our culture can be extremely discouraging. Let's not give up fighting the good fight! God is still seeking, convicting, healing, and transforming those with sexual and relational brokenness. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9)

Thank you for standing with Portland Fellowship, and for supporting our various ministry resources for Christians struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction and gender confusion. May the Lord bless you in your faithfulness and your courage to stand for truth and love in this dark world.

In Christ,

Patrick Silvis
Program Manager

Hope Group Online Workbooks



Our Hope Group Online workbooks are now available to purchase! This manual helps family and friends of LGBTQ-identified loved ones learn how to love well while remaining faithful to their biblical convictions.

This workbook offers QR Codes to watch the video lessons, and the lesson questions can be worked through individually, with your spouse, or as a group.

To order your copy of the Hope Group Online workbook (PDF or printed copy), please visit: www.takingbackground.com/bookstore.php

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 february

Taking Back Ground

Discipleship program for Christians struggling with unwanted SSA and/or gender confusion.

Zoom: 6-8:30 p.m. PST

In-Person: 6:30-8:30 p.m.

tuesdays in february

Hope Group

Discipleship program for friends & family of LGBTQ-identified loved ones.

Zoom: 6-8:30 p.m. PST

In-Person: 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Speakers and personal support can be arranged through the office.

Check website for additional updates at www.portlandfellowship.com