



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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Separated by Mario

My eyes were drawn to the massage parlors in Portland, even though I considered myself a firm believer in the faith. I was proud to be a Christian, until my life fell apart.

Things started to not make sense. I was divorced from a short-lived marriage, separated from my first-born son, struggled to keep stable employment, and frequent family arguments put my housing in jeopardy. The sum total of these life events all in close proximity to one another led me to isolate and become more detached from the community. The desire for physical touch grew within me while my eyes were drawn to massage parlors. While riding public transit, my eyes would latch onto the various signs and billboards advertising for massages. My flesh gave in and I made a visit.

One visit turned into two. Two became several, plus online websites. My walk with Christ came nearly to a complete halt. I began to question God, the Word, and myself. "What have I done? What have I become? Who am I again? What would my family think? What would my son think?" Existential thoughts filled my mind on a daily basis. My behavior seemed more closely aligned with someone who had an addiction and needed detox—sexual detox. My mind even got to a place where I justified my actions and said things like: "Lord, I deserve to feel good at this point." "Lord, forgive me for what I'm about to do." "You know what, this isn't so bad after all." Or even, "Oh well."

My thoughts during this time were severely clouded with the "logic of the flesh", which I soon discovered was no logic at all—flesh led by muscular reactions, fasciculations, twitches, but no love whatsoever. I remember checking in with my psychiatrist, who concluded that my behavior was incongruous to my faith practice and all that was known about me at his clinic. Up till that point, the only people I confessed to were of the world (unredeemed or unrepentant sinners), therapists, and psychiatrists. A sense of liberation was felt, but only welcomed by those who knew not the Lord Jesus Christ. I had known Him. I had a relationship with Him, a clear one. So in some ways, the welcoming of arms I encountered were from those who had cheated on the Lord themselves, while celebrating my own infidelity of Him.

I started seeing the light when I saw the growing discomfort the LGBTQ community displayed whenever I spoke about my love of Jesus—the joys, triumphs, and celebratory moments of my life up to that point—all moments I gave Him glory for. Many would roll their eyes, sigh heavily, or say things like, "You came all the way over here to preach to me?" The questions I had in my own mind, I would ask them: "You know this is sinful, right?" or "We're going to hell, you know that right?" or "You don't care



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

about how God feels?” What the world labeled “exploration” or “discovery” soon ended. If there was a discovery, it was one that confirmed not a single person from the LG-BTQ community was truly happy—not one. Every person I met was no different than me—depressed, angry, unforgiving, psychologically worn out, or having exhausted every coping skill/tool they’ve ever known. None of us were our true selves. None of us were being authentic. We were all posturing for the other person, projecting false images. It got to the point where I wanted out. *But how?*

I saw that I was severely addicted to how my body felt when engaging in these behaviors or even watching these behaviors online. The euphoria made me realize that this must be how addicts feel: those who shoot up and just can’t get enough, whose pleasure centers have had neuropathways crossed for so long that it would seem impossible to click the “back button” on the browser of their soul. The voice of the Lord was dampened in my mind and replaced with the muscle memory of new sins, neuro-associations that put me on a fast track to hell.

My exit ramp came when a random member of the LGBTQ community referred me to various affirming support groups, and then finally referred me to Portland Fellowship. I checked out their website hoping it would be the thing that would help me, and sure enough it was. I enrolled in Portland Fellowship’s Taking Back Ground discipleship program and haven’t looked back since.

Alongside other support groups for depression, bipolar disorder, individual therapy, cultural therapy, and men’s groups, the Holy Spirit led me out of darkness and back into the light (*1 Peter 2:9*). The Holy Spirit revealed to me the elements that fueled the sexual misconduct in my life were: (1) anger towards family, (2) detachment from loved ones, (3) unforgiveness of abusers, and (4) isolation from the Kingdom (church). I spent countless hours engaged in groups, therapies, trainings, and medications that supported “thought distraction” (dissociation) or “coping skills” (adaptation) with uneasy emotions, but without the power of God (*2 Tim. 3:5-7*). I found the various skills helpful, but it all boiled back down to practicing the faith—confession of

sin to the right people, repentance of behavior, and active faith expression (worship). Soon, I’ll be celebrating six years of sexual sobriety—no sexual misconduct whatsoever.

The TBG curriculum was filled with questions that offered me “cognitive restructuring”. My confidence at PF grew. Seeing the faces and hearing the LIVE testimonies of others who were also challenged weakened the power of Satan in my mind. I started recognizing delusions, and with the Holy Spirit’s help, developed a healthy dissonance between these delusions and the Truth, bringing me closer

to Christ (*2 Thess. 2:11, 2 Cor. 10:5*). My confidence in Jesus became more grounded, and I became more sober-minded (*1 Peter 5:8-11*).

I expressed my faith more upon graduating from the TBG program. I took to the streets, made my own tracts, bought a microphone/amps, and began sharing my experience publicly. I disclosed to my family members what I had been going through, and surprisingly, they embraced me all the more. One could say that a “relationship revival” began between us. Many of my family, friends, and former co-workers have witnessed me within the city at times sharing my testimony. Some started referring to me as “The Holysexual”, a term I borrowed from the church, highlighting the importance of living a chaste life (no sexual activity outside of marriage) for the sake of Christ.

As of now, my relationship with the Holy Spirit has been growing, and He has been challenging me to be a “brand ambassador” for the faith (*2 Cor. 5:20*). Though Jesus needs no marketing, one’s outward expression becomes clear evidence of an inward change by the Holy Spirit. Since coming back in alignment with God’s Word, the Holy Spirit has led me to surrender several aspects of my old life, including clothing, fragrances, brands, styles, patterns, images, objects, streets, pathways, routes, jobs, careers, songs, shows, foods, drinks, snacks, postures, and even language! The Holy Spirit has illuminated God’s Word in a way that I can now appreciate having my own “Exodus”, accepting a royal priesthood, and re-incorporation unto His holy nation—the body of Christ. I am truly thankful for the Holy Spirit who convicts me, corrects me, restores me, and calls me to “*be ye separated from the unclean thing until the coming of our Lord.*” (*2 Cor. 6:17, Rev. 22:11-12*)



A Year of Growth (Part 4 of 6): Making Peace with Imperfect Parenting by Lisa Price

*This year, we are highlighting different topics from Portland Fellowship's Hope Group, which ministers to family and friends of gay and trans-identified loved ones. In this article, Hope Group leader Lisa Price explores how we can make peace with our past parenting choices. *To read previous articles in this series: www.portlandfellowship.com/articles/growth.pdf*

"For You are great, and You do wondrous deeds; You alone are God. Teach me Your way, Lord I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name." —Psalm 86:10-11

Parents attending a Hope Group will sometimes confess they joined because they were secretly hoping they would gain the knowledge necessary to "fix" their gay or transgender-identified child. Parents quickly learn Hope Group is not about "fixing" our loved ones. Ultimately, Portland Fellowship's Hope Group is a spiritual journey that focuses on personal and spiritual growth. As parents and grandparents draw closer to God and grow emotionally, they become better equipped to communicate with and love their gay and transgender identified children and grandchildren. Most parents quickly discover that loving their adult children well increases their influence with their kids.



One critical aspect of the Hope Group experience is taking an honest look at our family's dynamics, as well as our parenting styles. Evaluating past parenting choices is not easy. Parents come to realize that to one degree or another, all people are a product of the parenting they received—and our children are no different. Despite our best efforts, some of the experiences our children had growing up likely contributed to at least some of their spiritual and emotional struggles.

What we do with our insights is critical. The way we choose to respond to past errors will likely have a huge impact on our present and future relationship with our adult children. The very worst response any parent can have is to give into despair, deny reality, or get angry at themselves or God. Despair, denial or anger will do nothing to bring healing to the relationships we care most about. The first, best response when we are unsure how to proceed is always prayer. It's critical we invite God into the process of healing our relationships. Intentional connection with God through prayer gives us a supernatural source of wisdom and strength as we seek to build healthier relationships with our loved ones.

One of the most powerful things any parent can do is to make a commitment to change and grow. Moving toward healthy change in the way we behave and interact with our kids in the present can be a relational game changer. When adult kids see their parents growing and changing, it becomes a powerful testimony of God's power to transform those who willingly submit their lives to Him.

Many parents have found it also helps to avoid "what if" and "if only" thinking as they process through past parenting decisions. This kind of thinking does nothing but keep us stuck in the past in a way that leaves us powerless to change anything in the present.

No one can change the past; however, we can make peace with the past and move forward in a God-honoring way. We do this by asking God first for forgiveness for mistakes made and then making a commitment to change. An adult child's problems are never all the parent's fault—kids make their own choices. That said, even the very best parents are human, and humans make mistakes. When a parent recognizes a mistake, confesses their error and offers a heartfelt apology to the adult child, it can go a long way in helping to repair broken relationships and improve the quality of communication (Proverbs 11:2, 1 Peter 5:5). Humility is a powerful thing.

Sadly, there are times in life when relationships are simply broken beyond our ability to repair them. Once we've done what we can do, we must trust God to do what appears impossible. Believers in Jesus have the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead living in them and working on their behalf (Romans 8:11). The resurrection power of Jesus is not only about salvation—it's about bringing health and hope to all of our relationships.

July - August Calendar & Services

tuesdays in july & august

Summer Series

PF's Summer Series this year is *Emotionally Healthy Relationships*. Come learn healthier ways to relate to your friends & family. In-person and Zoom groups offered.
6:30-8:00 p.m. PST

portlandfellowship.com/summer.php

july 11, august 8

In-Person Hope Group

For friends & family of gay & trans-identified loved ones. Join us for dinner, an encouraging testimony, and time for sharing & prayer.
6:30 p.m. PST

portlandfellowship.com/friends_family.php

july 20

Jason Sharing

Jason will be sharing about Portland Fellowship at Calvary Chapel Southeast in Milwaukie, OR.

august 23

Freedom March

Rainbow Revival and the Changed Movement are hosting a celebration of God's power to transform those with unwanted sexual desires.
1-5 p.m.

Tom McCall Park, Portland, OR

www.rainbowrevival.org

Follow us!

Get updates and inspirational resources on social media.

***Facebook & Instagram:**

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

***Twitter:** [@PTLDFellowship](https://twitter.com/PTLDFellowship)

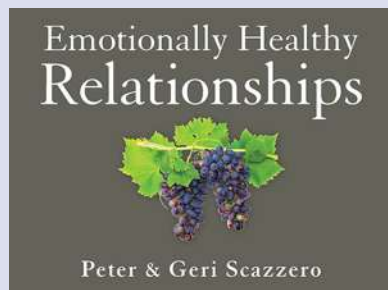
Additional Updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com

Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

Summer Series 2025: *Emotionally Healthy Relationships*



This summer, we're offering the *Emotionally Healthy Relationships* series on Tuesday evenings in July and August. If you joined us last summer for *Emotionally*

Healthy Spirituality, this is the natural next-step!

Emotionally Healthy Relationships will help you grow closer to Jesus, take responsibility for your own emotions, and develop healthier ways of relating to your friends and family. Topics include *Clarify Expectations*, *Genograms*, *Integrity*, *Listen Incarnationally*, *Fight Cleanly*, and more.

This program will be offered both on Zoom and In-House, Tuesday evenings July 8 - August 27, from 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM (PST). Cost is \$25, plus materials (purchased on Amazon). A short intake is required, and scholarships are available. Register today! www.portlandfellowship.com/summer.php

Summer Hope Group Gatherings

This summer, we are hosting several in-person Hope Group gatherings. Hope Group is Portland Fellowship's ministry for friends & family of gay & trans-identified loved ones.

Join us for dinner, testimonies, sharing & prayer on July 11th, August 8th, and September 12th, 6:30pm at the PF house. To RSVP, visit: www.portlandfellowship.com/friends_family.php



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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