



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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## Well, How Did I Get Here? by Jeff Tryka

Listen to Jeff's story: [www.pfhope.com/stories/tryka.m4a](http://www.pfhope.com/stories/tryka.m4a)

*As a child of the 1980s, I suppose I could be excused for using lyrics from the Talking Heads' classic song, "Once in a Lifetime", to describe my life. Like me, you may ask yourself, "Well, how did I get here?" and you may ask yourself, "Am I right or am I wrong?" and you may say to yourself, "My God! What have I done?!"*

You see, it wasn't supposed to be this way. I was supposed to be behind the wheel of a large automobile, with a beautiful house and a beautiful wife...but that's not where I ended up. Instead, my life has been one of struggles and victories, violent crashes, and a God who picked me up from the ashes to make something beautiful of my life.

I suppose it would be easy to say that I've always been up against the eight ball in my life, but that really just ascribes too much responsibility to circumstances than to actions. It may reveal some of the causes of my battle with unwanted same-sex attraction, but ultimately does not lend any more insight into where I am going from here than Talking Heads lyrics. Perhaps it's best to start at the beginning.

My parents may have loved me very dearly, but they were not set up for success when they got together. My dad was fairly intelligent, but was beset with obsessive compulsive disorder, which was only formally diagnosed decades later. This put him at a significant disadvantage as a father who needed to devote his attention to loving and nurturing his son, but was constantly pulled in different directions. My mother was the youngest of six children and tended to be more domineering toward my father. With her tenuous relationship with her own mother, my mom seemed ill-prepared for managing a household and raising a child.

A little over a year after my parents were married, I came along, and although I don't have many early memories, I can only imagine that I thought, "What in the heck have I gotten myself into?" Of the memories I have, I can only liken it to what amounted to an amazing sitcom.

In all those early years, there were no clear signs of the struggles to come; I was just a normal boy. I got dirty and loved playing with my dog—it wasn't like some stories you hear where the future struggle with SSA was clearly in the cards. I wasn't interested in makeup or dolls, but there were some signs of trouble in my small family. My parents fought a lot when I was young, and some of those fights were about me.

As time went on, my parents' relationship was strained by what seemed like a consistent series of unfortunate events. My mom started hanging out with another man who was not my dad, and that was confusing to me, but also a source of frequent fighting that shook the façade of stability in my home.



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

As I grew, though I was a part of the gang of boys in my neighborhood, I wasn't as fast or as athletic as some of the other boys. This made me feel like something was lacking, that somehow I was "less than" the other boys. When I was twelve, I accepted Christ as my Savior and tried to do what was right, but my church was small and there were few opportunities to interact with other Christians my age. Things got worse when my parents separated when I was thirteen. I was just hitting puberty, and really needed a male role model to guide me through all the chaotic hormones I was experiencing.

That chaos led to a transition from admiring other boys to desiring them sexually, entertaining the idea of possessing their masculine qualities through sexual activity. I exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped the created rather than the Creator (*Romans 1:25*). Although I never acted out in my high school years, I came close a few times. It wasn't until after college that I finally decided to let loose and fully embrace my lustful desires, having several affairs with other men. Each time I hoped they would satisfy me, that somehow, I would be fulfilled, but I was left even more empty than when I started. I had completely abandoned the truth of God that *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made"* (*Psalms 139:14*), and bought into the enemy's lies that I was "born this way" and there was nothing I could do about it. I was just like Israel, doing as I saw fit (*Judges 17:6*).

All through those rebellious years, the Lord was still pursuing me, convicting me and beckoning me to return to Him. Ultimately, after graduate school, having left my boyfriend behind, I went to work at a new job in Portland, where the Lord introduced me to Portland Fellowship. I went through the first year of the Taking Back Ground program, but then a job change sent me to Seattle, so I never finished.

Fast forward more than a decade and a half, and the Lord gave me a vision for my life that was not at all what I expected. Having moved back to Indiana, His Spirit shared a vision that there would be a ministry in my town that would minister to people who share my struggle, and that I would be a part of it. So, I called Jason Thompson and shared this and sought his guidance, but the Lord moves at His own timetable. It was six years later that He led me to complete Taking Back Ground and truly start living in submission to Him.



It was during the two years of TBG that I started looking deeper into the roots of my issues, and rather than seeking a superficial "fix" for my problem, I began pursuing Christ's healing for the deep wounds that had never been addressed. These wounds were so often not directly related to SSA, but were areas where I had built up walls of defense. As we learn, we were made for relationship, and when you are afraid of being hurt, you create hindrances to the relationships that God has for you. I began dealing with these issues and learning how the Lord wants to free me to have honest, healthy relationships with other men and women and enjoy the freedom He provides (*2 Cor. 3:17*).

Throughout the process of healing, I keep coming back to the difference between my natural masculine tendency toward "fixing" and pursuing healing and transformation—to no longer be conformed to the image of this world but to be transformed by the renewing of my mind (*Romans 12:2*). Ultimately as I pursue Christ and His resurrection, I learn every day how far I am from the ultimate goal, but, *"forgetting what is behind, I press on toward the goal of winning the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus"* (*Phil. 3:13-14*).

The process of sanctification is progressive as I keep walking with my Savior one step at a time, confessing my sin and opening my heart to the Holy Spirit's leading and healing of those scars deeply buried in my heart. Taking Back Ground provides so many tools to help in this daily pursuit, from self-examination when we fall to how to deal with "plateaus" in our walk with Jesus. As I continue to work out my salvation (*Phil. 2:12*), I am building relationships and connections to ultimately live in community as the Lord intended.

The vision the Lord gave me for ministry is not yet a reality, but the Lord is moving the pieces into place to achieve His vision so He will get all of the Glory. His path is not the one I would have chosen because as the heavens are higher than the earth, His ways are higher than my ways and His thoughts higher than my thoughts (*Isaiah 55:9*). However, I can trust Him through all the twists and turns and I only need to follow where He leads, one step at a time. *"To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."* (*Jude 24-25*)

## A Year of Growth (Part 5 of 6): Reestablishing Healthy Communication by Lisa Price

We continue highlighting 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 the do's and don'ts as we seek to reestablish relationships with our adult children. \*To read previous articles in this series: [www.portlandfellowship.com/articles/growth.pdf](http://www.portlandfellowship.com/articles/growth.pdf)

*"But You, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abundant in mercy and truth. Turn to me, and be gracious to me."*

—Psalm 86:15-16

When an adult child chooses to identify as gay, lesbian, or transgender, there is nearly always a breakdown in communication between the child and parent. Christian parents may feel the need to "fix" their child's wrong thinking concerning faith, sexuality, and morality. This causes a child walking in rebellion to feel defensive and guarded. Rebuilding healthy communication is rarely easy, but it is critical to healing the relationship. A healed relationship may open opportunities to influence the child in a way that draws them closer to Jesus. One of the primary goals of Hope Group is to help parents rebuild communication with their child. There are some definite do's and don'ts when it comes to reestablishing healthy communication with an adult child.



**Do: Lead with love and respect** - Leading with love and respect does not mean we celebrate or affirm our child's sinful choices (*1 Corinthians 13:6*). It does mean we choose to speak kindly to our child, even when they are hostile or attempt to provoke us. Leading with love means we accept the reality that this is the path our child has chosen for themselves. Then, we treat them with the respect, grace, and dignity due those made in the image of God (*Genesis 1:27*).

**Do: Draw clear but loving boundaries** - It is never unloving to be honest and real about what you are okay with, or not okay with, in your own home as long as your feelings are stated in a gentle, kind, and respectful way. Loving an adult child well means being clear about issues as they arise. Issues that may come up include what topics of conversation are unacceptable, whether or not you wish to allow same-sex partners in your home, and whether or not you are okay with displays of affection with their partner. Parents might choose to say something like, "I really love you and love spending time with you. However, I'm not comfortable with you and your partner kissing in my home. Please respect me enough not to do that". Clarity may feel harsh, but when it is coupled with gentleness and a respectful tone, it will prevent future conflict and hurt feelings.

**Do: Bathe all communication in prayer** - When a person chooses a life centered around sin, they are walking in spiritual darkness. In a very real sense, they are living life in the enemy's territory (*Eph. 6:10-17*). Satan will do everything he can to stop you from rebuilding healthy communication with someone living in darkness. This spiritual reality makes prayer an essential tool in your toolbox. If possible, spend some time in prayer before you meet or speak with your adult child. If things get tense or messy mid-conversation, say a quick, silent prayer asking for wisdom (*Neh. 2:4-6*). God is always listening.

Some **Don'ts** include: **Monologue or lecture** - When children are small, our job as parents is to teach and train. As their primary teachers, our conversations often devolve into monologues or lectures, with us doing most or all of the talking. As our children mature, it's critically important that we listen at least as much as we talk. Listening allows us to hear our child's heart; it will draw you closer, and it may open up some avenues to discuss deeper issues.

**Don't: React emotionally** - When people are walking in the darkness, they sometimes say things we find shocking. When this happens, we must refrain from reacting in an overly emotional way, even when we are hurt or shocked by their words. Reacting emotionally will only shut down communication. Instead of getting angry or expressing alarm, decompress with a trusted friend later.

Healthy communication can be difficult under the best of circumstances. However, when we are attempting to reach an adult child walking in sin and rebellion, it can feel impossible. Prayer, patience, and a commitment to loving your child will make space for God to do the impossible (*Luke 1:37, Ephesians 3:20*).

## September - October Calendar & Services

september 12

### In-Person Hope Group

For friends & family of gay & trans-identified loved ones. Dinner, testimony, sharing, and prayer.  
6:30 p.m.

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

september 22-26

### Jason Representing

Jason will be representing PF at the American Association of Christian Counselor's national convention in Tennessee.

september 23, 30

### PF Leadership Training

Volunteer leaders prepare for this year's discipleship programs.  
6-8 p.m.

tuesdays in october

### Taking Back Ground

Discipleship program for Christians struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction. *\*Both Zoom and in-house.*  
6-8:30 p.m. PST

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. PST

### Follow us!

Get updates and inspirational resources on social media.

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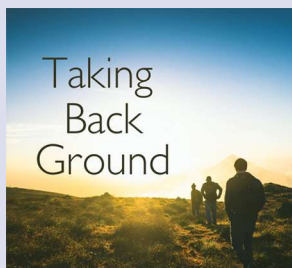
### Additional updates:

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

### Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

## 2025-2026 Discipleship Programs:



### Taking Back Ground

Registration is now open for our 2025-2026 Taking Back Ground program (both Zoom and in-person). TBG is for Christians struggling with

unwanted same-sex attraction or gender confusion. The program runs Tuesday nights October through May, and scholarships are available. An intake is also required.

If you or someone you know is desiring a deeper level of accountability and encouragement in the midst of sexual and relational brokenness, Taking Back Ground might be a great option! Please visit:

[www.portlandfellowship.com/taking\\_back\\_ground.php](http://www.portlandfellowship.com/taking_back_ground.php)

### Hope Group

Hope Group is a discipleship support group for friends and family of LGBTQ-identified loved ones. Join us on Tuesday evenings (either in-person or on Zoom)

as we process how to relate to our loved ones with both truth and grace. If you are facing pain, anger, confusion, or despair in your relationship with your gay or trans-identified loved one, then Hope Group may be a great series to walk through with other families on the same journey as you.

For more information, please visit:

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

*"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners." (Isaiah 61:1)*



**PORTLAND**  
fellowship

The Fellowship Message is a monthly publication of Portland Fellowship, a ministry proclaiming freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ.

#### MINISTRY TEAM

**Jason Thompson**  
Executive Director

**Patrick Silvius**  
Program Manager

**KathyGrace Duncan**  
Women & Transgender Ministry

**Liisa Bradshaw**  
Friends & Family Ministry

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post office box 14841  
portland, oregon 97293  
phone: 503-235-6364

email: [pf@portlandfellowship.com](mailto:pf@portlandfellowship.com)

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

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

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



**Register Today!**

## **SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

*Tuesdays, October—May*

*Zoom: 6:00—8:30pm (PST) In-Person: 6:30—8:30pm*

### **Taking Back Ground**

For Christians struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction and gender identity confusion



### **Hope Group**

Support for Family and Friends with Loved Ones who have embraced an LGBTQ+ Identity



**[www.portlandfellowship.com](http://www.portlandfellowship.com)**  
**503-235-6364**