



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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No Longer Ashamed of Myself by Aleksandra Witek

Listen to Aleksandra's story: www.pfhope.com/stories/witek.m4a

The very deliverance from SSA turned out to be merely a side effect, given the deep healing Jesus had done in my soul.

Born as the first and much-awaited child in my family, I was a quite typical girl. Though I liked playing with dolls, I became more interested in playing with cars and riding my bike, which was probably why my playmates were mostly boys. I didn't like playing house with girls, for I was often given unimportant parts in those games, which I considered a non-verbal signal of me being worse than other girls. That was how I felt—worse and different.

When I was still a little child, my dad started drinking alcohol, more and more over time, which destroyed our family's safe atmosphere forever. My dad got angry when drunk, which always led to violent brawling and verbal abuse. His face could contort in a horrible way when he made faces at me. I loved my dad very much, so his behavior really hurt me. One time, a thought popped into my mind that it was my face that looked so off-putting, and my dad was just imitating its expression. Unfortunately, with all my childish heart I believed that it was me who looked so terribly ugly. From that day forward, one particular emotion started to dominate my barely-emerging image of self: deep hatred, towards both my face and my body. Though I really tried hard, I didn't feel like I belonged in the girl world, and started blaming my ugly face and unattractive body for that failure.

Whether my dad was drunk or not, I heard his negative statements about me. In his opinion I was hopeless, useless, and stupid. He never appreciated my efforts or applauded me for things I'd done. The only person who received praise was my brother. Even when my brother was teasing me, Dad's anger still only fell on me. Mom never stood up for me unless Dad called me the worst names. I felt I was no one, devoid of protection and worth. During puberty, Dad jokingly derided my changing body and mocked its imperfections. Sadly, I only saw admiration for my body in the eyes of an older girl, who touched me inappropriately. The sense of being completely worthless, which had grown over the years, made me prone to have my boundaries violated; in fact, I didn't even know that I should have any boundaries.

I plunged into fantasies of being someone special, valued, admired, loved, and wanted. I found myself increasingly attracted to female bodies. Family circumstances forced me to move to a boarding school, where my carefully-hidden fascination with the female body surfaced with fierce intensity. I fell in love with a girl, but never revealed my true feelings. I expected her to reject me, so to keep our friendship going, I decided to conceal the truth. When she unexpectedly ended our friendship two years later, it really hurt. This confirmed my belief that people with SSA would always be rejected, so I had



Aleksandra is an alumnus of PF's Taking Back Ground Online discipleship program from Krapkowice, Poland.

to keep my feelings secret at all costs. That conclusion made me even more withdrawn and distrustful.

I have always believed in God, that is, I knew there was some entity like God. To me, however, He seemed to be a powerful, fearful, very distant, and strict judge, who was there only to condemn me for my sins. Though I never thought He could love me, I did my best to be okay with Him. I even started reading the Bible to earn His favor. When Jesus touched my heart with His love, I couldn't believe He really loved such a worthless person like me. However, His love made my false impression of Him melt away. I really craved belonging to Jesus. A year later, I became a member of a Christian congregation, supported by devoted Christians who provided sound Biblical teaching.

Walking with Jesus and getting to know Him strengthened my real identity as a beloved daughter of God, valuable and exceptional. I quickly became convinced that Jesus had already healed me from SSA, for I could easily overcome unclean visions and thoughts regarding women. I even started falling in love with Christian men at church and engaged in some romantic relationships. I came out of my self-protective shell. To my great surprise, I discovered that I didn't feel attracted to Christian women at church. The only thing that really nagged me was the guilt that I wasn't honest with those women—I visited and talked with them, but they didn't know about my struggles. I didn't realize then to what extent shame took control over my life.

I didn't even notice that my protective mechanisms were gradually cutting me off from my female Christian friends. I frantically avoided any intimacy in relationships with these women, mainly because of my wrong understanding of healthy intimacy. After years of staying distant in relationships, I drowned in loneliness and desperate longing for deep friendship. That longing became a source of trouble, when one of my female Christian friends asked me to hug her. I couldn't say no. Instantly, a surge of strong homosexual desires washed over me. My belief that Jesus delivered me from SSA irretrievably collapsed, and not long afterwards I fell in love with a woman from my work. I was devastated and torn by contradictory desires—to at last be loved, cared for and treated with ten-

derness by a woman, and still cherish a close relationship with Jesus. Plunged in unbelievable confusion, I prayed and cried out to God for help. It came unexpectedly one day when I happened to come across the Taking Back Ground program online. I immediately signed up, found a mentor, and started my personal journey to wholeness.



Aleksandra at age 19.

Initially, the main goal I hoped to achieve with Taking Back Ground was complete healing from my SSA. However, as I was working through some difficult experiences from my childhood, it became clear to me that being delivered from SSA is merely a side effect, something of secondary importance. With TBG, I was given the chance to submit to Jesus all of my painful experiences, confess my sins, and sort out the things from my past that influenced my way of thinking and functioning. I could let God's truth into those difficult areas, forgive and be forgiven. I saw amazing results from my work in TBG and that, in hindsight, turned out to be of the greatest value.

It was a stunner to discover that I easily became emotionally dependent and didn't really know healthy patterns of relating to people. The Holy Spirit also exposed my strenuous striving to be liked by others, even at the cost of giving up my needs. The most significant breakthrough, however, came when Jesus destroyed the stronghold of shame that paralyzed my social interactions for years. Because of my homosexual tendencies, I perceived myself as "defective" or "damaged", which closed me off to people. While I was working through those issues, I noticed the emergence of the true me. I was becoming bold enough to express my opinions, set boundaries, and enjoy my relationships with women. I was no longer afraid of admitting my mistakes or revealing the sensitive and fragile parts of myself. Only after some time did I realize that I was no longer attracted to women in that old way, and didn't need them to meet my needs.

At present, I'm learning how to build relationships with women where I respect myself in exactly the same way that I respect and recognize their uniqueness. More and more I can clearly see what healthy intimacy looks like, and I know that Jesus will carry on to completion the good work He began in me (*Phil. 1:6*).

Mentors Who Shaped Us: **Phil Hobizal** by Jason Thompson

This year, we are sharing how God has used mentors to shape and transform those struggling with sexual and relational brokenness. We pray these reflections will bless and encourage you to become a mentor yourself, so that God's grace can flow through you to others.

I first walked through the doors of Portland Fellowship in 1989. That day is forever etched in my memory. I remember climbing the narrow stairs of the annex at Hinson Baptist Church: scared, desperate, and yet holding onto a fragile hope that maybe, just maybe, I could find answers for the struggles I had carried privately for years. Beyond a set of church doors was a small space set apart for ministry, and in one of those offices sat the PF founder and director, Phil Hobizal, a man I had only heard about through a friend, someone I hoped might have the answers I was longing for.

That meeting marked the beginning of a relationship that would change my life. From our very first conversation, I admired Phil. In that small office, I felt safe enough to speak honestly about the deep shame and confusion that had weighed on me for so long. Phil listened with compassion and understanding. He didn't heap guilt or condemnation on me. Instead, he spoke words of grace and mercy. Those early meetings became cherished moments, times when truth met grace in a way I had never experienced before.



Jason & Phil circa 1995.

Over time, what started as counseling became something more meaningful. Phil became a mentor. There were times when we would take walks around the neighborhood near the church, talking about life, faith, and the long road of healing. He would listen, ask questions, and share wisdom shaped by his own walk with God. Through his humility and transparency, he showed me what it means to walk with integrity and to trust God especially when the path ahead felt uncertain.

As a mentor, two qualities stood out most about Phil: his faith and his faithfulness. When it came to faith, Phil believed with a confidence that both challenged and inspired me. The world around us was saying, "You can't change." Many repeated the message, "Once gay, always gay." But Phil believed God's Word when it said that our Lord heals, restores, redeems, and transforms lives. This conviction wasn't theoretical; it was personal and lived out daily. Whether Phil was teaching, meeting one-on-one, or simply sharing thoughts over coffee, his message never wavered: God is able.

I will never forget one day when we walked a block from the church. Phil stopped and pointed to a large Victorian house—a beautiful 5400-square-foot home—and said, "Jason, I'm praying God gives that house to Portland Fellowship." I remember thinking how unrealistic that sounded. We were a small ministry. How could we ever afford something like that!? Yet today, more than thirty five years later, I'm sitting in that very house as I write these words. God provided it, free and clear, through His people—faithful supporters who believed in the work He was doing. Phil's faith taught me that nothing is impossible with God, and that truth continues to shape my leadership today.

But Phil didn't just model faith; he modeled faithfulness. From the beginning, his commitment to the ministry he founded showed deep trust in God's calling. Phil stayed the course through challenges, opposition, and uncertainty. That same faithfulness was reflected in his love for his wife and devotion to his family. Even when life brought transition and change in his role at Portland Fellowship, Phil remained anchored to the Lord. Watching his example taught me that faithfulness is not about perfection; it's about showing up, trusting God, and walking in obedience one step at a time.

Over the years, our relationship changed: from counselor to mentor, to employer, and eventually, to friend. Through every season, I have admired Phil's steady walk with the Lord. His life continues to shape how I understand what it means to follow Christ with endurance and grace. My prayer echoes the words of Billy Graham: "We are not called to be reservoirs, but channels through which God's truth and love flow to others." I desire to lead PF with the same faith and faithfulness that Phil modeled so well.

As I look back, I am filled with gratitude for those who, like Phil, have poured into my life. And as I look ahead, I feel a renewed desire to do the same: to be a faithful channel of God's truth and love to others. That is the legacy of mentorship, and one of the greatest joys of ministry.

January - December Calendar & Services

tuesdays in january & february **Taking Back Ground**

Discipleship program for Christians struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction and gender confusion. 6-8:30 p.m. PST

tuesdays in january & february **Hope Group**

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

6-8:30 p.m. PST

saturday january 10 **Annual Planning Meeting**

The Portland Fellowship Staff and Board of Directors will gather to process, plan, and pray over the coming ministry year.

saturday february 7 **XPOSED Conference**

PF is helping put on the 5th annual XPOSED conference at Cedar Mill Bible Church in Beaverton, OR. Hope Group leaders Liisa and Leah will each be leading a breakout session. For more info & registration: www.xposedevent.com

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Additional updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com

Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

Conference: XPOSED 2026

The 2026 Xposed Conference is coming up on Saturday, February 7th! In today's culture, the topic of biblical sexuality is littered with land mines.

Xposed equips pastors, ministry leaders, counselors, and individuals to navigate these sensitive issues and empower them to care for their communities with God's design for sex and gender.



This year's Xposed theme is *Uncovering God's Blueprint to Healing*. Healing doesn't mean going back—it means moving forward with greater depth, strength, and purpose. Come explore *Uncovering the Power of Post-Traumatic Growth* with keynote speaker Debbie Laaser, a trusted guide in faith-based recovery, and learn how God brings beauty from even the deepest brokenness.

Portland Fellowship will be hosting a booth at the conference, and Hope Group leaders Leah & Liisa (pictured above) will each be leading breakout sessions. To register, visit: www.xposedevent.com

Updated Ministry Database

We've upgraded our ministry database! This new system has improved options for donating (through your bank account or credit card). If you'd like to become a monthly Fellowship Partner, or if you need to update your current pledge, you can sign into your account at www.portlandfellowship.com and click the "Donate" tab in the new layout. On mobile devices, you can download the Church Center app and add Portland Fellowship.



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PORTLAND
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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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