



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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In the Valley of Healing by Lisa B.

Listen to Lisa's story: www.pfhope.com/stories/lisab.m4a

Our story includes some dark chapters, but I have found that my most treasured sightings of our Savior happen in the dark. I'm grateful after each trial for what He showed me about Himself, and that He didn't leave me as I was. Yet, I am still reluctant every time He brings me into the valley.

My marriage ended when my daughter was just eight months old. My husband had been abusive and threatening, and regularly put us in danger, yet he won normal visitation rights for our daughter. Every weekly visit she spent with him, I feared the worst of his anger and dangerous behavior. When one of his girlfriends reported him to child protective services, he was able to resume unrestricted visitation without changing a thing. I did all I could to protect my daughter, which felt like never enough, and waited for the Lord to act.

My parents were tremendously supportive of my daughter and me. They took us in while I got back on my feet. My parents were strong believers that, along with me, daily disciplined and prayed with my daughter, and she exhibited trust and faith in Jesus from an early age. Between my parents' home and our own, she was surrounded by Scripture and prayer.

Tragically, both my parents died of cancer when my daughter was thirteen. On top of all we'd endured from her father, we lost our safety net and cheering squad. Her father continued to have weekly visits until my daughter was fifteen, when police caught him drunk driving with her. After this, he didn't force her to visit him anymore. Though battle-weary, our lives finally had an element of peace.

The next two years were somewhat uneventful for the first time since my marriage. As I sat on my couch one evening by myself, the words came out of my mouth, "OK Lord, it's been a calm two years. I think I'm ready for the next thing."

Have you ever spoken words that you know didn't originate in your own mind? This was one of those times, because let me tell you, I NEVER would have said THAT. "No, please Lord. Haven't we been through enough??" I heard Him reply, "You are ready. It will be ok." Then, He gave me peace.

Within the next few days, in her junior year of high school, my daughter nervously told me she was interested in a girl, and considered herself bisexual. I don't remember all the details, but I do remember God shutting my mouth to listen a lot more than was natural for me. I reassured her that I loved her and that I would love her friend, but that I did not believe this was in God's order for



Lisa is an alumnus of PF's Hope Group discipleship program.

relationships and that it would eventually cause her pain.

That night, and many, many nights after, I laid awake asking myself what I had done wrong and wondered what would happen to her. I fretted that she would walk away from her faith. She seemed to be teetering. The knot in my stomach was ever present, for weeks and months. I missed my parents terribly and wished I had their support. I shared with a few friends who were very supportive and prayerful, but none had experienced this. I felt alone.

I recalled when the Lord said to me, “You are ready.” I’m so thankful for His gentle warning that something was coming, and the peace He gave me. This was no surprise to Him, and He would be with us through it.

My thoughts and emotions over my daughter’s disclosure were all over the place. Is she going to wholesale throw all the Bible out with heterosexuality? She’s dismissing how she’s been brought up! How could she do this to me? She’s been brainwashed at school! If only I had homeschooled, this wouldn’t have happened! I wasn’t just heartbroken, I was angry—not at her, but at her father and at God. I worried about our strained relationship.

One of those sleepless nights I stumbled upon Portland Fellowship’s Hope Group Online. I quickly worked through the videos and materials. They were crucial to teaching me how I could respond to my daughter better. Two years later, I began attending in-person. I found hope and encouragement without phony clichés or pat answers. Instead of figuring out how to change my daughter’s mind, Hope Group’s primary focus was learning how to love her more and depend on God.

I still had a lot to learn about the relational brokenness that existed in my family, my own in particular. I had blamed her father for our broken hearts. However, as I worked through the Hope Group lessons, I started to realize with deep sorrow that I had also played a significant role in my daughter’s pain. Much of the time, I’d been emotionally unavailable to her as I fought multiple court battles with her dad, went back to school, worked a stressful job, and took care of my ailing parents. My way of coping with stress and pain was to keep busy. Sadly, one of my daughter’s first sentences was “Mama, sit down!” I was rarely mentally present. I pretended to listen while my mind was somewhere else (not that I was fooling her—I can only imagine how unimportant that made her feel).



Lisa with her parents & young daughter.

In my anxiety, I was sometimes critical and harsh with her. I feel like I spent years not really seeing her.

Just before my daughter’s disclosure, a long-term illness forced me to take a year-long leave of absence from work. My drug of choice, workaholicism, could no longer numb me as I was confined to the couch. In perfect timing, the Hope Group program shined a light on many things God would work on in my heart. I’m thankful He presented this opportunity to

heal my relationship with my daughter while she lived at home. I had to start with lots of apologies. I tried to be present, see her heart, learn how she received love, stop preaching, and listen fully.

Conflict avoidance was another problem for me. In trying to maintain what I believed was peace, I hid my thoughts and emotions. I even hid the focus of Hope Group from my daughter, fearing she’d get mad. My group leader challenged me to be open with her. I finally told her what our meetings were about and to my surprise, while not agreeing, she wasn’t angry. I think she could sense I was holding something back, and not being open left her to surmise the worst.

Now, instead of hiding our feelings, we are practicing honesty and openness. As clunky as we are at it, she’s been sharing more freely as I am striving to get better at that, too. Our house feels real peace now. Instead of getting irritated and holding resentment, we have worked on boundaries together. We both communicate what we need a little better and strive to help each other. Recently, an illness delayed my daughter moving out on her own. We were both disappointed, but since then we have grown closer and healthier in our ways of relating. Clearly God sought to do more work in us.

I wish I could tell the version of me in the valley of all the answered prayers I would see over the next few years. Though my daughter still doesn’t agree with my views on Scripture and sexuality, she resumed reading the Bible and is asking more questions. She’s attended church with me a couple of times and listens to the services online, even with the pastor teaching biblical sexuality. If you’d told me this even six months ago, I wouldn’t have let myself believe it! “*He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.*” (Eph. 3:20) I’m confident that God will continue to pursue my daughter, and I look forward to the day she is fully committed to serving Him.

Mentors Who Shaped Us: Rob & Kim Maricle by KathyGrace Duncan

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.

In the beginning of detransitioning, I was clueless about what to do, what the next steps should be, or how this was even going to happen. The only thing I did know was to follow the Lord. In doing so, I was led to Portland Fellowship where I met Jody, the Women's Ministry leader, and she encouraged me to attend the church where her husband was the pastor. She also helped me to find a place to live with two women when I moved back to Portland.

My two roommates were part of a home group which I decided to attend. This is where I met Kim and Rob Maricle, who were the home group leaders. As I continued to attend, Kim approached me and asked if she and I could meet. I was terrified because I could see how the Lord used Kim, and now, she wanted to meet with me?! I somehow managed to say yes.



In our meetings, Kim encouraged me to read the Word to see what the Lord was saying, and then share what He said when I came back the next week. I wasn't convinced that it was possible, but I tried anyway. When I did hear the Lord through the Word, it was amazing and I couldn't wait to share!

Also, during this time I was slowly getting to know Rob. I was very curious about him, and impressed at the same time. He was nothing like my dad, which I didn't understand. I kept waiting for him to yell, or be mean or a jerk, and he just wasn't. Instead, he loved the Lord and was following Jesus with all of his heart.

Eventually, the roommate situation became unstable and not safe, and I moved in with Kim and Rob. I was excited to be in a home with a family, and also terrified to be in a home with a family, because I wasn't sure how to be. Little did I know how this would bring great healing to my life.

I began to see this healthy, functioning family unit. It was definitely not what I grew up in. I saw Kim as a mom and how she adored her kids, and spoke words of affirmation to them. I also saw a wife who was not afraid of her husband and gave to him out of her heart, not out of expectation. I saw Rob as a husband who helped his wife, provided for his family and engaged with his children. They didn't argue, and there was communication between them.

I saw children who were able to just be kids. They laughed, they played, and they interacted with their parents without fear. They did things and went places with their parents. It took a while to sink in that this is how it was supposed to be. This season also helped me to see the places I needed to continue to forgive my parents.

During this whole season, I didn't ever feel judged. I wasn't told how living as a man was wrong, and that I needed to change. Instead, Kim and Rob affirmed who I was by encouraging the truth, helped me to understand how I am wired spiritually, and they didn't shame me when I fell short (which felt like I did a lot).

After moving out, I began to look back, and I saw the foundation that was formed by the Lord in using Kim and Rob. I now see where I am today, and my life is fruit of the investment that they made in me. Kim and Rob were faithful and unwavering while walking with me. They stood fast to what the Lord had said, even when faced with opposition from friends and family in allowing me to live with them (I still looked pretty masculine, even as I was learning how to live as a woman again).

Today, I am so grateful for Kim and Rob's friendship. I'm grateful they hung in there with me through the healing process. I am grateful they were faithful to the call, and didn't lose faith or hope in what the Lord could do. *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* (Hebrews 11:1)

March - April Calendar & Services

friday march 13

Hope Group Meeting

A night of food, testimony, and prayer for friends & family of gay or trans-identifying loved ones.

6:30 p.m. PST

portlandfellowship.com/rsvp.php?rsvpid=32

saturday march 14

KathyGrace Speaking

KathyGrace is sharing at Revolution Church's Women's Retreat.

monday march 16

Patrick Speaking

Patrick will be sharing with Faith | Hope | Love's parent's group.

tuesdays in april

Taking Back Ground

Discipleship for Christians with unwanted SSA / gender confusion.

6-8:30 p.m. PST

tuesdays in april

Hope Group

Discipleship series for friends & family of gay or trans-identifying loved ones.

6-8:30 p.m. PST

saturday april 18

KathyGrace Speaking

KathyGrace will share with a Zoom parent's group from Florida.

Follow us!

Get updates and inspirational resources on social media.

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

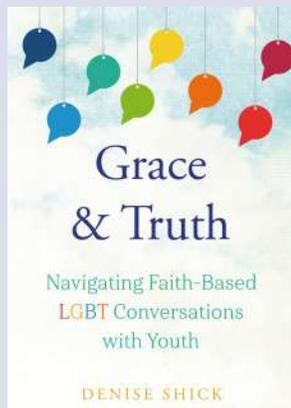
Additional updates:

www.portlandfellowship.com

Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

Helpful Resource: *Grace & Truth—Navigating Faith-Based LGBT Conversations with Youth*



How can Christian parents, youth leaders, and teachers engage in truthful but grace-filled conversations with young people about LGBT topics?

Many people aren't sure where to start when it comes to discussing these issues with teens and young adults. *Grace & Truth* was created to meet that need. Inside Denise Shick's newest book, you'll find:

- *Practical guidance from a biblical perspective*
- *Thoughtful, faith-centered conversation starters*
- *Follow-up questions to deepen understanding and engagement*
- *Tools to help create a safe, respectful space for dialogue*

This is an excellent, practical resource for youth pastors, college and young adult leaders, teachers, and parents. Whether you're leading a classroom discussion, mentoring teens, or parenting at home, this resource offers the clarity and confidence to navigate these important conversations with grace and truth.

To order *Grace & Truth* and other books by Denise Shick, go to www.livingstonesministries.org/help4families/books/ Denise is the founder and executive director of Help 4 Families Ministry, as well as the director of Living Stones Ministries. She is the author of four children's books and several nonfiction books, including *My Daddy's Secret*, *Understanding Gender Confusion—A Faith-Based Perspective*, and *Transgender Confusion—A Biblical Q&A for Families*.



PORTLAND
fellowship

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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