



the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

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A Place of Surrender by Liisa Bradshaw

It was early 2017 when I first discovered that my youngest daughter was struggling with some deep mental health issues, and by the end of 2018, I found out that she was identifying as bi-sexual. Then, at the age of sixteen, my daughter decided she wanted to live as a transgender man.

I did not know what to say in response to her, and being in shock, I really don't remember most of our conversation. I felt so helpless. *Was I a bad parent? Did I not do a good enough job teaching her God's Word? Had she been abused? Is there any way to change her mind?*

So, was it my fault? I think deep down, I wanted it to be. I felt that if it was my fault, then I could control the outcome: Maybe if I just apologize, and talk things out with her, then this would all go away! Although I now know that the path my daughter is taking for her life is not my fault, I've also realized that I have contributed to her story with the role I played in her life.

I have my own history of relational brokenness that I've had to walk through and heal. My healing took a good portion of my adult life, and that meant I was still on my healing journey when my kids were young. It was always my desire to heal so that my kids would not be affected by my brokenness. Growing up in a home with a lot of abuse, and a lack of grace and forgiveness, resulted in me believing that I needed to be perfect in order to be loved. The idea that I could fully heal all my brokenness goes along with my need to be perfect. Even though I was healing and learning healthier ways to relate with God and with others, my perfectionistic ideology was still spilling over into how I interacted with my kids, instilling in them their own broken belief systems.

As my kids got older, I finally came to a place of surrender before God, realizing that I could never be perfect, and that is why Christ died for me. *"But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8) In the freedom of surrendering, I was then able to parent my kids with true grace and forgiveness. I am so thankful that God brought me to this change of heart. However, even though I had apologized to my kids for my past



Liisa helps lead the Hope Group, PF's ministry for friends & family of LGBTQ-identified loved ones.

actions, some of those actions were set in their hearts and minds—things that would now be a part of who they are and who they would become, and things they were now going to have to battle to change. Thankfully, my hope and trust is in God, and I know He will walk with my kids just like He did with me: *“The Lord is my portion, says my soul, ‘therefore I hope in Him!’”* (Lamentations 3:24)

There are so many circumstances that contribute to who we become as we grow into adulthood, and I was only one piece of that for my kids. Starting in 2008, our family went through a great amount of change and loss that left some deep wounds in my children’s hearts and would be another factor in how they decided to live out their lives. It started with multiple job losses for their dad. This resulted in us losing our house to foreclosure, having to move to a new city, and moving in with my parents.



Liisa and her husband, Ernest.

Living with my parents became extremely unhealthy for all of us, both mentally and emotionally, and it threw me back into some very dysfunctional behaviors. After a series of significant events that revealed how toxic the relationship was with my parents and siblings, I made the heart-wrenching decision to no longer have communication with them.

Two years later, the stress of everything came to a head for my oldest daughter, who was eighteen, and she left in a very angry and hurtful way. Two months later, my husband left and filed for a divorce. In a two-year period of time, my kids and I had lost all of my family, their oldest sister, and their dad. We were all left reeling in pain and shock, and none of us were able to help the other because we were so focused on our own wounds. This left my daughters looking for comfort and healing wherever they could find it, and very vulnerable to the enemy’s lies.

But God, in His faithfulness, met me in the darkness

and reminded me of the truths He had ingrained in my heart in previous years: *“Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and light are both alike to You.”* (Psalm 139:12) If He met me in my darkness, then I can have faith that He will meet my kids in theirs.

God has shown me through my healing journey that He never promised us a life without pain and struggle. What He has promised us, is that He will never leave us to walk through these struggles on our own. *“He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not be afraid nor dismayed.”* (Deut. 31:8) We can have faith and hope in a God that loves us and loves our children, and He will guide them too. *“The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.”* (Isaiah 58:11)

Was there any way to change my daughter’s mind? I so wish there was. As her mom, I just wanted to fix it and make all the pain she has experienced go away. Instead, I chose to make sure she knows I love her, no matter what, and that I still desired to have a relationship with her. Right now, I am giving her space to live her life, to include me when she wants, and I pray continually that God will bring her to that place of surrender.

In Job 42:5 it says, *“My ears had heard of You, but now my eyes have seen you.”* It has been through my pain and struggle that I have had the privilege to see sides of God I never would have seen any other way. We each have to come to that place of surrender before God and invite Him into the dark places in our souls; this choice solely belongs to each of my kids as well. As I continually surrender my children to God, I can know and trust that His love for them far exceeds mine.

A Year of Hope (Part 1 of 6): The New Self by Leah King

This year, we are highlighting different parts of Portland Fellowship that offer hope for healing and relational wholeness in Jesus Christ. In this first article, Hope Group Zoom leader Leah King explores how Jesus offers new life and identity to those struggling with sexual and relational brokenness.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) The New Year is always a fun and exciting time. Having just celebrated the arrival of the long-expected Jesus, we settle into the beginning of the year, full of expectation and hope. There are new and renewed commitments to working out, building healthy habits, and goals to become the new and improved version of you. Stores quickly fill with all sorts of self-help and accountability books. There are deals and discounts left and right to set you up for success. Sadly, as the days and weeks go by, our enthusiasm for such commitments dwindle, too.

Why is this? As Christians, we know the reality is that we are human, which means it’s easy to fall back into our old patterns and give up on goals and commitments. I have found that in a similar manner, it seems to be even easier to fall back when it comes to matters of identity, sexuality, and relational wholeness. However, unlike the offer of accountability from the world, we get the strength that only comes from Christ Himself!



The world has its own way of helping us keep to those diets and exercise routines, but it’s often not God’s way. The world’s way is great at making sure you are immersed in discovering the best version of you, “the new you”. Often, the secular world’s accountability for the “new you” comes with exhaustion, late nights of numbing pain, anxiety, depression, and getting a temporary fix from whatever will satisfy the desires of your flesh in the immediate moment. When the commitments to the “new you” get hard, the world encourages embracing whatever makes you feel satisfied in that moment to keep you looking good and staying on track.

Though seeking good health is not bad, the “new you” the world is often talking about is really the “grave clothes” of the Christian’s past (John 11:44). There’s no new and improved version of you at all, but rather a life stuck in grave clothes, with no hope of healing. It’s a life of fixes that keep you needing more. The last thing the world wants to encourage is the “new you” found in Jesus: the new identity in Christ where we find wholeness and healing.

The newness that is offered in Christ is a life of hope in all things being made whole. It’s hope for healing, embracing true identity given by Christ, and the satisfaction that nothing in this world can offer. It is hope for a wholeness that we already have as children of God, because of the arrival of the baby Jesus (which we celebrated in our homes last month). Our hope is based in the truth that Jesus died a sinner’s death as an adult, rose from the grave, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, who gives new life in Him and hope for all who believe.

For those of us longing for relational wholeness and freedom from same-sex attraction and gender identity struggles, we get to embrace this new identity offered in Jesus, even if we don’t see or feel it yet. It’s not about our identity at all, but rather, *His* identity given to us. We don’t deny the reality of our struggles, but we press into the freedom offered to us in new life in Christ. *He* is our identity. He is the healing and satisfaction of the desires of our hearts.

Therefore, as this New Year begins and the months go by, let’s tune out the self-helps of the world, and instead run to the Cross. Let us put on the “new self” given to us in Jesus, and press on toward the upward call of Christ, because the old has gone and the new has come (2 Cor. 5:17).

If you would like help in seeking relational wholeness or freedom from unwanted same-sex desires for yourself, or support as you walk with a loved one, please consider participating in one of our weekly support groups this year. Jesus has new life waiting for you!

January - February Calendar & Services

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

PF's intensive discipleship program for men and women struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction.

**For both Zoom and in-house.*
6-8:30 p.m. PST

tuesdays in january & february **Hope Group**

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

**For both Zoom and in-house.*
6-8 p.m. PST

january 19 **Patrick Speaking**

Patrick will be sharing about sexual integrity on the mission field at Mission Connexion Northwest. Sunset Church, Portland, OR

january 26, 28 **KathyGrace Speaking**

KathyGrace will be sharing her testimony and leading a pastors' training at Father's House Church. Longview, WA

february 24 **Jason Speaking**

Jason will be leading a workshop session at the XPOSED conferece. Cedar Mill Bible, Portland, OR

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www.portlandfellowship.com

Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

Garden to Garden Biblical Consulting



We are excited to highlight a brand-new resource for pastors and churches: Garden to Garden Biblical Consulting. Leah King, who serves as a Hope Group leader with Portland Fellowship, recently launched this ministry to equip the local church to navigate conversations surrounding sexuality. Garden to Garden provides gospel-centered training and support to local churches and pastors in the area of sexuality with truth, grace, and compassion.

To learn more, or to schedule a consultation with Garden to Garden, please visit their website: www.gardentogardenbiblicalconsulting.com

Fellowship Partners

PF's monthly giving program, Fellowship Partners, is a way for you to intentionally support God's work in people at PF, and for us to connect with you more personally. Our Fellowship Partners receive short video updates that include confidential testimonies, prayer requests, and updates from PF staff, volunteers, and participants.



If you would like to intentionally partner with Portland Fellowship and receive confidential video updates, we would love to connect with you in this way! To become a Fellowship Partner, log into your account at www.portlandfellowship.com and click on "Make a Pledge". You can also fill out and return the card enclosed in this newsletter.



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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