



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

January / February volume 29 number 1

## My Testimony by Blair Francis

*My testimony: have I even got one? Actually, on some things I would say I do. On others, perhaps not as much. You be the jury. Let us start with the "yes" side of the ledger.*

First of all, I am seventy-one years old, so I have been at this for a while. I was born into a devoutly Christian home, but our church—indeed, our whole denomination—was also devoutly legalistic. I had attended church three times a week since before I was born and had gone to a Christian college, but I never heard of justification by faith apart from works of law until I started to work in the fall of 1980.

By then, I was a thorough-going legalist, and it was killing me. I was never sure of my salvation. I was engaged in a constant battle and debate with myself, making the best "legal" arguments I could to "justify" myself under the commands of Scripture, but it never worked. I had questions about baptism, other questions about confession, others about restitution. My stomach hurt all the time with feelings of guilt and fear. I was in physical agony. Yet, here is where my testimony begins.

I did not detect Providence working at the time, but I can see God's fingerprints in the rearview mirror. While living in Dallas, I "happened" to hear S. Lewis Johnson, a professor at Dallas Seminary, preach through the book of Romans on the radio. I was thunderstruck. If Johnson were right, all these questions were beside the point. Here, instead, according to Romans, were the relevant points: Was Jesus sinless? Yes. Was He also the son of God? Yes. Did His death pay the penalty for my sins which I in bare justice ought to have paid? Yes. Did that let me off the hook from having to pay the penalty myself? Yes. Did God account, or credit, Jesus's perfect righteousness to me because of my faith? Yes (*Romans 4*). When I stand up on the Day of Judgment to be judged for the things done in the body, will I be able to put forward by imputation the perfect righteousness of Christ instead of my own, personal flawed record? Yes. So...what's the problem?

I had no answer. When my focus shifted away from me to Christ, all of my complicated "legal" arguments fled away. I was left standing there, awe-struck, dumbstruck, silent...and saved. But all of this was a long battle that wasn't really won until 2011, when my stomach quit hurting, at age fifty-eight. Peace was thus a long time in coming, but come it did, and I am here to testify that the battle belonged to the Lord.

And now I must turn to that other deadly struggle of my life, the battle against same-sex attraction. From my earliest memories I was more interested in boys than girls, and later, in men than women.



Blair is part of Portland Fellowship's Taking Back Ground discipleship program.

Ministries like Portland Fellowship have encouraged us to ask whether we may not have interpreted some experiences of life incorrectly. When I look again, through different lenses, I find that my earlier life was more of a mixed bag. For example, I remember on my third birthday thinking, “I am so glad I am now three. Now I can punch harder!” That strikes me as very boy-typical. Though I preferred women’s and girls’ clothes and hats from a very young age, I was also mischievous. Pranks got me some good hard spankings, but they were boyish pranks. I loved to be outdoors doing nearly anything. That was boyish. I liked to see how high I could jump, how fast I could run. Boyish.

Yes, I used to day dream about attention from older boys. But I now understand that is not especially unusual. Nor did I dislike all competition. It is just that my field of competition was the classroom, where I made good grades, or the band, where I made it to All-State in high school.

Sadly, I never thought any of that “counted” in the calculus of masculinity. Even in sports, I was a mixed bag. Though I did not like “The Big Three” of football, basketball, and baseball, I did like golf, swimming, volleyball, gymnastics, all the racket sports, and I came to like running. I also have come to enjoy hunting and fishing. But again, I felt that none of my preferred sports “counted”. But wait—so Olympic swimmers, gymnasts, ping-pong players, and golfers are same-sex attracted? That argument seemed absurd even to me. But it led to a question I could not answer: *If the things I like do not determine a gay disposition (since so many completely straight guys enjoy them), then why do I have SSA?*

“Maybe it’s because I’m a cissy, because I don’t like any of ‘The Big Three’”. I was afraid to play basketball. Well, a very fine basketball player, who knows nothing about golf, might be afraid, or embarrassed, to step out on the tee box and play a game of golf surrounded by other golfers. Maybe my antipathies to “The Big Three” were normal, rather than perverted. *But if so, then why do I have SSA?*

“It’s cowardice. This must be it. After all, no straight man was ever guilty of cowardice.” But wait—so every soldier who ever fled in presence of the enemy was necessarily gay? And there were times when I did stand up for myself. Once again, it seemed to me the premise simply

couldn’t bear scrutiny. *But if so, then why am I SSA?*

I began to wonder whether I was making the same mistake as to SSA that I had made about justification. In both cases I had thought I was both the problem and the solution. But even as the solution was outside of me concerning justification, what if it were also outside of me concerning SSA? What if the answer to SSA were also Jesus, just like it was in the case of justification? So I tried the hypothesis on to see if it fit. Was it He who made me? Yes. Did He make me male? Yes. End of story. Enjoy what He made you. Live in that way to His glory.

I first found Portland Fellowship on the internet. One thing I noticed early and consistently in their materials was an emphasis on inward change, as opposed to mere exterior behavior management, and I desperately wanted interior change. Could my desires actually change? PF said they could. What they had to say was therefore of interest to me from the get-go.

Eventually, participation in Taking Back Ground became possible for me via Zoom. I am now three-quarters of the way through. I look forward to completing this journey in the spring, but will at the same time be sorry when it is over. Some things I think I have learned since starting TBG are (i) exotic = erotic, and its corollary, (ii) familiar = non-erotic; essentially, when there is a genuine, healthy bond with another man, interest in his body evaporates. Along these same lines, SSA seems always to have a component of adverse comparison: I perceive the interesting man as in some way superior to me and myself as inferior to him. As I see this imbalance as a misperception, a falsehood, and that other men and I are actually on a par, I’ve seen many of the unwanted attractions seem to go away on their own.

I think what may best describe my current situation is an adaptation of Paul’s statement in I Thessalonians 3:12-14: *“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me...forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on towards the goal...”* And I remain confident, as Philippians 1:6 promises, that, *“...he who began a good work [in me] will carry it through to completion.”*



Blair & Jason at last year’s TBG Retreat.

## A Year of Growth (Part 1 of 6): Opportunities in Our Pain 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 first article, Hope Group Zoom leader Lisa Price explores how Jesus can take the pain of a friend or family member's disclosure to bring about new opportunities.

*"Hear me, Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Guard my life, for I am faithful to you; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God; have mercy on me, Lord, for I call to you all day long. Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you."*

—Psalm 86:1-4



No Christian hopes to hear the news they have a son or daughter who has chosen to live out a gay, lesbian or transgender identity. For many it is some of the hardest news they will ever hear. The revelation swiftly turns into a bewildering bombshell that brings with it waves of deep sorrow and profound grief. In many families the disclosure brings conflict and discord to the peace and harmony of the family unit. The strong differences of opinion that arise concerning how to best handle the loved one's new identity often create painful rifts in relationships that would have once been described as "solid", "unshakeable", and "resilient". The feelings of shame that creep in often leave parents feeling isolated and alone in their grief, even from their closest friends and church family.

For any parent who did their best to raise their child in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4), the news is always the first step in a long journey of self-doubt and spiritual uncertainty. Parents cannot help but wonder where God is and what He's doing in the misery and messiness of their situation. Moms and dads find themselves asking questions such as:

*"What did we do wrong?" "Where was God when all this was taking place with my son or daughter?"*

*"Why is this happening to our family?" "When is God going to fix this problem?"*

While it is never easy to hear the news we have a loved one who has chosen to identify as gay, lesbian, or transgender, God does promise in His word that He will take even the most difficult situations in our lives and use them for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28, Romans 5:3-5). We position ourselves for blessing, growth, and good when we make the decision to trust and obey God no matter what. A key aspect of trusting God is making the daily choice to submit to His will in the midst of our pain and confusion. When we choose trust and obedience, the news of a loved one's gay identity or gender confusion morphs into something more than simply a source of shame or unspeakable grief and pain.

It also becomes a series of opportunities.

Trusting God with our situation transforms our pain and confusion into an opportunity to learn how to grieve in a healthy and God-honoring way. The regret we feel becomes an opportunity to grow wiser in the way we interact with others. Some of the worst news we have heard becomes a beautiful opportunity to learn to love difficult people well and become more like Jesus. Most notably, the pain, confusion and grief we feel becomes an opportunity to get to know the God of the universe in a deeper and more intimate way.

Portland Fellowship's Hope Group is all about growth and trusting God to bring good out of heartbreak and pain. In this series of articles, we will explore the topics of grief, surrender, communication, and growing in our faith. We will take an honest look at the pain of discovering we have a son or daughter who identifies as gay, lesbian, or transgender, but we will also explore the opportunities this news brings for our closest relationships. In the process, we will see God work in ways we never dreamed of.

## 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 11

### Annual Planning Meeting

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

january 23-24

### Jason Speaking

Jason Thompson will be teaching at a leadership training event with Path of Life, a ministry similar to PF in Spokane, WA.

january 26

### Jason Speaking

Jason will be sharing about Portland Fellowship at Springhill Church in Gaston, OR.

### Follow us!

Get updates and inspirational resources on social media.

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\*Twitter: @PTLDFellowship

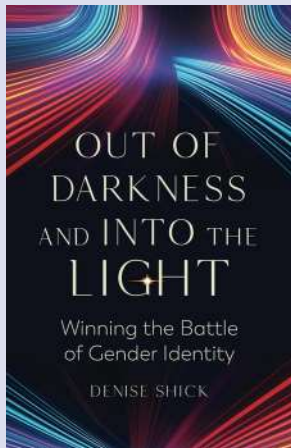
### Additional Updates:

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

### Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

## New Book: *Out of Darkness and Into the Light: Winning the Battle of Gender Identity*



Is gender biological or is it fluid? Can a person be born in the wrong body? What is the best solution for those who suffer from gender dysphoria? In *Out of Darkness: Winning the Battle of Gender Identity*, Denise Shick shines the light of God's Word on this divisive topic. With sound biblical teaching, personal ac-

counts, credible research, and scientific fact, Shick exposes the lies Satan uses to deceive people into embracing false ideologies about gender and identity. Jesus said, "The thief [Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10).

In this book, you will learn how to defend against Satan's weapons of rebellion, envy, manipulation, and a critical spirit. You will better understand how he twists God's definitions of sin, good, and evil to delude and destroy the vulnerable. You will also be equipped to navigate and move beyond trauma so you can receive the healing God longs to give you. People trapped in an identity crisis are crying out for help. Only God's amazing love can bring confused, desperate hearts into His light. Only He can expose the darkness for what it is...Satan's attempt to destroy people God loves. The battle for gender identity is winnable. *Out of Darkness* will show you how to stand firm in your faith and engage the enemy as you wield the most powerful weapon of all—prayer for yourself and your loved ones.

To order *Out of Darkness* and other books by Denise Shick, go to [www.livingstonesministries.org/help4families/books/](http://www.livingstonesministries.org/help4families/books/)



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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