



# the fellowship message

"Proclaiming freedom for the captives." ISAIAH 61

March / April volume 29 number 2

## The Need for Empathy & Community by Kyron

*At age seventeen, I confided in my church elders about my struggle with unwanted same-sex attraction. One elder compared my journey to that of a man who had an organ transplant and needed fifty-two pills a day for his body to accept it—an image that would define my struggle for years.*

I grew up in a middle class family on the Caribbean Island of Trinidad. My parents divorced when I was eight, and at age eleven, I started having unwanted sexual dreams about men. I was too scared to tell my parents. I knew them to be disgusted with homosexuals, and I never thought I would become one. Based on that fear, I continued to struggle in silence.

At age fourteen, I had my first sexual experience with a male. I went to him for advice on women (since he had experience). One day, he initiated sexual contact with me, which escalated my struggle. My father, observing some signs, invited me to church in his own way, which was through arguments. Eventually, at fifteen, I attended church and became born again. The next time I had sex, I physically felt God's presence depart. I never wanted to experience that again.

Years later, I opened up to my pastor and some church leaders about my struggle. I was taught some basic principles—receiving prayer, accountability, being disciplined—all of which were good. But, there came a point where the guidance of my church did not help and, in some ways, deepened my struggle.

At nineteen, I became a youth leader in my church. I believed I was honest about my struggle: I communicated that I had attractions to males and had been sexually active prior to becoming a Christian. By age twenty, my youth small group dwindled, and my same-sex attractions intensified. I was too scared to tell my pastor, but after some months, I wrote him a letter. He felt I had deceived him (because I was still struggling), but I hadn't claimed my struggles disappeared. A tense conversation with him and two male leaders ensued. I was instructed not to get close to any males in church. Leaders were told to monitor my interactions, and I was removed from ministry. My pastor told them I was lusting after other young men at church, mentioning them by name. He betrayed my confidence many times during my youth. In my mind, I had unwanted intrusive thoughts, not intentional lust.

The isolation I experienced broke me psychologically. I became anxious and scared to build relationships with my peers, because I believed I would experience public shame. During a team meeting, my pastor gave me a deadline of three months to change, or I would be expelled from the church.



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

I was so desperate to change that I started praying at 3:00am. I was already chronically late to work, so I had a choice to correct my reputation at work, or meet the three month deadline. I chose my pastor's deadline. I ended up losing my job, but I kept my relationship with my church.

Years later, I grew to a healthier place: more communication, accountability, better relationships with my leaders and my parents. Then one day, I became attracted to another guy my age, and started sending him sexualized signals. I snapped out of it and wrote another confession letter to my pastor. What followed was more discipline, then more persons were told of my SSA struggles, including my roommate, landlord, work supervisor, and my father. I was around twenty-five.

I felt treated like a criminal. My roommate had this negative attitude toward me, and one day he blurted out, "How would you feel if you were living with a homosexual?!" My relationships became tense, heavy on discipline, sharp, cutting. I wanted friends my age, but I was told to build relationships with older people who could help me.

Meanwhile, our church had gained a reputation for being a cult, but I didn't listen to the warnings. I rented from a church leader and worked full-time in our church, even though I wasn't making enough money to buy bread at times, even though my pastor and his wife continued to threaten that I would be cut off if I didn't change. I was also reprimanded for not bringing enough people to church. My pastor compared my failure to a person in a tribe who doesn't want to hunt—the tribe may kill that person. I gave up everything, daily time and money, praying, calling, trying to bring new people to church.

Around that time, God gave me this word in the song "You'll Come" by Hillsong United: *"Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge him. As surely as the sun rises, he will appear; he will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth."* (Hosea 6:3)

How did I not realize that I built my entire life around abusive leaders that exploited my time, talent, and treasures? Their approach felt akin to using shock therapy to "cure" SSA. I lived in fear, believing God might kill or

crush me, as my pastor suggested. I would visibly shake in meetings with my pastor or his team. I adjusted my whole life to escape SSA, and I was scared to make decisions without talking to my pastor. I saw no escape.



There was one friend who treated me with compassion (let's call him "John"), and I became emotionally dependent on him. John cared for me, but my stresses and clinginess were too much for him. We agreed we should get another witness to resolve our issues, but what happened was horrible. I shared my struggles concerning John with my performing arts leader and her husband, but this leader shamed me for the situation, and her husband compared me to a female dog—he used the

curse word. The next week, I was suspended from the performing arts ministry. My pastor also said I complained about John without remembering the terrible person I had been. I was instructed to submit a letter from a professional before I could rejoin the group.

It was during this process that God delivered me. I desperately searched for help online, where I signed up for Portland Fellowship, an environment of understanding, compassion, and guidance. Issues that had taken me a lifetime to overcome were solved in a few sessions of Taking Back Ground. I did seek professional help, and my therapist started warning me about my church. I got other opinions—all these psychologists affirmed that there are relational factors to SSA, a fact PF embraced, but not my church.

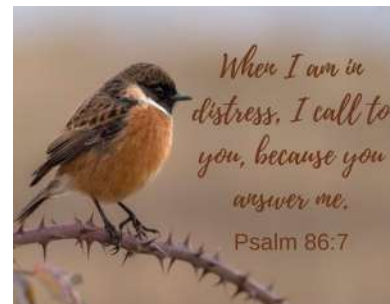
While my old church banned me from ministry, a new church welcomed me and even paid me to work in media. They sought fellowship, not perfection. After months of prayer, I cut ties with my old church. It was messy, but it caused me to become healthier, more confident as a man, and my life started improving. I was still deeply broken and relationally unhealthy, but this time, I wasn't expected to be perfect, and neither was I ostracized by a faith community.

For the first time in twenty years, I no longer believe God would kill me, nor am I running my life into the ground to bring people to Christ. I've learned that God, not man, is the final authority. I asked Him to deliver me, and He did. I continue working through Portland Fellowship and growing into the man God created me to be. My journey isn't over, but every struggle has been worth it. (Phil. 3:14)

## A Year of Growth (Part 2 of 6): Working Through Grief 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 article, Hope Group leader Lisa Price explores how processing our grief prepares us for the Lord's ministry purposes. \*To read the first article: [www.portlandfellowship.com/articles/growth.pdf](http://www.portlandfellowship.com/articles/growth.pdf)

*"You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you. Hear my prayer, Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me." —Psalm 86:5-7*



Grief is simply an inevitable part of the human experience (*Revelation 21:4, Psalm 31:9*). The dictionary defines grief as “deep mental anguish that arises from loss or bereavement”. There are five broadly agreed upon stages of the grieving process. These stages or phases include denial (sometimes called shock), anger, bargaining, depression and finally, acceptance of the situation. The phases do not always occur in a particular order, nor is it unusual for an individual to go back and repeat a stage of grief they previously worked through before they land solidly on the final stage: acceptance.

When a child raised in a Christian home chooses to identify as gay, lesbian or transgender, their parents typically experience deep and profound loss that results in grief. Sometimes the parent-child relationship becomes estranged at the revelation. Even if the relationship remains intact, there is inevitably a “death” of hopes and dreams parents had for their child. Christian parents worry about their child's spiritual condition and fear their child will reject God completely. Many grieve the loss of a traditional wedding and the blessing of having a son or daughter-in-law. Others may mourn the loss of biological grandchildren. These and other sorrows result in denial (shock), anger, bargaining and depression.

How we grieve matters. The grieving process serves a valuable purpose for Christians. When we work through our grief in healthy ways, we go from a place of pain and despair to a place of comfort and healing. The comfort we receive from God and other Christians leads to acceptance of our situation, but also a sense of hope for our loved one and their future. As we heal, God equips us to show mercy and minister to those who've experienced similar losses (*2nd Cor. 1:3-6*).

When we run away, use substances to numb out, or minimize the seriousness of our pain, we short-circuit the natural grieving process and make it more difficult to come to a place of acceptance and hope. Some Christians are uncomfortable with the strong emotions associated with grief. These folks may attempt to skip over their negative feelings altogether and jump straight to “acceptance”. When this happens, parents may end-up affirming their child's broken sexuality rather than simply accepting the reality of their choices. Still other parents allow their disillusionment with their child's choices to harden into bitterness. Bitterness leaves us unable to enjoy the gift of life or effectively help others with their struggles.

The Bible does not run from the subjects of grief and loss. David expressed deep and agonizing grief in many of the Psalms (*Psalm 23:1-4, Ps. 25:16-17, Ps. 38, Ps. 116:3*). The Psalms also give Christians a pattern for dealing effectively with grief. To grieve well, we must honestly acknowledge our losses (*Psalm 23:4*) and allow ourselves to fully feel the emotions that come with grief, even the uncomfortable emotions like anger (*Psalm 69:1-3, Ps. 143, Lam. 3:55-57*). Once the feelings of grief are allowed to run their course, it is essential that parents move into a place of trusting the Lord with their own and their child's future (*Psalm 37:39-40, Ps. 39:7, Ps. 40*).

Grief is chaotic and challenging. Unfortunately, homosexuality and transgenderism are not topics most Church people are comfortable discussing. It is also unwise to process through grief in front of the children who are the source of our feelings. These realities leave many parents feeling completely alone with no place to share or process through their grief. Portland Fellowship's Hope Group is a welcoming and safe place where parents can process their grief and work through any pain and disappointment they feel. Many parents find that the healing that takes place at Hope Group leads to deeper relationship with God and healthier relationship with their children. \*For more information on Hope Group, please visit [www.portlandfellowship.com/friends\\_family.php](http://www.portlandfellowship.com/friends_family.php)

## March - April Calendar & Services

march 7-9

### TBG Retreat

PF's annual retreat for Taking Back Ground leaders & participants. This is a powerful opportunity for participants to lay down and things that have held them captive.

march 21

### Hope Group Evening

For family & friends of LGBTQ-identified loved ones. Join us for a night of sharing, prayer & testimony. 6:30 p.m.

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

march 26-28

### KathyGrace Speaking

KathyGrace will be sharing at the Church Awakening conference in Edmonds, WA.

tuesdays in April

### Taking Back Ground

PF's discipleship program for those struggling with unwanted SSA.

*\*For both Zoom and in-house.*

6-8:30 p.m. PST

tuesdays in April

### Hope Group

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

*\*For both Zoom and in-house.*

6-8:30 p.m. PST

### Follow us!

Get updates and inspirational resources on social media.

**\*Facebook & Instagram:**

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

**\*Twitter:** [@PTLDFellowship](https://twitter.com/PTLDFellowship)

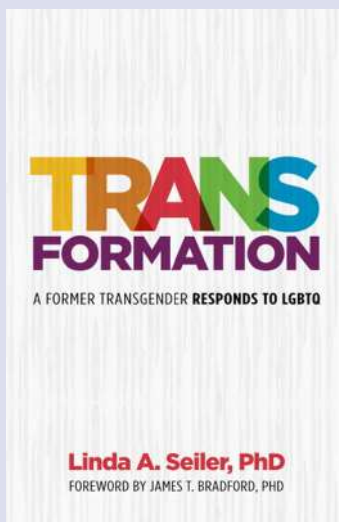
### Additional Updates:

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

### Speakers, counseling and support for youth

can be set up through the office.

## Encouraging Resource: *Trans-Formation: A Former Transgender Responds to LGBTQ*



If you've been searching for a Christian resource on transgenderism that can speak to personal struggle, pastoral care, and academic study, look no further than Dr. Linda Seiler's book, *Trans-Formation: A Former Transgender Responds to LGBTQ*.

Drawing from her academic research and her own eleven-year journey out of transgender desires and same-sex attractions, Dr. Seiler answers questions such as:

- *What does the Bible say about sexual orientation and gender identity?*
- *Are people born gay or trans?*
- *Why are teenagers adopting LGBTQ identities at alarming rates?*
- *What about "celibate gay Christians"?*
- *Does transformation mean all temptation disappears?*
- *How do we navigate conversations with LGBTQ-identified loved ones?*
- *Should a Christian attend a gay wedding?*
- *What about preferred pronouns?*

Whether you are a Christian leader, concerned parent, or conflicted adult, *Trans-Formation* will equip you with a theological, scientific, and restorative response to LGBTQ.

To order your copy of *Trans-Formation*, please visit: <https://lindaseiler.com/>



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 Silvis**  
Program Manager

**KathyGrace Duncan**  
Women & Transgender Ministry

**Roy Graves**  
Multimedia Coordinator

**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)