

# Freedom FOCUS

March—April 2007

NEWSLETTER

“...to turn them  
from darkness  
to light...”

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## Our Heavenly Father's Love Relationship With Us

In 1 John 4:16a, we read, “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us....” the Greek word for *known* is “ginosko,” meaning “to become aware of, to understand things as they really are.” In the context of relationships, it means “to know someone personally.”

Our love relationship with our Heavenly Father should not only be an *intellectual* knowing, but also an *experiential* knowing. This experiential knowledge of the Father's love will improve our ability to trust in God and enable us to love others from our new heart in Christ (1 John 4:7-21). Here are five important aspects of our Heavenly Father's love relationship with us.

### Romans 8:14-15

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

### Our Heavenly Father takes joy in our wonderful and unique existence (2 Chronicles 9:8; Psalm 16:11)

*Lie: I have to be someone different than who I am for God to be glad to be with me.*

- When a person understands and experiences the reality that their Father takes joy just because they exist, they will experience true joy in their lives.

### Our Heavenly Father loves us with an unconditional love (1 John 4:10; John 3:16).

*Lie: I have to do something or be perfect for God to love me.*

- We learn to understand and experience unconditional love by feeling loved when we fail. When a person realizes that the Father loves them unconditionally, even in the midst of their failures, they will experience a new level of trusting both Him and others.

### Our Heavenly Father meets our needs without asking (Philippians 4:19; Matthew 6:8).

*Lie: It is all up to me to take care of myself.*

- It is important for us to understand that it is the Father that brings us life and care that meets our needs. We may have had people in our lives that were not there when we needed them. However when people understand that God is there meeting every need, we learn how to give and receive from others.

### Our Heavenly Father helps us to understand the characteristics of our new heart in Christ (Ezekiel 36:26; Ephesians 4:24; Galatians 2:20).

*Lie: My true heart is evil and I am bad.*

- Few Christians understand that they were given a new heart when they were born again. Many people base their identity in Christ on how their flesh performs. As we understand our new identity in Christ and how to live out of our new heart in Christ, we can have life-giving relationships with others.

### Our Heavenly Father provides for us a place of safety and companionship in our time of upset and difficulties (Psalm 9:9; Psalm 59:16)

*Lie: I have to suffer alone.*

- People can either lean too much on others or feel trapped in suffering alone. Few experientially know that their Heavenly Father is with them when they are suffering. The Father never intends for his children to suffer alone. When we learn to acknowledge that the Father is with us in our times of difficulty, we will learn how to handle emotional upset with Him. As a result, we will be able to be with others when they are upset.

Rev. Jeff Pokone

## Upcoming Events in 2007

### April 26 & May 31

Join us at noon for our monthly *Church-Connect Luncheons* designed to provide practical tips for effective discipleship counseling.

### April 29

Jeff Pokone will be speaking on *Biblical Family Dynamics* at Bethel Baptist Temple (8501 Plainfield Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45236), during the 11:00 a.m. Service. Make plans to attend!

### November 2

Mark your calendars now for our 2007 Fall Praise Banquet at 6:00 p.m., at the Indianapolis Training Center. Come and enjoy great food, outstanding testimonies of God's work in the lives of people, and a presentation from Counselor and Center Director, Rev. Jeff Pokone.

## Just a Reminder...

ICBC of Indiana is now the **Indiana Biblical Counseling Center**. Because of this name change, we have had to update our email address and web address. Please note these changes below:

office@indianabcc.com

www.indianabcc.com

# How God Is Healing a Supporting Sister

When my sister began counseling, it did not occur to me that I would be in counseling too. I was happy to be there as a support person for her, but the focus was not on me. However, what affects one sister affects the other, though in differing ways, even when the one is not involved personally in the “traumatic” event.

Our sessions have deeply impacted me as well as my sister. Of course, we are familiar with the concept of wearing masks, or many different hats. We behave in the way suitable for the moment. But the masks interfere with our sense of well-being and our communication with others. Transparency is a most helpful thing in supporting a hurting person. Since I did not know my sister was hurting, I was unable to help her. Pride, success/failure issues, and shame are just a few of the reasons that may have influenced this “mask of well-being.” When I discovered the depth of her pain, I was shocked and numb for some time.

Eventually I had to write to express and clarify my feelings as they rose unbidden in a confused, distracted mass that was constantly on my mind. I had to take time to deal effectively with those feelings. I began to recognize anger toward those who had hurt her, anger at her for not letting me “in” to be a comfort to her, anger at myself for not being there to support her in a time of desperate need, and anger at myself for all the things I did that I thought were helpful but may have been destructive. I was not who I thought I was in our relationship. I saw some familiar response patterns that had sent my sister spiraling downward and effectively robbing her of all feelings of self-worth, plunging her into ten years of mere existence. I wrote for me and I wrote for her.

As I reviewed her life on paper from my new perspective, new knowledge, and life experience over the past twenty years, I was able to make some sense of it all. I looked back with new eyes to reinterpret all the data and form updated opinions on her life. It was a daring and dangerous thing to do, to comment on her life as I did. Yet I felt compelled to share those pages with her, not knowing how she would respond to my own raw emotion on how I viewed her life. She received it with love and it opened another door in our relationship when true compassion and empathy was revealed.

We often wonder how we can show our love for others. There are the usual ways—words, hugs, gifts. But how can we make another person *feel* the love we offer! This counseling experience has allowed me to demonstrate my love for my sister in a new way by walking with her through the painful past, facing the darkness of despair, and taking another look at the situations with fresh eyes and a second pair of “objective” eyes. She is no longer alone in or suppressing the memories she has shared with me and aired in the light of day. These memories are no longer draining her energy.

I encourage you to prayerfully consider how God is leading you to participate in this important healing ministry of counseling. I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of *His* healing in my sister’s life.

*Testimony from a Grateful Sister*

Reflecting on our counseling experience with Rev. Jeff Pokone, I would like to share some key realizations that God opened my eyes to, some aspects I appreciated about Rev. Pokone’s counseling approach, and the resulting benefits we have experienced.

## Key Realizations

- Once chosen by God, God will never let you go.
- Verbal abuse and negative self-talk can destroy the quality of one’s life.
- Our childhood theology can shape us and trap us in feelings of failure.
- Our parents’ theology can keep them in feelings of failure.
- Correct theology is very freeing.
- The process of healing can also be a time of great spiritual warfare, as the enemy attacks with weapons of discouragement and physical sickness.
- God works all things for our good—even the “bad” things that happen to us (Romans 8:28).

## Why I Appreciated Rev. Pokone’s Counseling Approach

- The nonjudgmental attitude/atmosphere
- The abundance of Scripture applied
- The variety of translations that speak to the heart of the matter
- His willingness to patiently listen
- His sensitive and probing questions which demonstrated his understanding
- His willingness to let *me* talk and share insights
- His thoughtful silence before jumping to an answer.
- His transparency expressed in his use of his own testimonies of how God has dealt with him through real life experiences
- His gracious spirit toward us versus a condescending spirit
- His humble dependence on God for wisdom by opening each session in prayer
- His attention to our needs rather than the time clock
- The helpful handouts and reading assignments

## The Resulting Benefits of Our Counseling Experience

- I have a closer relationship with my sister—restoration that might never have occurred.
- We are both able to verbalize feelings that arose from the distant past.
- We have corrected personal and theological misconceptions.
- It provided an open door for my sister and me to pray together/cry together.
- We have discovered new energy and joy in life.
- We have found strength to face present/future difficulties with an accurate and eternal perspective.