

Words from the Woodwards

March, 2022

“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed’" (John 8:31,32,36).

Dear ministry partner,

I'm so thankful for God's blessing on recent ministry events--the 40 who attended the seminar in Ohio (Feb. 26th) and the 35 in Knoxville (March 5th). I had the opportunity to preach at the host church on Feb. 27th. (The video of the message is at painesvillebaptistchurch.org .) The Workshop last week was very fruitful!

My next seminar is April 2nd in Rode Island; I'm to present our *Finding Peace Seminar* there with GFI alumni, Rob and Nancy Semco.

Thank you so much for your prayers and financial support. May God's liberating truth encourage you today.

Yours in Christ,

John

P.S. A local counselee shared her testimony in Knoxville and at the Workshop. She sent me a copy of her Facebook post that I will include here. To God be the glory!

I know I don't post much on here, but some things are just too good not to share. Things that, if you aren't so chubby and out of shape, you'd sprint up the nearest mountain and shout out for the whole world to hear!

God isn't a genie in a lamp. When you accept Jesus into your heart, He doesn't 'poof' away your problems and pain. In fact, you find that you've just been sent to the frontline of the battle for your mind. And while the war is already won, the battles can still be bloody. The new creation in you strives to break free from your old nature [flesh], while your old nature tries to hold you back with chains to your past. And if you try to fight yourself, all in your own strength, it inevitably leaves you in the wake as collateral damage – weary, frustrated, despondent.

I started going to spiritual counseling eight months ago. Even though I was saved, I was still experiencing manifestations of my bondage. Panic attacks, though certainly less frequent, still wracked my body. Suicidal thoughts would still creep in. And the ever-present nightmares

I've had for as long as I can remember were leaving me perpetually exhausted. I could barely complete my work shifts, let alone have energy for other activities I enjoy. What I needed more than *a sage on a stage* was a *guide on the side* to help me navigate the murky waters of my newfound faith [saved in 2019]. And that's exactly what God blessed me with through Grace Fellowship International.

The way my counselor has walked me through the Gospel and helped me reckon on the truth of God's Word has revolutionized how I view my identity in Christ. His kindness, gentleness, and the safe atmosphere he creates allows me to be vulnerable and open up about things in my past like I never have before. We've been able to delve down to the very root causes of my suffering instead of focusing on treating symptoms like in traditional psychotherapy and psychiatry. And you know what? In doing that, the symptoms resolve on their own.

A few weeks ago, my counselor supported me in undertaking *The Seven Steps to Freedom in Christ*. That journey was utterly gut-wrenching at times, but it delivered exactly what it touted: freedom. Freedom from pain, anger, and bitterness I didn't realize I was still suppressing. Freedom from deception and lies that were preventing me from claiming the victory Jesus already bought with his blood on the cross. Freedom from my past. Freedom to live my present.

We finished the steps on February 18th with a celebratory cup of hot cocoa. Since then, my nightmares have cleared up and I've started having good dreams. That said, my sleep is more restorative than it's ever been, and my energy levels have skyrocketed. I'm not just surviving anymore, I'm thriving!

Hallelujah! Glory to God! So grateful my Abba, the Great Physician, still works miracles! Here's the kicker: I had an appointment with my psychiatrist four days before we embarked on this spiritual endeavor during which he prescribed me a new medication to try to alleviate my nightmares after I told him my sleep was still terrible and I was tired of being so tired all the time. I didn't start taking the medication because I knew my counselor and I were about to take these steps of faith and I was excited to see what God could do first. (Okay, and I'm just stubborn and on enough meds already, haha.) Regardless, the need for that medication is gone .

If you're struggling and need some help, hope, and healing beyond what the world can provide, let me tell you about my Jesus.

- L.B.

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