

# freedom



A Newsletter Update from Freedom In Christ Ministries - USA

## Practicums: A God-directed Trifecta of Ministry

Times change and hopefully we do, too. When we first opened up CFM University to the general public in the fall of 2010, we had little idea how strategic the four-day Practicums would become to FICM. We knew we needed to see prospective certified volunteers face-to-face, since all their online course work was done from the comforts of home. You can't get to know...and therefore you can't be sure you can trust...people unless you hang out with them. So we designed an intensive 76 hours to facilitate training in a relational environment. That Practicum purpose is still valid in 2018.

But something remarkable has happened beyond what we originally planned. Practicums have evolved in the past eight years into eagerly-anticipated, fun, family reunions with a strong ingredient of training, undergirded in prayer. We are seeing not only new students but seasoned FICM veterans flocking to these events from all over the country. Practicums are now vehicles for equipping saints for expansion into new churches and communities; avenues for care and training for all our people; and growth environments supported by and interwoven with a powerful foundation of prayer. Prayer, care & training, and expansion. A beautiful, God-directed trifecta of ministry.

Recently (April 16-19) the Knoxville office hosted its annual spring Practicum. We had 20 students from Texas, Oklahoma, Alabama, Virginia, Arkansas, Indiana, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Puerto Rico. Six of the students were pastors, which was very encouraging! These students have a vision and yearning to see the freedom message and ministry grow and flourish back home. Ministering to the students were 35-40 pray-ers, presenters, coaches, and administrative staff. The CFMU Practicum has become the FICM-USA place to be!

Each of the Practicum students has a story of freedom to tell... and share with others. Here is one that came from a pastor and his wife:

*We had a road trip that was going to be 10 hours each way. So we took the entire first half and four hours of the return leg going through Victory Over the Darkness. It was amazing what God was teaching us. So we decided to use the final six hours to go through The Steps to Freedom in Christ. We started out doing it silently. Then I turned to my husband and asked, "Are you having all kinds of stuff come to your mind that you need to deal with like I am?" He nodded and so we decided to do the "Steps" aloud together (not recommended for spouses to do together, but God can work*

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even in less-than-ideal situations!) We didn't notice much difference until the following Sunday. Sundays were our best-worst days. We loved the fellowship with people and seeing their lives touched. But afterwards, the attacks would come like, "You shouldn't be a pastor", "You don't know what you are doing," etc. The attacks were relentless. Later that following Sunday, we asked each other, "Have you had any of those terrible, negative thoughts today?" Neither of us had. That was when we knew it worked! After 25 years, the negative noise and depression was gone. We had not been able to cry for all those years. Now we are able to weep with those who weep. God has completely set us free!

This couple has gone back to their church in Oklahoma to spread this good news to everyone in their church and beyond! Praise the Lord!

Please be in prayer for our next spring, 2018 Practicum in Escondido (near San Diego), CA June 11-14. Right now there are 28 students from California, Colorado, Oklahoma, New York and New Jersey planning on attending. With all the support staff coming in, this one may have even more people than Knoxville. Sounds like fun!



## KL2018

From May 22-26, 80 delegates from 25 nations gathered for the "every four years" Freedom in Christ Ministries International event. The theme this year is "Wider and Deeper" and reflects our heart's desire to expand this ministry worldwide while making sure our people are walking closely and rightly with Jesus, growing strong and mature in faith.

There were ministry reports from around the world as well as cogent topics that will help equip our global leaders to be even more effective, fruitful disciples. One exciting element of

KL2018 is that we heard from some Chinese brothers who are spearheading a project to get one million "flash drives" with Christian resources (including FICM teaching) into the hands of Chinese house church pastors. How thrilling is that!

Please pray that all who attended this gathering will be encouraged, refreshed and better equipped to take this life-changing message and ministry to every tribe, tongue, people and nation!





The Lord has clearly tasked us with taking better care of our students and graduates of CFM University. He is brilliantly using our Care & Training department under the leadership of Marianne Becker. The Cohort Strategy (under Christy Kampf's supervision) and the Mentoring Task Force (under Terry Pausch's care) are two elements that are now in operation. We asked Christy and Terry to give their perspectives:

## COHORT STRATEGY

The Cohort strategy consists of seasoned FICM volunteers selected to be Cohort Leaders. The Cohort Leader is responsible for connecting with a small group of new CFMU Coordinator Track students to form a Cohort. The leader helps the students throughout their online studies leading up to the Practicum. Cohort Leaders host one to two video conference meetings per month to see how the students are doing; check on their course progress; see if they have any questions; and pray with them. Healthy relationships also form between the students as they encourage each other and pray for each other. Many get to go through the Practicum together!

We believe this new strategy is an incredibly valuable and integral part of caring for our people as they continue to grow in their relationship with the Lord and their service to Him. This is at the very heart of Freedom in Christ Ministries.



## MENTORING STRATEGY

The Lord continues to grow this ministry with the addition of many servants with hearts that long to bring this life-changing message of freedom to others. With this surge in numbers of people across the nation who desire to be equipped as new Community Freedom Ministry Associates (CFMAs) the need for care and ongoing training became apparent. Our desire is to welcome them into the family of FICM and to partner together, that each might be engaged, empowered, and effective in ministry.

Upon completion of the Practicum and approval by their home church leadership and FICM, new CFMAs are partnered with several other newly graduating CFMAs. An experienced mentor is assigned to each group and leads them as they begin to develop their Community Freedom Ministry. This "continuing education" component for new CFMAs lasts for a minimum of one year and can go longer.

Each of these initiatives, despite being in its pilot stage, is creating excitement across the ministry. Anticipation of skills being honed, questions answered and likely life-long relationships cultivated gives great hope and a sense of adventure to the future of Freedom in Christ Ministries.



# Christian School Helps FICM with New Course

If you have been a Christian for a while, you have likely been part of a church small group or Bible study where someone has bravely talked about the headaches and heartaches of their lives. And you have probably seen prayer requests from folks in the church who are struggling to "make it" spiritually and become growing, fruitful disciples. Maybe you have wished you knew how to help them.

Wouldn't it be great if there were a ministry tool to help these dear people? Think about how it would transform our churches if there was a time-tested, biblically-balanced process of helping every person become a more mature, increasingly fruitful follower of Jesus!

The ministry tool has been around for nearly 30 years...*The Steps to Freedom in Christ*.

Now, top-notch training in how to utilize this powerful, transforming tool is on the way!

On April 14, the award-winning "Warrior Network" of the Christian Academy of Knoxville (CAK) partnered with FICM to film our latest CFM University course, *CFM 110: Basic Encourager Training*. In this four-hour training event, presenters Brian & Jewl Westphalen (FICM staff) skillfully explain the "how to's" of using the "Steps."

This course was filmed before a live audience by a team of CAK students in their school's studio, under the supervision of teacher, Anthony Burns. In CFM 110, Brian and Jewl share from the richness of their wisdom and experience of several decades of freedom ministry. You won't want to miss it!

Please pray for the important post-filming work of editing, writing, etc. that still needs to be done. We'd love to see this course available by the end of summer, 2018. Stay tuned! Here is your opportunity to be equipped to do real, life-transforming discipleship!



# Hail, O Mighty Man (or Woman) of Valor!

Of all the famous people in the Bible, I can probably relate to Gideon the most. The fact that he was used by God to be a leader of Israel was purely by the grace of God. He did not aspire to leadership and neither have I. In my flesh, I would prefer to stay uninvolved and unencumbered by the responsibilities of leadership. Have you ever noticed how our God does not particularly care about who we were according to the flesh or what we would prefer to do to stay comfortable? He delights to use the foolish things of the world to shame the wise (1 Corinthians 1:20-29) and He is relentless in stretching and growing us in our faith.

We are introduced to Gideon as he was threshing grain in a winepress, trying just to eke out enough food for his family to survive during a very dark time in Israel's history. The Midianites had been oppressing Israel for seven years and it wasn't fun. Just about every effort by the people of God to make ends meet was met by a swarm of locusts called Midianites who took everything Israel had. Kind of like the bully that snatches a smaller kid's lunch in school each day with no one stepping in to help. The Midianites were bullies, allowed by God to discipline His disobedient people (see Judges 6:1-11).

Gideon was minding his own business one day when God showed up. The angel of the LORD called out to him saying, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor" (v. 12). Gideon wasn't buying "the LORD is with you" stuff, and he told God so (v.13). I imagine him muttering under his breath, "Yeah right." God then told Gideon to go in the strength he had and deliver Israel. Gideon immediately thought of reasons why this plan was not going to work (especially suggesting God take note of how unimportant his clan and family was in the scheme of things (v.15)). Clearly, in Gideon's mind, God had the wrong man.

Ever struggle with that? Have you ever been called by God to do things you were convinced you were not qualified to take on? How did you respond? How does knowing who you are in Christ change your perspective? God obviously saw something in Gideon that Gideon himself didn't see.

Here's the first point that we can glean from this passage: **God doesn't just see us as we are; He sees us according to how He plans to make and mold us.**

God was not put off by Gideon's complaints. He basically said, "I've sent you and I'll be with you; that's all you need to do what I've called you to do" (v.12,14,16). And that task was to "save Israel from the hand of Midian" (v.14).

Is it enough for you to know God has called and sent you to do ministry and that He will be with you no matter what? Will you come out of whatever "wine press" you are currently hiding in and receive God's calling, commissioning and constant presence?

The first thing Gideon was told to do was tear down his father's altar to Baal (vv.25, 26). Which brings us to our second point: **Before God will use you powerfully, you must thoroughly remove the false gods from your life.** It reminds me of what God said to Joshua about Achan's sin of taking objects from Jericho that were under the ban: "Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things...Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies" (Joshua 7:10-12a).

This is kind of the Old Testament version of James 4:7: "Submit, therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." We cannot accomplish what God has called us to do and we cannot stand before our enemies until we get rid of the things He hates from our lives.

Despite Gideon's obedience, things got worse before they got better. That's not unusual! The enemies of God came against Israel so that the people of God were overwhelmed. We would have been, too!

Gideon then presented God with his two-time fleece test and God came through for him. Which brings us to point three: **God is patient with His people and never bypasses our personal growth in the pursuit of His larger purposes.** The Lord wanted to deliver Israel from oppression, but He also wanted to mold Gideon into a man of God. Both endeavors were important to God. As you read the story, you see how patiently the Lord helped Gideon through his doubts and fears. He does so with us as well. And so Gideon grew in his faith; and we do, too.

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God even let Gideon hear a prophetic dream from the mouth of one of the enemy soldiers to encourage this mighty man of valor (Judges 7:13,14)! Gideon's response? He worshiped. That was the sign Gideon was ready.

Then Gideon arose to fight Midian. There comes a time for us as well when we have to step into the calling of God on our lives. The Lord doesn't want to hear any more excuses; He wants to see our obedient action, even if we are still scared. Amen?

The weapons that God initially used to win this battle were clay pots, trumpets, lanterns and loud shouts. Not exactly typical army weaponry, I would say. And that is our last point: **Don't try and figure out in advance how God is going to win your battles; just go in faith knowing He will.**

On May 5, I passed the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my being appointed president of FICM-USA. I was scared spitless in those early days. But God has built me and, by His grace, enabled me to step into this leadership position despite my fears. I could not have done this without Him and the wonderful people around me (in Gideon's case, he gets tons of help in defeating Midian from the nation of Israel; you can read all about it in Judges 7). Who I was without Christ was and is irrelevant. God has been with me. God will stay with me. Just as God will be with you.

Hail, O mighty man (or woman) of valor! The Lord is with you. Ultimately, that's all that matters.



*Rich Miller*

Rich Miller  
President, FICM-USA



## OPEN HEART, OPEN HANDS!

Most readers of this Newsletter are aware that FICM-USA is engaged in strategic planning and implementation to strengthen and move the U.S. Ministry forward in significant ways. "First fruits" of these efforts have been reported in these pages: The new cohort and mentoring strategies, the new *Basic Encourager* course that many of you asked for. But, there is much more to do and few financial resources with which to do it. We continually praise God for meeting THROUGH YOU the basic operating needs of the Ministry, but, if we are to move forward and upward, we need additional financial resources.

A few of the high priorities are major renovation of our website (\$10,000-\$12,000), resources for leaders of our Prayer, Care and Training, and Ministry expansion initiative to use for activities in the seven regions of the country (\$60,000/year), development of quality, digital learning resources for children (think "Veggie Tales" quality - \$50,000-\$60,000 or more), an *Advanced Encourager* course (\$7,500). And, these are just three high priorities on a much longer list.

Yesterday, as I was reading John 6 (Jesus feeds the five thousand), two principles jumped off the page. First, when Jesus saw the crowd coming, He tested Phillip with a question, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" (A paraphrase for FICM-USA right now could

be, "Where shall we get the money to do what needs to be done?") The scripture tells us that Jesus already had in mind what He was going to do. Phillip was quick to respond that they didn't have the money (by far) to feed this crowd. Then, Andrew brought forward the boy with five small loaves and two fishes—but certainly not enough food. But, as we know, Jesus multiplied the lunch the boy willingly gave (not a small thing for a boy) to feed the huge crowd with much left over.

The two principles that stood out to me were: 1) Jesus always knows what's coming and how He is going to use it, and 2) if a giver has a heart open to God's prompting and an "open hand", it enables God to use the gift in wondrous ways. The two principles apply to me (and you). God already knows what he wants to accomplish with my gifts, and if I have a heart open to His prompting and an "open hand", He can work. If I don't; He can't (at least through me).

In addition to your General Fund (operations) giving, would you please prayerfully consider "giving your lunch" to one of the projects mentioned above? All gifts of all amounts are deeply appreciated.

Thank you! Thank you!



Russ French, Chair  
Financial Development Task Force



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