

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulders.

And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” **ISAIAH 9:6 (NKJV)**

This Christmas, let the ageless and inspired words of Isaiah bring a welcome calm and perspective shift on your lives, your relationships and the challenges you face. You are not alone. Christmas, the celebration of God Almighty coming to earth as a human baby proves God’s deep, deep love for you and His continued desire to enter into and share every aspect of your life. And perhaps, the busier you find yourself and more challenges you face, the more you need this simple truth to penetrate your heart.

Many of you have received our annual Christmas letter before. For some of you, this will be new – a personal invitation into our lives, our hearts and desire to faithfully complete the task God has set before us – *to equip the body of Christ to offer an effective healing-discipleship experience to any and every person seeking the abundant life Jesus promised.* The tool God has entrusted to us is Freedom Session. And our belief that Jesus offers freedom and healing to all who seek Him is as firm as ever.

Our prayer is that after reading our letter, you will be encouraged to continue your own healing-discipleship journey, and/or partner with us in sharing our message with others.



Three words (along with gratitude) to summarize 2023 and our thoughts as we enter 2024:

EXPANSION CHANGE REFOCUS

But before we elaborate on that, we want to share a testimony from Katherine, a woman who graduated Freedom Session fifteen (15) years ago and the long-term impact Jesus has made in her family through our ministry. At the time, her family was young and her (Christian) marriage falling apart.

*“Dear Ken & Bonnie,
Five years ago, I went back to university and became a teacher. Since then, I’ve done a lot of reading and training about kids and trauma. Specifically, I’ve been reminded and been made thankful for Freedom Session in two specific areas.*

One – I learned that authenticity and attachment are often at odds. Our need to feel connected overrides our need for authenticity. Freedom Session gave me the gift of both. Being able to be fully authentic and find greater attachment and community changed the path of my life in all the best ways!

Two – I’ve learned a lot about how our bodies hold trauma and how our emotional and mental wounds impact our physical health. Based on the physical symptoms I had before my divorce, I’m struck with the reality that Freedom Session likely saved my physical health as much as my mental / emotional health. THANK YOU!

FS Canada Ken filming 5 TV episodes for 700 Club on mental / emotional health





Katherine (centre) and her family.

Your work has made an eternal and profound impact on my life...literally making my life better in every way. FS has also made a generational impact. My children have wounds and struggles, but they are all actively connected to and serving God. They are authentic and truthful while still knowing they are loved and valued. You have done good, good work and we are grateful!"

Katherine's story is complicated...as are all stories. We remember working with her husband and trying to salvage the marriage, although in the end, her husband chose a destructive path. The point is: God always has a Plan A for those who seek Him from whatever point they turn their lives over to His leadership. And we are grateful, through FS, to have played a role in this generational healing.

EXPANSION: We have now completed our first full year with the 2022 updated FS teaching and Mid-week Mentor Videos, one of our more "successful" endeavors of the last ten years. In 2019, God asked us to make it possible for any interested person in North America to take Freedom Session, and during Covid, He gave us the strategy: teaching videos with "live" emcee segments and video-embedded worship to enable anyone to host a quality FS experience in a small group environment. Every week of the year, even in the slow months, one or more FS small groups start somewhere in North America!

We are now working hard to fortify and expand the support strategy for these groups. Offering the teaching FREE of charge has always been a dream of ours and the financial partnership of people like you is what makes this possible. This new approach also enables us to start groups in England, Holland, Hungary, Mexico and Spain. Workbook distribution is a challenge, but we are working on it.



Another significant expansion is our FS Spanish release – Conociendo Libertad – into Mexico. In July we helped move Abner and Jessica Galvan from Vancouver Canada to Tijuana, Mexico where they serve as Conociendo Libertad International Directors. They also serve as part time discipleship pastors in a local church. Our intended strategy for Mexico was to establish a successful hub of local FS ministries in Mexico and expand from there. But in early November, God opened a door for us to teach / present FS at a Pastors' equipping conference (IMEC) in Mexico City. What struck me most is how hungry the pastors were for a healing discipleship ministry like FS. At first, I thought they were just being kind to me but as the conference continued, I realized they have no healing-discipleship programs of this depth in Mexico and their people are as deeply broken as those who attend our Canadian and USA churches.





During the same trip, we connected with Galo Vasquez, a seasoned pastor committed to equipping / training pastors through an organization called VELA (Vision for Evangelism of Latin America). We are discussing the possibility of taking 30 pastoral couples through Freedom Session through his ministry. It is important that we see God leading the way as

The protected son later became a pastor while the wounded son developed cognitive challenges and turned to drugs for which he eventually spent time in prison. During prison visitation, her son begged her mom not to cry. The inmates routinely beat inmates whose mothers cried during visitation. So, she vowed internally to suppress her tears and Satan used this "inner vow" to bind her emotions since that day. Once we figured this out, we led her to renounce the vow and forgive those involved. We asked Jesus to heal her heart and restore her capacity to feel. I have seen miracles at the altar before. This was one of them. It was moving and agonizing to hear 20 years of suppressed pain emerge from her heart. She sobbed and wailed for what seemed like forever. We had to hold her up. Later, she experienced other emotions return - including happiness. (One cannot shut off only half one's emotions. The degree to which we shut off painful emotion, is the same degree to which we shut off our hearts to feel joy, love, peace, etc. We teach this in FS.) There are many more stories we could share.



it will be a significant time and financial investment. In faith, we have printed 1000 Spanish workbook sets in Mexico and are working on a more effective distribution strategy. Please intercede for us. The culture, laws and regulations are much different and more complicated (to us) than in Canada or the USA. It's a learning curve for sure. One more story from our time in Mexico, one that broke my heart and encouraged me at the same time.

One of the pastors asked us to pray over a woman who had not cried for over 20 years - no emotion whatsoever. Years ago, her two sons were attacked and robbed. The older shielded his younger brother and ended up with knife wounds to the back and one to the head.

If God wants to significantly use Freedom Session in Mexico, we are willing. The needs are great. The work is hard and the risks are high so we are asking Him to be very clear in His leading. We are also asking Him to provide the financial support so our work in Mexico does not hinder our responsibilities in Canada or the USA.



Preaching in Mexico with Aline,
FS team member interpreting



CHANGE: Change is always happening, but 2023 brought significant changes with long-term implications for Bonnie and me and every area of our ministry. In change, we experience losses, wins and new opportunities.



LOSSES: In Canada, Caroline Georgieff, resigned her FS Canadian Director role for medical reasons. Caroline was responsible for our church support / mentoring and greatly helped us expand in Canada over the last few years. We are grateful that Caroline continues to serve a few hours/week as

a volunteer. In the USA, a similar transition for different reasons. During Covid, our FS USA National Directors, Chris & Crystal Pettit, began a small home worship gathering that continued to grow and has evolved into a genuine church plant. Chris & Crystal's first priority must be to pastor this young church family and as of December 31, they are resigning their FS USA Director role. This is a loss for us but a win for the kingdom. Chris will remain on the FS USA Board of Directors.



WINS: The big win is the opportunity / necessity before us to evaluate our current structure, strategies and systems. The best analogy I can think of is my grandparents who built a house for two and then added a

room for each new baby that entered the family. In ministry, this works for a while but at some point, the mechanical systems of our "little house" need an overhaul. This is where we are today. We have become a growing, international ministry with an outgrown infrastructure. We need a major renovation with efficient structures and systems that can sustain our current and future growth. We also need a succession plan. This will be my/our personal focus for 2024.



NEW OPPORTUNITIES: Bonnie and I have assumed the FS National Director roles for both Canada and the USA and travel together as much as possible. We are in process of obtaining an L1 visa so we can temporarily work in the USA. We intend to spend close to 1/2 the year in the US, hiring and training new staff as well as relocate FS USA operations from Washington to Tennessee. More importantly, we intend to create a more intentional USA growth plan by connecting personally with church leaders already using Freedom Session. Then we'd like to launch and personally direct a Freedom Session ministry in a strategically selected church in TN. That is how our ministry began in Canada and that is how we grew. It is also important that we expand our donor base in the USA as over 90% of our financial support currently comes from Canada.



NEW FACES: We are excited to introduce Karol Pape as our new FS Administrator as well as the "front lines" correspondent with those who reach out to us. Karol has facilitated and directed FS numerous times in her local church and has served as our FS Small Groups Consultant as a volunteer. Karol will be playing a key role in helping us inte-

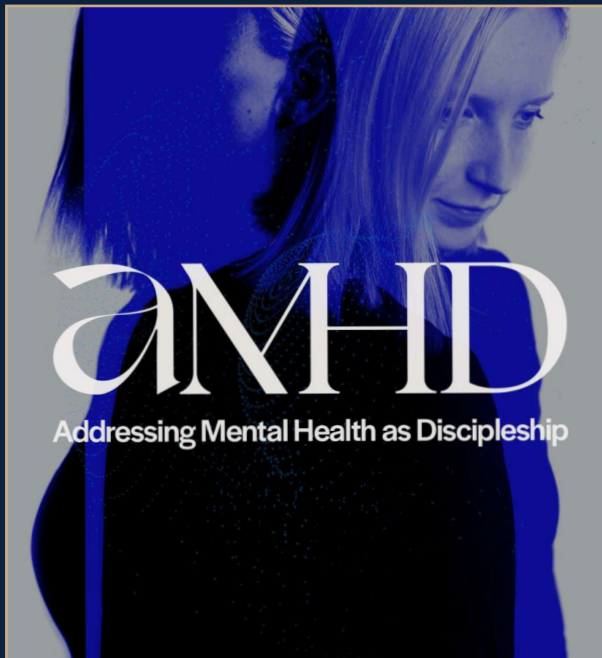
grate Canadian and American strategies. She also ensures churches and FS small group hosts who need support are taken care of. We are very grateful for her servant heart and keen eye for detail.

In early 2024, we will introduce another new face so watch for that news release on social media.





REFOCUS: We feel we have been faithful to God's assignment of making FS accessible to all, even where no FS expression currently exists. This means we can now return our attention to equipping the local church to offer effective emotional and relational healing experiences in the context of discipleship. We are excited about this as it IS the mission for which FS International was birthed.



Mental and emotional health are hot topics these days; everybody is talking about it. But merely talking about it is not the answer. Neither is referring everyone to the experts at \$150 / hour. Now more than ever, the church has a unique opportunity and responsibility to offer practical, effective strategies to pro-actively address mental/emotional health and Freedom Session is one of the best ways to do this. This conviction and the testimonies we continue to hear from FS grads, motivates us to continue pouring our hearts into equipping the church for life-transforming ministry.

Longer term, there are writing projects we feel God has asked us to complete that we never seem to get around to. Part of our 2024 restructuring will be aimed at freeing Bonnie and I to tackle some of these assignments in 2025.

Our final refocus is to return to our bi-monthly partnership updates via newsletter or video. I apologize for not doing so well at this in 2023. This was one of the losses we experienced in our staffing transitions. In 2024, we intend to do better so you can better watch your partnership investment at work.



An Invitation to partner with us financially.

This isn't about Freedom Session – it never was. It's about ministering emotional and relational healing to those who fill our churches and those we hope to reach. Sexual abuse, sexual addiction, depression, divorce, fear, guilt and shame, low self-esteem and a gnawing disconnect with our Heavenly Father are the common experiences of most people who attend our churches. They think they are the only ones, but they aren't. Freedom Session helps churches / individuals create authentic environments in which Jesus can heal and heal deeply. If you've taken FS, you know how important this is.

Now we are asking God's people to support us in convincing churches and then supporting them to offer Freedom Session as a normative component in their discipleship process. Investing in Freedom Session provides an excellent spiritual return as we keep our overhead low and most of our donations are invested in expansion and supporting those who serve on the front lines.

If you are currently supporting us, **THANK YOU!** We need you now more than ever. If you are new to the FS family and would like to see more people experience what you've experienced, there are three ways you can support us financially. It's online and it's easy. **[Freedomsession.com/give](https://freedomsession.com/give)** (you can also donate via cheque. Tax receipts are issued in January).

- **Monthly Expansion Investments & Monthly Salary Support:** Expansion funds provide foundational resources for promotion, mentoring and supporting local FS expressions, establishing new ministries, investments in new locations. You can also designate to a FS staff member. Staff who serve more than quarter time are asked to raise 1/2 of their salary.
- **Year-end and one-time gifts:** These are mostly used for expansion projects and make up a good portion of our annual budget.
- **Kingdom Investors:** In addition to the many who support us, we are looking for 3-5 persons to provide significant investments in 2024, particularly our work in expand FS in the US, in Mexico and our new commitment to create a succession plan so that the ministry is less dependent on Bonnie and me. (We know businessmen/women like numbers, and these are available if you contact us personally at fsim@freedomsession.com)



Celebrating a local church FS graduation.
60+ grads their first year.

We do our best to operate frugally with modest salaries and minimal overhead. We sense God asking us to take some large faith steps forward to expand in ways far beyond what we initially imagined. We know you believe in Freedom Session. **We humbly invite you to partner with us or continue your partnership in this important ministry.**

To close, I want to share a definition of success that I learned 34 years ago, while preparing for ministry. It comes from a couple upon their retirement after years of difficult missionary work. I reflect upon it often and it summarizes my heart as I conclude this letter.

"Some have asked us if we feel we have been 'successful.' That is a slippery word. We have been faithful. We have forgiven the unforgivable, loved the unlovely, offered hope where others saw only brokenness. To the extent that we have been faithful, we have been successful."

May the Lord Jesus encourage you with those words. May He grant you / your family a meaningful celebration of His birth and anticipation for how He will guide you in 2024.

Merry Christmas,
Ken & Bonnie



Meeting a FS grad from a recovery home.