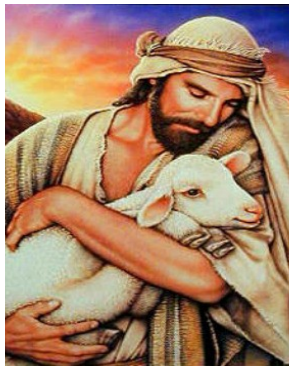




April 2024

Over the years, Jeanine and I have met with couples and individuals, struggling in their marriages. Broken and wounded from childhood abuse, they have erected thick walls of self-protection due to neglect and abandonment, held captive in bondage. Each one crying out for someone to accept, understand and care for them. And there is only one who truly can – Jesus. So, we lead them, like Andrew did to Phillip, to the only one who looks beyond our words and behavior to the pain in our hearts. Exodus 34:6 describes to whom we bring hurting people. Not a condemning God, full of wrath, anger and judgement who points His finger at our sins and failures. Not a God who is full of expectations that we change our behavior or else! A lady who we cared for recently has always had a distorted view of God due to a legalistic church and family. She felt from God she can never measure up, she can't do anything right, so we led her to connect with Jesus in prayer. He drew her a word picture of Him carrying her like a little lamb he rescued and it changed her perspective of God, now as a loving father. This is the God whom we serve.



**Exodus 34:6 says** “Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with loyal-love and faithfulness.” We want to focus on the word compassion. In fact, 80% of the Bible, describes God as compassionate. Compassion is a deeply emotional word and it conveys the strong bond between a parent and their child, both

as a mother and a father, but his compassion is ultimately expressed in the person of Jesus.

Imagine how difficult it would be trying to describe what God is like. But the people who wrote the Bible consistently described God's character in this way: "Compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with loyal love and faithfulness." The first word used in this description of God is "compassionate," or in Hebrew, "rakhum." This word is also expressed as a noun, "rakhamim," or compassion. Both of these words are related to the Hebrew word for womb, or "rekhem." So compassion in the Hebrew Bible invites us to imagine a

mother's tender feelings for her vulnerable infant. So, "rakhum" is a word that conveys intense emotion. Sometimes translated as "deeply moved," like in the story of King Solomon who meets two women who've just given birth. One of their babies dies, but both women claim that the living baby is theirs. As a test, Solomon says cut the baby in two and give each mother a half, and the baby's real mother is deeply moved. Not wanting the baby to die, she gives the other woman her baby. It's her compassion reveals that she's the true mother. But "rakhum" isn't just an emotional word, it also involves action. And most often, the word is used to describe God's actions motivated by his emotions. When the Israelites are suffering and oppressed in Egypt, God hears their cries and is compelled by his compassion, his “rakhamim”, to rescue them.

**Mission**

Freedom Ministries of the Quad Cities exists to help couples and individuals experience freedom in Christ through identifying and resolving spiritual and emotional conflicts thus strengthening, empowering and helping fulfill their relationship with Jesus Christ and others.

**“THE LORD, THE LORD, THE  
COMPASSIONATE AND GRACIOUS GOD,  
SLOW TO ANGER, ABOUNDING IN LOVE  
AND FAITHFULNESS,”** Exodus 34:6

In the wilderness, the Israelites are hungry and thirsty and God is “rakhum” or compassionate, caring for them as his own child. He provides everything they need, food, water, and clothing, as he personally guides them. So, when Yahweh reveals his character to the Israelites in the wilderness, he begins by saying he’s compassionate. But despite Yahweh’s continual “rakhamim”, the Israelites turn away from him time and again. They reject Yahweh’s compassion and give their allegiance to other gods. Their rebellion results in exile, and they’re scattered among the nations. It’s in this dark moment in Israel’s story that we come to the book of Isaiah, where Yahweh compares himself to a mother full of “rakhamim” toward her baby. He says, "Can a mother forget her nursing child, or have no compassion," or “rakhamim”, on the child of her womb? "Even if she forgets, I will not forget you!" God is full of motherly compassion, and he will rescue his people.

In Isaiah, God is going to do this by entering into the suffering of humanity. And this points forward to a time when Jesus comes on the scene. He is Yahweh’s deep compassion become human. In Greek, the word compassion is "oiktirmos." And as Jesus embraces the sick and cares for the outcast, He’s deeply moved by human suffering. Jesus compares himself to a mother hen using her wings to shield her chicks from danger as he gathers people into his embrace. And in the ultimate expression of “oiktirmos”, Jesus is moved by compassion to enter into humanity’s suffering, into death itself, to rescue and bring us near to God. And it’s this same life of compassion that Jesus calls us, his followers, to imitate, allowing ourselves to be moved by the pain of others, to embrace the hurting, and to participate in relieving suffering in the world. In this way, we, too, can embody the compassion of Yahweh, or in Jesus’s words, "Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate." Now you can see how fitting it is that "compassionate" is the first word God uses to describe himself. So, when we’re in pain or see others suffering, we can be certain that God is deeply moved to respond and that he’s there to meet us with his deep compassion.

(Adapted from: The Bible Project: How God begins to describe himself in the Bible)

## *Birdies for Charity*

If you have a desire to help individuals and couples find freedom in Christ, please prayerfully consider using the enclosed form to donate to Freedom Ministries of the Quad Cities. The John Deere Classic Charitable Corporation sponsors Birdies For Charity in association with the John Deere classic golf tournament, July 1—7, 2024. The goal of the program is to obtain donations for non-profit organizations. Only flat donations will be accepted, You may pledge a one-time flat donation or send your check along with your form. All donations are due by July 5, 2024.

You may still guess the number of birdies for a chance to win a two year lease on a 2024 Lexus! The deadline for contest entries is June 26, 2024.

Donating through the “Birdies For Charity” event is easy and 100% of your donation, plus additional BONUS BUCKS, go directly to us. Simply fill out the enclosed pledge form, noting the amount you wish to give, your name and address and mail the left half of the form to Freedom Ministries in the enclosed envelope or mail it directly to the Birdies office.

**Thank You!**



## *Praise and Prayer*

### **Praise**

- ◆ For a Heavenly Father who loves and chases after us to show us his holiness, righteousness and care for each of us.
- ◆ For relationships healed and marriages strengthened.

### **Prayer**

- ◆ For our schedule, that God will get the people in at the right time in His schedule.
- ◆ For wisdom and discernment as we lead people to Jesus to heal the pain in their hearts and relationships.

If you no longer want to receive the newsletter, please contact us. Our email address is: [freedomministries@att.net](mailto:freedomministries@att.net) or write to: Freedom Ministries, P.O. Box 953, Moline, IL 61266-0953