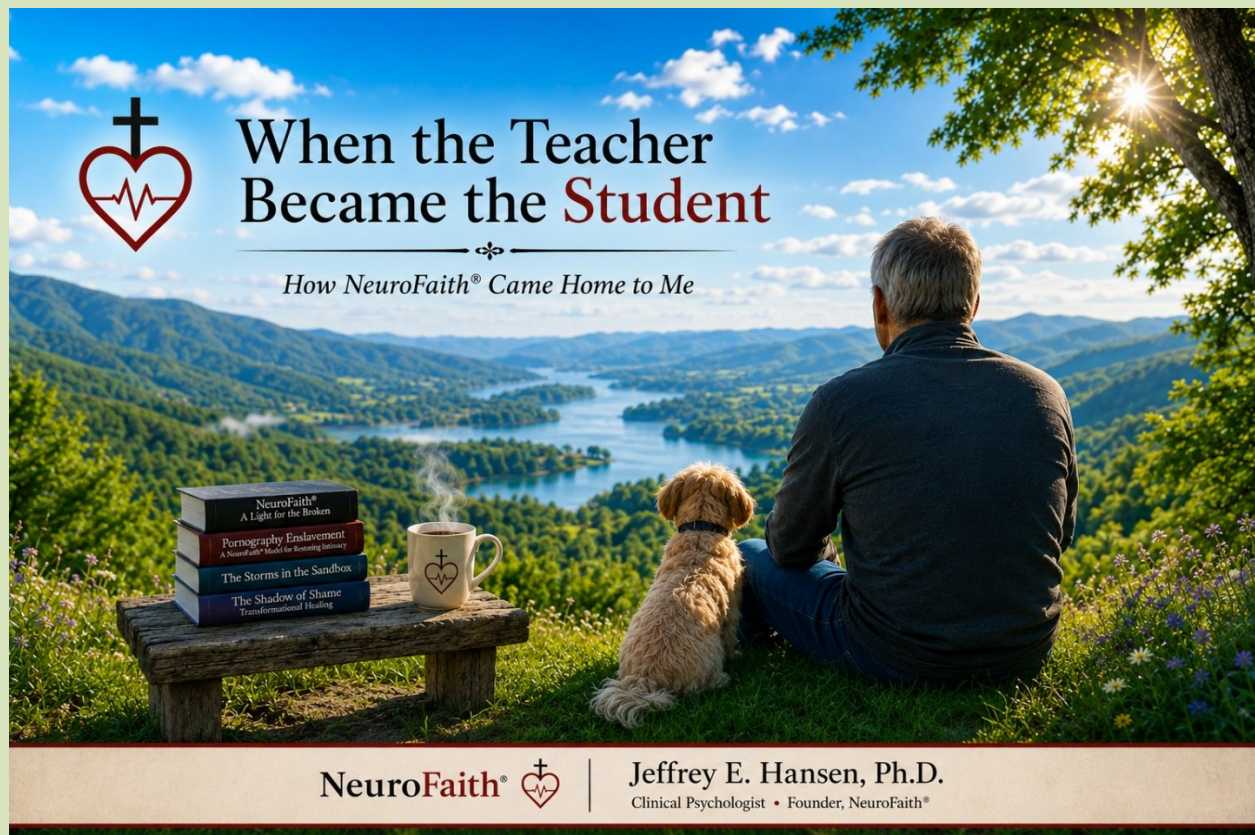




Opening Reflection to the Certification Class

As we come to the close of these eight weeks together, I have been reflecting on what this certification has meant. My hope from the very beginning has been that each of you would leave with a deeper understanding of trauma, the autonomic nervous system, HeartMath®, Internal Family Systems, and, above all, what it means to invite Christ into the healing process. I sincerely hope that has happened. I hope you have learned something useful, something practical, something that will help you sit more wisely and compassionately with the people God brings into your life.

But if I am honest, I have a confession to make. I think I may have learned more than anyone else in this room. There is an interesting irony about teaching. We assume that the person standing at the front of the room is the teacher and everyone else is there to learn. Yet if we are paying attention, God has a remarkable way of quietly turning the classroom around. Somewhere along the way, the teacher discovers that he has become the student.

That is exactly what happened to me.

Many of you have no idea how much God has used you during these past eight weeks. Through your questions, your observations, your encouragement, and your willingness to speak truth with gentleness and compassion, the Lord has been speaking into places in my own heart that I did not even realize still needed His healing. Several of you loved me enough to reflect things back that I simply could not see for myself. You did not come with criticism. You came with love.

Because I felt safe with you, my heart could hear it.

I have thought about that sentence a great deal. I do not believe we heal in isolation. God certainly speaks through His Word. He faithfully convicts us through His Holy Spirit. But He also chooses to speak through His people. Safe relationships become holy places where truth can finally reach the places our defenses have guarded for years.

So, as strange as this may sound, when we began this certification, I thought I was here to certify you. Now that we are coming to the end, I am beginning to think perhaps I should write one for myself. Not because I have mastered NeuroFaith®. Quite the opposite. Because somewhere during these eight weeks, NeuroFaith® stopped being something I was teaching and became something God was using to continue healing me.

What follows is really my thank-you letter to all of you.

The Lecture Began Talking Back

For decades I have taught trauma, resilience, neuroscience, and Christian integration to patients, psychology interns, physicians, graduate students, and now clinicians completing the NeuroFaith® certification program. Teaching has always been one of the great joys of my professional life because there is something deeply satisfying about watching another person suddenly understand not merely a concept, but something about his or her own story. Good teaching does not simply transfer information. At its best, it invites people to see themselves more truthfully and more compassionately.

That is what I thought I was doing as I taught Internal Family Systems. I described managers, firefighters, and exiles with the confidence that comes from many years of clinical work. I explained how managers try to keep life organized and under control, how firefighters rush in when pain becomes too intense, and how exiles often carry the deeper wounds of shame, fear, abandonment, rejection, and grief. I have loved IFS for years because it refuses to shame our defenses. It asks us to become curious about them. It asks not, 'What is wrong with you?' but, 'How did you learn to survive?'

Then, somewhere in the middle of teaching those very ideas, I began hearing my own words differently. They no longer sounded like concepts I was offering my students. They sounded like questions God was quietly asking me. I found myself wondering whether I was actually living what I was teaching. Was I looking at my own protectors with compassion? Was I curious about the wound beneath my reactions? Was I allowing Christ to bring healing to the deeper places, or was I simply explaining the model well while still being driven by parts of me that were frightened, frustrated, and tired?

The lecture began talking back.

As I reflected on my relationship with Tim and the events of the past several months, I recognized something I had not fully appreciated. Beneath the frustration, disappointment, and repeated mental rehearsing of conversations was an old exile carrying a painful belief: that I did not matter. That belief did not begin with Tim. It was far older than that. But the

relationship touched it. Whenever I felt dismissed or unheard, especially by someone whose respect mattered deeply to me, that old wound awakened with surprising force.

When that happened, my managers immediately went to work. They encouraged me to explain more, work harder, write another book, build another program, clarify one more point, send one more text, and somehow earn what Christ had already given me. Achievement is not wrong. Writing is not wrong. Building something meaningful is not wrong. But when achievement becomes an attempt to prove that I matter, it becomes a heavy burden, and God never intended His children to live that way.

When my managers could not quiet the pain, my firefighters arrived. Mine did not reach for alcohol or drugs. They showed up as irritability, intensity, argument, and the desperate need to be understood. I wanted to make the point clearly enough that the other person would finally see what I saw. Sometimes my observations were accurate. But even when the content was right, the spirit was not always right. I thought I was defending truth. Looking back, I can see that I was often defending an old wound.

That realization was humbling. It was also strangely freeing. IFS had taught me for years not to shame protectors. Now God was inviting me to extend that same compassion toward my own. My managers and firefighters were not my enemies. They had helped me survive much of life. But they were not created to lead my life. They could protect me, but they could not produce peace. They could keep me moving, but they could not heal the wound that kept insisting I did not matter.

Then the Students Began Teaching

At first, I assumed the lesson ended there. It did not. As the weeks unfolded, another surprise emerged. God was not speaking only through the material I was teaching. He was speaking through the people sitting in front of me. Several of you in this class, along with friends and family who love me deeply, gently reflected things back that I simply could not see for myself.

What struck me was not only what you said but how you said it. There was no condemnation. No attempt to win an argument. No sense that anyone was trying to put me in my place. You spoke with kindness, compassion, and genuine concern. You cared enough to tell me the truth, but you did so in a way that communicated love rather than judgment. That made all the difference.

The same words, spoken without relationship, can easily harden our defenses. The very same words, spoken within safety, can become instruments of grace. That is one of the quiet mysteries of healing. Our hearts do not open simply because information is accurate. Our hearts open when truth comes clothed in love. Because I knew I was safe with you, my heart could hear what my protectors might otherwise have rejected.

"Speaking the truth in love..." - Ephesians 4:15

I have become increasingly convinced that this is one of God's ordinary ways of bringing healing. He certainly speaks through Scripture. He faithfully convicts through the quiet work of the Holy Spirit. Yet He also chooses to speak through His people. We rarely heal in isolation. Safe relationships become sacred places where truth can finally find its way past our defenses and into the deeper places of the heart.

That is not merely a psychological observation. It is deeply Christian. From the beginning, God has formed His people in relationship. We are not disembodied minds collecting correct ideas. We are embodied souls who are shaped, wounded, and healed in connection. The Body of Christ is not a theological abstraction. It is often the very place where God brings His truth near enough, and gently enough, for our hearts to receive it.

When Truth Reached My Heart

One of the deepest discoveries for me was realizing that healing is never merely about understanding. As psychologists, we value insight, and rightly so. Insight gives language to our experience. It helps us recognize patterns, name our defenses, and understand how the past continues to echo in the present. But insight alone does not transform a person. At some point, truth has to move from the head to the heart.

For several weeks, I could explain exactly what was happening inside me. I knew my managers. I could identify my firefighters. I understood the exile they were trying to protect. Yet my body still carried tension. I still replayed conversations. My peace had quietly become irritability. I could describe the process, but I had not yet fully experienced the shift.

Then, through Scripture, prayer, loving relationships, and the gentle work of the Holy Spirit, something began to change. It was not dramatic in the theatrical sense. There was no sudden lightning bolt. It was deeper and quieter than that. The striving slowly loosened its grip. My breathing deepened. The tension in my body began to release. The endless need to explain myself faded. I did not simply think differently. I felt differently.

Only later did my mind catch up with what my heart was already experiencing.

That, I believe, is one of the most important things NeuroFaith® has to offer. Healing is not merely cognitive. It is not merely emotional. It is not merely physiological. It is not merely spiritual. It is the integration of the whole person under the loving lordship of Christ. When truth becomes embodied, our nervous system, our heart, our relationships, and our faith begin telling the same story.

The Eight C's and the Fruit of the Spirit

Richard Schwartz describes Self through what he calls the Eight C's: calmness, curiosity, compassion, confidence, courage, clarity, creativity, and connectedness. I have taught those qualities many times. But this time I began asking whether they were actually describing the way I had been living. Had I been calm? Not consistently. Had I remained curious? Not as much as I wanted to admit. Had compassion shaped my responses? Sometimes, but not always. Had my confidence remained rooted in Christ, or had it become too dependent

upon whether another person heard me? And perhaps most painfully, had my connectedness with people I loved been affected by my protectors? Yes, it had.

Then my thoughts turned naturally to Paul's description of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. I realized those qualities had also been obscured. I was not consistently acting out of love. My peace had given way to irritability. My patience had grown thin. My kindness and gentleness were sometimes displaced by intensity. My self-control was not what I wanted it to be when my firefighters took hold of the steering wheel.

The conviction I felt was not harsh. It was not condemnation. It was the loving conviction of a Father inviting His son back into alignment. God was not asking me to perform better so I could become more acceptable to Him. He was inviting me to surrender more deeply because I was already loved. That distinction matters. The managers try to earn love. The firefighters try to protect love. Christ gives love, and from that place, healing becomes possible.

Releasing My Brother

The clearest evidence that something genuine had changed was my heart toward Tim. History had not changed, but I had. The questions did not all suddenly disappear. The disappointments did not somehow become imaginary. But the emotional charge was gone. The resentment dissolved, and in its place came compassion.

I have always loved Tim. That was part of what made the pain so difficult. But now I could actually feel that love again. It was not merely an idea or a decision. It was something I experienced in my heart and even in my body. The affection was no longer competing with disappointment. The compassion was no longer buried under frustration. I found myself sincerely praying for him and wanting God's best for him, without needing to manage the outcome.

Our protectors had collided. Our wounds had intersected. His journey is his own, just as mine is mine. I do not need to understand every part of his story in order to release him to God. I do not need to be fully understood in order to have peace. Christ ministered to the deeper place beneath the conflict, and that peace was not theoretical. It was embodied. It was liberating.

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." - Romans 12:2

The Greatest Lesson

As I look back on this certification class, I sincerely hope my students learned something meaningful. I hope you understand trauma more deeply. I hope you appreciate the wisdom of the nervous system. I hope you have gained language for managers, firefighters, and exiles. I hope you have seen more clearly how HeartMath®, IFS, polyvagal understanding, and Christian faith can come together in a model of healing that honors the whole person.

When the Teacher Became the Student
-Jeffrey E. Hansen, Ph.D.

But I know with certainty who learned the most. It was the teacher. Looking back now, I smile at the irony. I thought I was teaching NeuroFaith®. All along, God was using NeuroFaith®, His Word, His Spirit, and the loving voices of His people to continue teaching me.



So perhaps one of these days I really should print myself a NeuroFaith® certificate. I probably will not hang it on the wall. But I think I would know what it meant. It would not mean that I had mastered the model. It would mean that, by God's grace, the model had begun mastering something in me. It would remind me that the instructor quietly received a certificate too, not for achievement, but for surrender.

Perhaps that is the deepest lesson I will carry from this season. Healing is not simply accumulating knowledge. It is allowing truth to become embodied until our minds, our hearts, our bodies, our relationships, and our faith begin telling the same story. When that happens, we do not merely understand peace. We begin to live it.