

Rising Christian Artist Leaves His Life 'Wide Open' for the Holy Spirit

Maybe you saw him on *Rising Star* or *The Voice*. Maybe you've heard his latest single, "Freedom Hymn," on your favorite Christian radio station.

Austin French's debut album, "Wide Open," hits the street this week, but there is more to the young worship leader than catchy tunes that show his heart.

The 24-year-old has two children, one biological and one adopted, with his wife, whom he served with at The Avenue Church.

The Avenue Church is in Delray, Florida, which is called the recovery capital of the world. French says his church was about 80 percent recovering addicts.

"The recovery community doesn't need fake hope," French tells Charisma News. "They need real hope. That comes from Jesus, and the people that find that become passionate about telling others. The church grew because the gospel is tangible and real. They found that Jesus breaks chains of addiction, and when your life depends on getting clean, you stick with it."

His work with his congregation is evident in his album.

"My music is a reflection of the community I was surrounded by. It's real and honest. They are songs of where confession meets the healing power of God," French says.

"I've never been addicted to drugs or alcohol, but I struggle with sin every day. I learned that just like trying to get sober from addiction the more you talk about it the easier it gets to love life apart from that addiction. I relate because

the more I talk about what I struggle with and bring it in the light, the enemy loses control over my life,” French says.

And as he wrote, he tuned his ear to what the Lord was saying.

“The Holy Spirit taught me so much through the writing process of this record,” French says. “He taught me that songs are like testimonies. They have the power to heal, the power to encourage and the power to challenge. Through this process, I wrote songs about my life and where I was with God and the moments that filled up the past four years. Looking back and listening to this record, I hear prayers answered, and I see moments my life changed because of the Holy Spirit working in my life.”

Another life change? Doubling the size of his family.

While he and his wife, Jocelyn, pursued adoption for her mother’s foster child, Coleman, the young couple discovered they were expecting.

“My wife getting pregnant was something we had hoped would happen for the benefit of our little boy we were adopting,” French says. “We want our little boy to grow up with a brother or sister really close in age to just enjoy the bond of a sibling. When we found out we were going to naturally have a baby we honestly just smiled because God knew the desires of our heart for children. And God is always sovereign.”

The constant state of flux inspired the title track, “Wide Open.”

“That is the state of life that we are in even currently. The beautiful thing we’ve discovered is that our capacity or at least we think we can handle is limiting. That when we lift our hands wide open our hearts wide open and live our lives wide open to God, He does immeasurably more than we could ever hope and dream. It has affected part of my music journey and will continue to do so forever.”