

## The Prayer Answer

As a Christian counselor I stress the value of prayer and scripture meditation to my clients. Sometimes clients have spiritual conflicts at the root of their depression and anxiety. They often do not realize that they were individually designed by God on purpose to fulfill his purposes. Clients often have little understanding of their identity in Christ and their permission to go boldly into the throne room. Some feel that they have done something too bad for God to listen them. Sometimes they feel that he does not care. Still others feel that they have little knowledge of prayer and that they must be fluent and scholarly to reach their Lord and Savior. Others just feel too weakened to pray.

Many of my clients deeply appreciate our prayer time in sessions. My clients will remind me if while trying to stay on schedule I accidentally neglect prayer time with them, Oops! Many of my former clients write and thank me for giving them the valuable resource of prayer, including the importance of putting on the full armor. Practicing this principle has had very dramatic results in my own physical well-being.

A friend of mine certainly understands God's healing power too. He healed her from a debilitating disorder known as Agoraphobia. This anxiety disorder kept her house bound in torment. She prayed and quoted healing scriptures to find her freedom. She has become a successful Ohio Valley business woman and pastor. I've heard similar testimonies from many others. No wonder the Bible exhorts us to pray and to meditate on His word so that it is stored in our hearts.

Speakers such as Francis MacNutt, Ph. D. at the Ashland Theological Seminary Formational Prayer Summer Institutes have also inspired me to continue praying with clients. MacNutt is an internationally known authority on the healing ministry and a founder of both the Association of Christian Therapists and Christian Healing Ministries. He has authored many books including *The Nearly Perfect Crime: How the Church Nearly Killed the Ministry of Healing*.

Dr. Koenig, an Associate Professor of Medicine and an Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center, reports that spiritual issues are now being considered important by medical schools. Today at least 70 of the approximately 125 medical schools in the United States have these courses, compared with only 3 schools in 1992. Koenig reports that there a huge interest in

scientifically studying the impact of religious activity on health and hundreds of studies are underway.

Drs. Chester Tolsen and Dr. Harold Koenig, authors of *The Healing Power of Prayer*, write that “prayer generates peace, power, and health—a triple preventative that guards against anxiety and disease.” “It releases the immune, hormonal, and cardiovascular systems to heal disease, illness, or injury.” Studies find that faith and prayer positively improve your well-being and the body's ability to heal itself. These authors stress that while medicine, surgery, and the other methods which doctors bring into the healing process are important, you can have a role in healing too through prayer.

I agree with Dr. Tolsen and Dr. Koenig about the importance of combining prayer with other medical modalities of treatment. Christians can be at a real disadvantage when it comes to mental health treatment. They believe that it is acceptable to seek medical treatment for all illnesses except those impacting their mental health. It is no big deal for them to take medication for diabetes or high blood pressure, but there is often no way that they will consider medication or counseling to help with their mental illnesses since they feel that this makes them less spiritual.

My clients are taught to consider all of the tools for healing available, unless something totally violates a Christian principle. Listening to God and looking for his peace in the direction of medical care is critical. Can you imagine Noah not using the ark he was instructed to build and just praying his way through the flood? The Bible is full of “strange things” being used to bring about God's purposes. He promoted the use of touch and oil in healing. Sometimes he used only a word to heal. At another time he used river water to heal leprosy, and his own “spit” mixed with dirt to heal blindness. The Great Physician used a variety of materials in healing. I encourage you also to use all of the tools God has provided for you as well ~ most importantly “Prayer”!