

The Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland) worked from the early 1950's to support and spread the healing ministry within churches and to encourage engagement with the medical profession. To further these aims a centre was run in Edinburgh where people could come for prayer, listening and healing. A loving and supportive prayer community formed, which came to an end in 2011. This document is part of a legacy of resources which we hope will support others in their engagement with the healing ministry. More archived material is available to the public at the National Library of Scotland.

Pray for ...

Extracts from writings of Ian Cowie (Chaplain 1976-88)

To help those who have problems in praying for other people, or who don't see why they should ask others to pray for them.

Why do we need to ask? Doesn't God know already? Jesus says He knows before we ask, so why ask?

I don't know what to say. Once I've said "Make him better" what more is there?

If God's Will is to make me better, He will. So what's the point of asking. Surely all I can do is to accept His will?

I can't get the hang of all the strange language people use in prayer, and praising God sounds like flattery. I don't like people who need to be told they are wonderful.

Many of these problems come because our ancestors drew on their experience in the courts of kings and nobles to illustrate prayer. That was natural for them, but it is confusing for us.

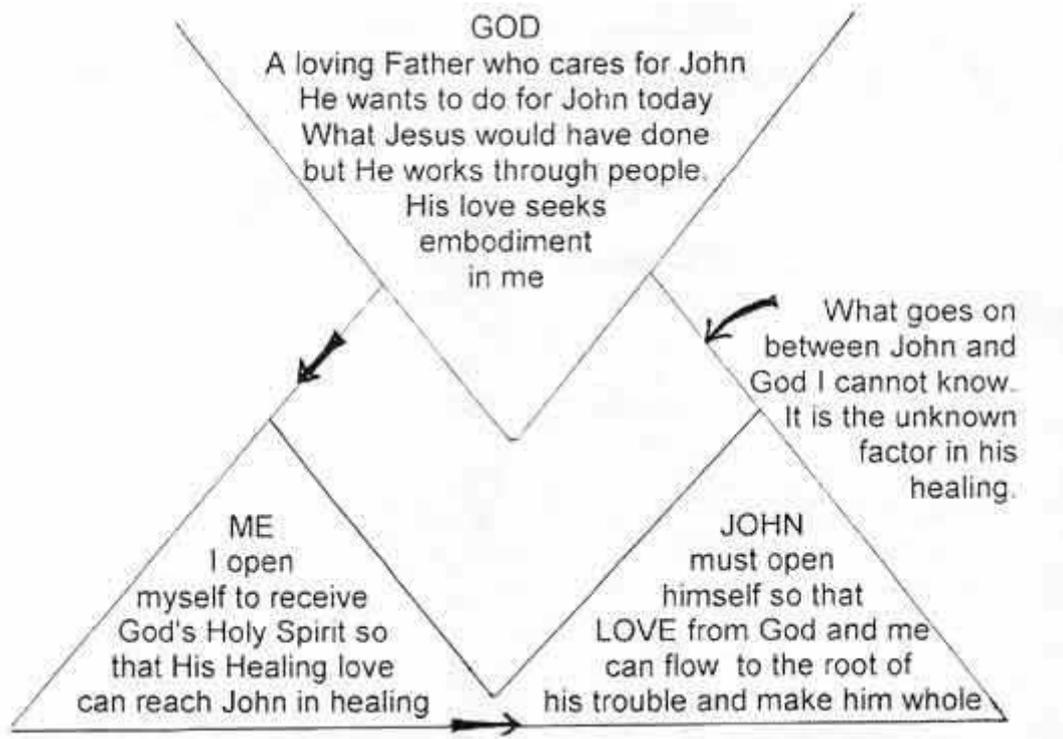
What is more, illustrations drawn from the court of a medieval tyrant do not tally with the picture Jesus gave us of prayer being like the relationship of a loving Father with his children.

So we do need to start again and re-think prayer. We need to find a picture of prayer that makes sense for us. Our ancestors approached authority by bowing and scraping, by flattery and getting influential people to put in a good word for them, and thank goodness we do not.

We approach our authorities by filling in forms in triplicate, and that does not help us to understand prayer! So let us look at a completely different approach. Let us imagine that I am praying for John. We can see it working something like this:

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The love of God flowing from me to John may require down-to-earth forms of expression: time spent with him, a letter, a lift to hospital, the laying on of hands or some sacramental act.

If John's trouble is serious, a "higher voltage" of God's love will be needed. In Jesus the full flow of Love was possible because of His purity. Perhaps only a trickle can get through me ... but at least that will give John a boost towards health.

What prayer is not

Me telling God how worried I am about John, begging, beseeching, bribing, threatening Him to do something about it.

What prayer is

Me coming, preferably as part of a "family" to Our Father, as the Lord's Prayer indicates.

We can only do that if we are really convinced that God is Love, the Love that was embodied in Jesus.

So the first part of prayer is to focus on God.

A story about Jesus or something He said will help us to tune in to God.

As we start thinking about what God is really like, naturally we will want to praise Him. There is something wrong with a person who sees something beautiful and does not want to say, "Isn't that beautiful". Praise is just enjoying God, not flattery.

Then, when we have focussed on OUR FATHER and have HALLOWED HIS NAME, we want to move on to seeing what He wants done here on earth, and what He wants us to do in particular. We clarify what our lives are about: "SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ... ". As we see the mess the world is in, and John's trouble is part of that mess, it leads us to set aside selfish ambitions and to dedicate our lives to working for God, and what we want more than anything else is to do what He wants us to do. "THY WILL BE DONE ..." "I'm here at your disposal, Lord. Use me to broadcast your love."

Into this loving relationship we can now bring 'John', just allowing God's love and power to flow through us to him. No words are necessary, but some words may help.

Having named John, keep your thoughts focussed on Jesus rather than on him. Try to visualise one of Jesus' healing works that is relevant to John's case, or to focus on some aspect of God that is needed ... for instance on "God is Light" if John is in darkness and depression. "See" yourself blessing John in the Name of Jesus.

You do not need to be saying anything or doing anything other than being open to God, perhaps for quite a long time. But if an idea starts forming in your mind, be open to what the Lord wants done. It is wise to cross-check with somebody else if it is something unusual.

Some questions

"How about the parable of the importunate widow, and the friend at midnight?" (Luke 18: 1-6 and Luke 11: 5-12)

The point of these stories is that prayer must not be a polite formality, but there must be a sense of urgency that leads to persistence. Luke 18: 1 makes this quite clear. It is not that God is like the sleepy friend or the unjust judge. Rather, our sense of urgency and caring must be ready to answer His. But it must be a FAITH-FULL urgency, not frantic worry

"Surely it is between God and me... why should I ask somebody else to pray?"

Because God's basic concern is to build us up in mutual love, and He has made us so that we are inter-dependent. We need to rely on one another at every level, including the spiritual. Part of His healing purpose falls into place when we pray for each other in love. No doubt Jairus had prayed to God for the healing of his daughter (Mark 5), but it was when he asked a flesh and blood man for healing that she was healed. If he had not swallowed his pride and asked this wandering joiner for healing, she would have died. Would that really have been God's will? So we are told "send for the elders of the church" (James 5: 14) because now it is the Church that is the Body of Christ. Unfortunately many churches are not ready to respond to such a request. But just as we send for help at the physical level (i.e. the doctor) so we should send for help at the spiritual level. God works through people, and I must not be too proud to ask.

Jesus said to go into the inner room and to pray in secret. So isn't it wrong to pray with each other?" (Matthew 6: 5-6)

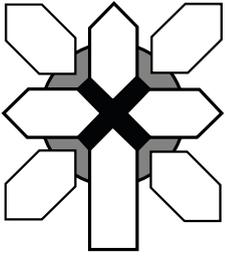
There is prayer that is very private, and without this inner, private prayer all the rest will drain of meaning. In a marriage, if husband and wife do not have times alone with each other, the marriage will disintegrate. So it is with our relationship with God. Developing this "inner room" of prayer is vital, though it can be difficult in a modern council flat with poor sound insulation. But Jesus also told us to love one another and stressed that He would be present when two or three gather in His Name. Our TOGETHERNESS (another word for "communion") is very much part of His concern, and if we are to do His Will then we must learn to share our joys and sorrows, to uphold each other in prayer and to talk to Him with each other. People find many different ways of praying together: some like silence together, some prefer a set of words that they agree on, some pray freely and verbally. BEING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD TOGETHER is the important thing, and that may take different forms with different people.

"I don't feel anything"

There are times when we are aware of the presence of God. It is hard to put it into words, but you just know that "the line is not dead". Some people do have visions, etc, but most of us are just dimly aware that there is Someone there. Every now and then we get the feeling that nothing is there, and then we realise the difference. At these times, which we all go through, it is important that your love and loyalty for your earthly friend keeps you faithful in prayer, even if things seem dead on the God-side. When we look back, these are very often the times of spiritual growth.

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Credo

used by the

Christian Fellowship of Healing (Scotland)

The Christian Fellowship of Healing:

is united in its commitment to the practice of prayer as the foundation of all our ministry.

Prayer is the means through which we believe the Holy Spirit can use us, here and now, to continue the practice of healing incarnated by Jesus.

is an ecumenical group of Christians who openly embraces a range of theological understanding and language to describe 'how' God heals.

We accept that health and healing can and does come through medicine, counselling, complementary therapies and other means. This does not negate the real contribution of prayer, rather it upholds the role of prayer to support individuals to listen to the Holy Spirit within them, guiding them, facilitating health and healing.

is committed to being alongside people who are suffering and experiencing pain, struggle and distress whatever their background.

We acknowledge that suffering faces us all and challenges our understanding and belief. Yet we can, with integrity, offer reassurance of God's loving presence accompanying every human being as seen in Christ who has shown us the capacity of God to be vulnerable even to the point of death. Living in and from this truth of the ever present loving God we respond as authentically as possible from our hearts, and we can offer an understanding of the range of meaning of healing which includes miracles.

is convinced of the importance of the varied aspects of healing displayed by Jesus in the miracle stories.

This includes an intense personal encounter with Jesus; affirmation of the individual as a person of value, physical healing, restoration of meaning and purpose, social inclusion; as well as challenge to those in power; confronting rigid thinking and lack of compassion. We believe all these components are aspects of the transforming love of God and reflect the wholeness Jesus calls us into. We see healing as deeply linked with the Christian tradition of vocation through which the living God calls each of us to discover and fulfil our potential.

is united in our understanding that healing in the New Testament includes wholeness.

This links the transforming love that effects miracles with the transforming love that brings the disciples through their fear and resistances into their ministry of apostleship. Our experience is that the practice of prayer in small groups, with a commitment to sharing and listening, enables those of us offering healing prayer to grow in ourselves and in our capacity to experience and share God's love. This includes the reality that some people have a gift of healing and a greater capacity than average to bring about healing.
