

Inner Healing Prayer Ministry

Community Covenant Church
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This resource is intended to provide a brief overview of inner healing prayer ministry at Community Covenant Church. It seeks to answer three questions:

- What is inner healing prayer ministry?
- What is the theological foundation for inner healing prayer ministry?
- What can I expect if I choose to participate in inner healing prayer ministry?

I. What is inner healing prayer ministry?

Inner healing is a journey towards wholeness and restoration through God the Father in Jesus Christ by the work of the Spirit. The fundamental movement in inner healing prayer ministry is towards maturing in our life in Christ. Being a follower of Jesus Christ is a movement of God's grace in bringing about healing and restoration—and inner healing prayer is simply a continuation of that movement. Most people who come for inner healing ministry have gotten stuck somewhere along the way and the logjam needs to be broken so that the streams of healing can continue. Norma Dearing says inner healing is the healing of those things that can block us from being able to “live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28) in relationship with God.¹ Though God can bring healing through individual prayer, often this logjam caused by deep wounds and patterns of sinful reactions can only be broken through the mediation of others on our behalf. Francis MacNutt says,

“The basic idea of inner healing is simply this: that Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, can take the memories of our past and:

- 1) Heal us from the inner wounds that still remain in our memories—or subconscious—and affect our present lives;
- 2) Fill with his love these places in us that have so long remained empty.”²

Michael Scanlan describes inner healing as the healing of the inner person,³ and Jim Glennon speaks of inner healing as freeing people from the burdens that have been left from the past.⁴

We are thankful that many persons connected with Community Covenant Church have experienced significant and even sometimes truly miraculous healing through this type of prayer ministry. There are still many more in our congregation who have either never heard about inner healing prayer or, though having heard about it, have hit what could be called a ‘weirdness barrier’—a lack of understanding that leads to the perception that this is only for the really ethereal or wacky person. Whatever the perception, it often keeps them from considering healing prayer ministry an option. Some people have the

¹ Norma Dearing, *The Healing Touch: A Guide to Healing Prayer for Yourself and Those You Love* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2002), 75.

² Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1999), 146.

³ Michael Scanlan, *Inner Healing: Ministering to the Human Spirit Through the Power of Prayer* (New York: Paulist Press, 1974), 9.

⁴ Jim Glennon, *Your Healing is Within You* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978), 71.

perception that there is no biblical/theological foundation for prayer ministry and thus assume there is no place for it in the local church. And unfortunately, some people have been deeply wounded by an inner healing prayer experience in the past. Others assume it is only for those who have extreme circumstances in their past with obvious emotional and spiritual impact. For these reasons, inner healing prayer ministry is often relegated to a small, set apart, esoteric group of people in the church instead of being considered a central part of our life in Christ as his disciples.

However, we believe healthy inner healing ministry is restoration through Christ by the dynamic work of the Spirit and should be an essential part of every local church. It is a ministry that seeks to recover the rich traditions of confession, repentance, forgiveness, absolution, anointing with oil, laying on of hands, and other forms of healing prayers. We also believe that a healthy inner healing ministry will not be up front for all to see but will honor and respect the person receiving prayer and will be conducted in privacy and in confidentiality. But neither should this ministry be a hidden opportunity that only a few people know about.

It is helpful to mention the various ways in which God brings healing and how inner healing prayer ministry fits into this broader context. God works through (and is not limited to) the following forms of healing:

1. Spiritual Healing – Restoring our relationship with God through Jesus Christ and the on-going, recreating work of the Spirit in transforming us along the journey.
2. Relational Healing – Restoring our horizontal relationships and living in authentic community with others.
3. Physical Healing – Restoring wholeness to our bodies, whether through medical care and/or through the healing ministry of the church.
4. Inner Healing and Deliverance – Healing the inner wounds of the inner person caused by sins committed against a person or by the person's own sins. Deliverance is healing from various forms of satanic oppression or harassment.
5. Creational Healing – This involves a dimension of stewardship of our world so that the land continues to be renewed.
6. National Healing – Healing of peoples and nations against the principalities and powers that are at work in structures and societies and organizations.
7. Healing of the Dying – Healing of a dying person in relationship to his family and his family in relationship to the dying person.
8. Eschatological Healing – Restoration and healing as part of the future reign of Jesus Christ in the new heaven and new earth as pictured in the Book of the Revelation.

The key here is to recognize that though it is one of several forms of healing, inner healing ministry is an important component of God's overall movement towards healing that must not be overlooked or neglected. These various forms of healing are dynamically inter-connected and cannot be segmented into separate components.

Within inner healing prayer ministry, healing may come through a variety of ways. In an effort to describe this variety, consider the following four strategies as provided by Dr. Charles Ringma:⁵

1. Diffused Healing – inner healing through things such as conversion, personal prayer, personal or corporate worship, communion, confession, preaching, pastoral care, Christian counseling, laying on of hands, and through general interventions (medical, therapeutic, psychological, etc.).
2. Initial Response Prayer – This is about the hidden prayers for healing that can arise out of informal interactions with people in the other normal ebb and flow of life. It is about growing in our attentiveness to the work of the Spirit around us and silently entering into healing prayers on behalf of others.
3. Self-Help Approaches – This is about seeking the help and partnership of God through healing prayers on your own without the presence of another person. This may be very appropriate for people with certain personalities or with people from certain cultural backgrounds. However, this can become simply a mechanism for avoidance.
4. Team-based Prayer Ministry – This is generally one to three persons coming alongside another person who is seeking healing and restoration to pray for God’s healing to come. This is what is most often referred to as inner healing ministry and is what this resource is primarily addressing.

It is not unusual for a person’s movement towards healing to take place through a combination of these various forms of healing. But what does God’s Word say to us about inner healing?

II. What is the theological foundation for inner healing prayer ministry?

While the Bible provides very little prescriptive information about inner healing prayer ministry, the theme of healing runs throughout both the Old Testament and New Testament. The meta-narrative of Scripture is about God’s redemptive plan and provision for spiritual and relational healing. This is seen in the recurring themes of God’s work in creation, mankind’s fall into chaos, and God’s work of recreation through Christ. This theme is not only the larger story of Scripture, but is also the smaller story of our lives and of the Church. Inner healing is a part of this meta-story of God’s restorative activity. In the Old Testament, the word *shalom* relates to healing and means peace, well-being, security, and wholeness. It is not referred to simply as personal shalom but relational and communal shalom. In the New Testament, salvation is the equivalent word referring to peace, well-being and wholeness both personally and communally.

Inner healing and deliverance was central to the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecies in Isaiah as the one who “took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Is. 53:4) and as the one sent to “bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners” (Is. 61:1), thereby placing Jesus at the center of inner healing ministry. We see in Matthew 4:23-24 that

⁵ Charles Ringma shared these strategies during his lecture on July 9, 2007 in APPL 582 Inner Healing and Deliverance class at Regent College, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Jesus was active in not only proclaiming the kingdom of God but in bringing in the kingdom through healing of many forms and deliverance from spiritual oppression.

Central to inner healing ministry is a healthy dependence upon the Holy Spirit in relation to God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Life in Christ is about being restored to communion with the Triune God. John 14 describes this dynamic relationship which we are called into as followers of Jesus Christ. And it is the work of the Comforter to come alongside us in inner healing ministry. God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is the healer—not us. God desires to lead us to truth in our inner parts and inmost places (Psalm 51:6), and it is the Spirit who reveals truth to us about the character of God and about ourselves and even about our past (John 16:13; John 14:26). And inner healing is not just a personal or individualistic or church-centered concept. It is clearly missional. Isaiah 61:1-4 describe this movement of restoration and healing of a people and nation that would have an impact on the people around them. As Charles Ringma says, healing opens up the possibility of rebuilding; a healed people can rebuild a neighborhood; a healed Church can rebuild a nation.⁶

It is in this context of comfort, grace and revealed truth that healing comes, not through condemnation. And it is the movement of God’s heart to bless(to heal) all peoples and nations through Jesus. This is the context and foundation for inner healing prayer ministry in the local church.

III. What can I expect if I choose to participate in inner healing prayer ministry?

In describing inner healing prayer ministry in more practical terms, MacNutt provides a helpful explanation:

“The idea behind inner healing is simply that we can ask Jesus Christ to walk back to the time we were hurt and to free us from the effects of that wound in the present. This involves two things:

- 1) Bringing to light the things that have hurt us. Usually this is best done with another person; even the talking out of the problem is in itself part of the healing process.
- 2) Praying to ask the Lord to heal the binding effects of the hurtful incidents of the past.”⁷

But what does this really look like? When describing this ministry, one temptation is to focus solely on the actual prayer time (ministry time) itself while overlooking the importance of how to prepare the person for that time as well as how to effectively follow up after the ministry time. In seeking to grow an inner healing prayer ministry at Community Covenant Church that really cares for and respects people and helps remove unnecessary barriers, it is important to take a look at what happens before, during, and after the ministry time.

Preparation is essential for moving beyond simply trying to *fix* people. It communicates that the person is highly valued. Without proper preparation, we may push someone into inner healing prayer who really should be meeting with a professional counselor or seeing a medical doctor. Even if inner healing prayer is the best next step for the person, short-cutting the preparation may lead to the person being unnecessarily surprised or unintentionally wounded during the prayer ministry session. Preparation occurs when the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ MacNutt, *Healing*, 147.

person seeking healing(counselee, for lack of a better term) meets with another person (counselor, also for lack of better term) to talk about ways to move towards healing. Usually this is a one-on-one meeting with a pastor or good friend who has some pastoral or lay care training. The goal is to discern together the next best course of action. Is inner healing prayer a good next step or are there other appropriate steps? Not everyone needs healing prayers right then. The gift of listening itself is a measure of care.

If it appears that inner healing prayer is the next best step, the counselor should assume the counselee knows very little about inner healing prayer. This is all in an effort to love and respect the person, for it is in the context of God's love and respect for people that healing comes most powerfully. The counselor must be prepared to give some simple explanation to help the person understand what they would be agreeing to. Here are some samples of the kinds of things that should be discussed during this stage of the preparation:

- a. Provide the counselee a handout (such as this document) to take with them and read that explains healing prayer ministry.
- b. Give the counselee some idea of what might take place in the ministry time. Though there is mystery in the ways of the Spirit of God that cannot be explained or rationalized, it is not a good idea to surprise people or leave them feeling tricked or coerced into something really weird.
- c. Schedule the actual ministry time. Depending on the counselee's situation and understanding of inner healing ministry, there could be a significant time gap between preparation and the ministry time—and that is okay. If the person is really uncomfortable, the counselor could suggest some self-help approaches and journaling and commit to revisiting this option in six months. If the counselee feels he/she is ready to move ahead with the ministry time:
 - i. This could be scheduled for one or two weeks later. Try to discern together who should be part of the prayer ministry team. Generally, it is a good idea to have a prayer team of no more than two or three people.
 - ii. Invite the counselee to commit to walking in a spirit of prayer over the next few weeks leading up to the ministry time, asking God through his Spirit to reveal the key issues which should be addressed. Keeping a journal during this time would also be helpful.
 - iii. Encourage the counselee to ask a few other friends or family to begin praying for them during these weeks of preparation.
 - iv. The prayer ministry team commits to praying daily for this ministry time leading up to the scheduled time, asking God for discernment and an outpouring of his healing.

During the ministry time, there is a temptation to follow a methodology that works in every situation. However, every situation is different. There is no prescriptive methodology or formula that will work the same in every case. The wind of the Spirit blows wherever it pleases (John 3:8) and cannot be controlled. Instead, there are some overall themes that will be addressed during the ministry time. These themes will provide a framework for understanding what kinds of things to potentially expect as part of the ministry time. The ministry time involves listening, discernment and prayer, all intertwined in a dynamic movement. First, the counselee will share his/her story. During this time, there is discernment going on by all participants. The participants then agree

on the big theme or relationship with which to begin their prayers. The ministry team will then guide the person through a series of prayers and listening around this big theme or relationship. As the ministry time progresses, there will be times for asking Jesus specific questions and waiting to hear His voice. There will often be times to simply process together what is going on and discerning together the next step and how to pray. These prayers may include such things as inviting the Holy Spirit's presence and guidance, prayers of confession, prayers of absolution (declaring forgiveness), prayers of forgiveness for the one who has caused the wound, prayers for severing any emotional or spiritual ties, prayers dealing with spiritual oppression, and prayers for inner healing and infilling of the Spirit.

Following the ministry time, there needs to be a plan for living into and living out the healing that has occurred during the ministry time. It is what Charles Kraft describes as learning how to live in the newness that becomes possible when we deal honestly with our inner pain in the power of Jesus.⁸ Though significant healing can come through the ministry time, we are still people on a *journey* of healing. Old habits that have been connected to painful memories and events in our lives and sinful reactions to these wounds do not necessarily immediately go away. Sometimes, it is difficult for a person to know how to live without the habit or reaction. There is an unlearning and a relearning that needs to occur. The plan for follow up should include agreed upon steps for growing into the new lifestyle that the healing makes possible, whether it be some form of accountability or mentorship, committing to a bible study or discipleship opportunity, continued periodic pastoral counseling, or maybe even medical or psychological care.

In conclusion, inner healing prayer is fundamentally a work of God in Christ through the Spirit in bringing about healing in a person. Inner healing prayer is normal for followers of Christ as we seek to continue in the stream of God's movement of restoration and healing in our lives. As we continue on this journey and realize that we are all wounded, may we be formed into *wounded healers* on behalf of others, following the path of Jesus Christ.

This resource is offered as an imperfect aid in helping prepare a person for prayer ministry. Please feel free to contact Sandy Gold (Prayer Ministry Coordinator) at 696-5229 or Neil Botts (Equipping Ministries Pastor) at 696-5229 if you want to discuss this further.



⁸ Charles Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels: Breaking Demonic Oppression in the Believer's Life* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1992), 141.