



# CONVERSATIONS GUIDE

BY KIM ENGELMANN



## THE NEARLY PERFECT CRIME: HOW THE CHURCH ALMOST KILLED THE MINISTRY OF HEALING AND HOW TO GET IT BACK.

In this article Francis McNutt, Dominican Priest and founder of Christian Healing Ministries, and Harold Koenig, MD, Director of the Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health at Duke University are both interviewed. The



questions revolve around the place of healing in the church and how to recover this lost gift of the Holy Spirit. Francis is honest in his assessment of healing, sharing that Jesus always healed everyone who came to him and that God still heals today because he does not want his children to be sick. Why some are healed and others not, and why certain miracles are more common than others is part of the mystery involved in the healing ministry? McNutt explains how he prays, and the intuitive part of a person that often can discern the voice of the Holy Spirit. He also speaks about tongues, and how this helps him in the healing ministry. Ultimately, all healing is to move us back into relationship with God. Finally, the three things to be aware of as one prays for the sick are as follows: 1) the attitude of the person needs to be loving and sensitive 2) identify what they are praying for 3) Is there any unforgiveness blocking the way? (McNutt says

that unforgiveness is like clogging the arteries to the Holy Spirit.)

In the interview with Harold Koenig, he shares his studies on a person's religious beliefs and how they promote healing when integrated into the health care plan. Interestingly of all the religious practices most consistently related to better mental and physical health it is attendance at religious services—it tops them all! This is partly because it is faith put into action—people who go to a service are willing to do something about their faith. There are great psychological benefits from listening to the sermon, praying together, worshipping God, singing together and performing rituals together with common beliefs. He speaks of studies for those prayed for as having significant improvements for both rheumatoid arthritis, and hearing and vision. Ultimately his plan to study the effect of prayer on healing cannot measure the miraculous. This, says Koenig, is beyond our limit. Still Koenig believes in the “supernatural” and affirms the power of God to heal.

1. Has someone you know been healed through the power of prayer?
2. Do you think the power of healing prayer needs to happen with more regularity in our churches?
3. If so, how might this happen? What are the roadblocks? What might be the benefits?

## RENOVATION OF MY HEART: JESUS, DALLAS WILLARD AND ME

In reading Willard's books, Jeff Berkebile finds himself reading Scripture with a new lens. If Jesus did what he



did in Scripture, why couldn't he still act in the same way? Before that, he really wasn't convinced that Jesus' words could change things in the here and now. Recognizing the relevance and transformative nature of God's presence now available to change things as they are was revolutionary. In order to make life different and more conformed to what Jesus was all about, there is training that is necessary. The

goal of this training is to develop a fruitful relationship over time with God, not simply robotic compliance. God uses the vivid and diverse personalities of people to accomplish his purposes, and each gives an individual flavor. Recognizing this, Jeff's image of God began to change, and God became for Jeff “too good to be true, yet he is.” Jeff talks about the difference between avoiding wrong-doing (not screwing up) versus having a desirable goal. The Willard words for avoiding wrong-doing are “sin management.” Sinning is only a symptom of a deeper problem. Jesus was always dealing with the deeper underlying reason for wrong action and calling us to do something, not just simply avoid doing something wrong. The nature of God, that is “the most joyous being in the universe” is enough to propel us forward. We can know that One! True change is possible with training. As Willard says, “If you want to keep the Ten Commandments or the teachings of Jesus, don't try to keep them. Try to become the type of person who will keep them.” The practice of spiritual formation helps us to become exactly that.

1. What images of God do you have that you sense might be hindering your spiritual growth?
2. Do you often imagine God as the most joyous being in the universe? If you did this, how might this affect your prayer life?
3. In what ways do you “train” to be the kind of person that would be able to keep the ten commandments? How is this different from “trying hard”?

## TELLING OUR STORIES

In this article, Susan Phillips talks about the power of story telling and the need to listen to and tell each other our spiritual stories. Spiritual directors listen to stories as God-crafted, and they encourage the spiritual discipline of bringing our stories before God even when they are painful ones. Stories bring out emotion and emotion embeds



memory in our bodies. Thus the first point about telling our stories is MEMORY. Shared cultural stories, and body

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## Are You Called to Help People Who Are Hurting?

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- M.A. in Professional Counseling
- M.A. in Marriage and Family Therapy
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- M.S. in Christian Psychological Studies

### Specialization Programs

- Addictions Counseling
- Child & Adolescent Counseling
- Christian Sex Therapy
- Spirituality & Counseling
- Trauma Counseling

# If you had to choose one thing that you needed healing from today, what would it be?

memories can be evoked. One of the practices of spiritual directors is to guide people toward telling their own grace-filled experiences. The second point about stories is that they create MEANING. Both the Biblical stories and our own stories are connected and serve to create a sense of belonging and purpose. The third point is that stories often carry MORAL impetus. Jesus often told stories to illustrate a moral point like the Good Samaritan. Stories teach us moral behavior, but when told in the context of God's goodness are also filled with grace. Finally, stories do MENDING work. They heal us. Even the telling of stories is a way to get things out. "Studies have found that recovering from traumatic experiences can be expedited by writing about those experiences for others to read or speaking about them to others who are listening." Turning experiences into stories is a way to create meaning and help us to see God's hand at work in our lives.

1. Do you have someone to whom you can tell your spiritual story?
2. What do you think is the value of telling stories?
3. Jesus told many stories. Why do you think that was?
4. How might you practice telling your stories more often?
5. What is a story of grace that you refer to, to help you mend, notice meaning, help you remember, and that has moral significance? Even the story you choose does not have all of these qualities, try to identify one or two.

## INVITING GOD IN

Mary Yerkes begins this article with her friend Melissa's pain, as she tries to sort through a difficult situation at work. After prayer together, a healing journey began for Melissa. Mary isolates four points that are key in facilitating inner healing. 1)

A three way conversation between the two people and Jesus as the person providing direction has his/her ear tuned to the Holy Spirit



as well as to the person. 2) Melissa was honest with her emotions and it is only when this step is taken first that healing can happen. 3) Trusting God to do what he will do for the healing process at the right time and in his way. 4) Talking about the brass tacks of the consequences of managing pain in an unhealthy versus healthy way. Mary emphasizes again and again that healing takes time. She then shares her own journey of recovery from childhood emotional abuse. Through seeking God, and finding rest, solitude and taking some time off from meeting the demands of her church, she returned with a renewed perspective. The journey of healing is ongoing, a continual process throughout our life. "God alone brings healing. But we must respond to His invitation and participate in our healing." An interview with Mary by Jan Johnson follows, and the article closes with bullet points outlining a way to experience healing in your own life while on retreat.

1. Do you believe healing is a journey? Why or why not?
2. If you had to choose one thing that you needed healing from today, what would it be?
3. Do you think the above four points are helpful? Why or why not?
4. What point do you imagine might be most difficult for you to implement? Discuss.

## COMMUNION AND FORGIVENESS

Ben Patterson writes his account of growing up with a mother who was addicted to pain medication and all



kinds of over the counter drugs. She was a Christian but during his high school years his Mom became aloof and he lost her in her world of addiction. Ever since then Ben resented his Mom, even when his son Joel encouraged him to pray for "G-ma" saying "If we're not praying for

G-ma, who will?" Then a woman named Linda unexpectedly dropped by. She often did this when she was nudged to share a word or two from the Lord with them. She usually didn't stay very long, but this time she did. Ben describes her as an "already" Christian in the "already but not yet" way theologians have of describing why things are still broken in our world. Ben says she was always expecting miracles to happen just as readily and as frequently as they appeared to happen in the Gospels. It wasn't until 9pm that night that she asked "How is your mother?" She knew nothing of the family. "May I pray for you?" she asked. When they prayed together the image of Ben's Mom filled his mind and heart. She was vivid and beautiful and vivacious. She was also wise, smiling at him. Ben knew this was a vision of his Mom at the resurrection in a "future so sure and powerful that it was invading the present." When his Mom was forced to move in with them, he also experienced a healing of his resentment toward her again, and continued to remember her the way he saw her when Linda prayed.

1. Has anyone ever showed up for you, as Linda did for Ben, and give you a word that you knew was from God?
2. Have you ever done this for someone else?
3. Is there someone in your life that you need to forgive, and begin to see in the light of their resurrected identity? How does seeing someone this way and forgiveness link up?
4. Discuss together.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Kim Engelmann is Sr. Pastor and West Valley Presbyterian Church in Cupertino, California. She is the author of seven books, including her most recent book, *Running In Circles*. She has also written *Seeing Jesus, A Walk With God Through Friendship*, and three children's books entitled the *Joona Trilogy*.