

Offering Prayer for the Healing of Others

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“If you pray with a motive to do good to someone, your prayer may actually bring about good both to him and to yourself. . . . But all prayers with a motive fall short of the ideal prayer which is without motive. In the entire spiritual panorama of the universe nothing is more sublime than a spontaneous prayer.

It gushes out of the human heart, filled with appreciative joy. It is self-expression of the freed spirit without any actuation of a motive. In its highest form, prayer leaves no room for the illusory diarchy of the lover and the Beloved. It is a return to one's own being.”¹

¹ Meher Baba, *Beams from Meher Baba*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Sufism Reoriented, Inc., 1958), 76.

Offering Prayer for the Healing of Others

This is an exploration of how to pray for the healing of others. I had no background offering a spontaneous prayer. I wanted to understand why people pray for the healing of others, and how to do it. My focus is on intercessory prayer. I include elements of prayer with which I am comfortable.

I use the term healing to refer to spiritual healing. "Healing is the sick person's attainment of equanimity".² St. John of the Cross suggests, "Human health in its fullness is the conscious experience of God".³ As a chaplain I hope to support the healing of the patient's spirit.

My Background

Previous to starting CPE, I had never prayed aloud with someone for their healing. I do know how to pray for others, in my own way. As an acupressure therapist, I pray for my clients. After sessions I offer the client's issues to God; I visualize light and love around the client.

I pray for global issues by holding an intention for global healing during the day. This is done with others in prayer circles seeking transformation of the world in the light of God.

A prayer circle is a group of people holding the same intention for transformation. Through the power created by their intention and prayers, an energy field of consciousness is formed, which is held in the oneness and the unity of everyone's divine Self. The more people there are holding the intention, the more powerful and effective the field is to create change. We call this effect "the power of one."⁴

As a devotee of Meher Baba, I had gleaned that praying for something is not the best approach to prayer. Meher Baba explained,

² Jeff Kane, *The Healing Companion* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 21.

³ Father Thomas Keating, *The Quieter Truths: Recreating Through Contemplative Prayer*, Association of Professional Chaplains (Video).

⁴ Leslie Temple-Thurston, "The Power of One Effect", <http://www.Corelight.org>, accessed February 2, 2002.

God is so merciful and bountiful that even without their asking He always gives much more than His lovers can receive. He knows their real needs more deeply than they do. Therefore the element of asking something from God is superfluous.⁵

When I was bed side with a patient, I was at a loss at how to pray. My quest to understand offering a spontaneous prayer for the healing of another began.

Intercessory Prayer

Praying for others is called intercessory prayer. It is

...the capacity to recognize that your spiritual accomplishments are not discrete. They go out into everything. It is called merit in Buddhism, or called intercession in the Judeo Christian traditions. You are giving what you have caused in your own holiness away.⁶

When I enter the patient's room I offer my compassion and understanding. When I listen to a patient or hold their hand, it provides some level of comfort. Whether I offer a verbal prayer or not, my being with them, may be the most I can do.

“The key to true intercessory prayer is compassion.”⁷ Intercessory prayer works because, “Prayer effects a transmission of your energy through the medium of God's Spirit to the person in need of that energy, regardless of how far away from you he or she may be.”⁸

In the Buddhist tradition there is the concept of merit. Merit is accumulated through your spiritual practices, good thoughts and deeds. You can offer the benefits of your merit for the healing of others. An example of a Buddhist form of prayer called the Tonglen practice. You silently pray to offer what merit you have accumulated for the benefit of another, such as, “May I

⁵ Meher Baba, 74.

⁶ Elizabeth Hin, *Balance in Healing and Awareness*, The White Rose Foundation (audio tape), 2001.

⁷ Ron Roth, *The Healing Path of Prayer*, Ron Roth, (NY: Three Rivers Press, 1997), 34.

⁸ John Killinger, *Beginning Prayer*, (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1993), 85.

be able to take on the suffering of other, may I be able to give my well-being and happiness to them”.⁹

I spoke with a patient who was experiencing the loss of a very close friend. She wanted to do something positive with her grief. She offered her grief to God, and asked the energy of that grief be transformed and used for the healing of the patient in the bed next to her. This was true intercessory prayer.

Seeking with God’s Will

“There is really only one prayer we may offer: ‘Thy will be done’.”¹⁰

Jesus has given the Lord’s Prayer as an example of how we should pray. The Lord’s Prayer asks that God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven. To find God’s will in a patient’s suffering requires surrender and faith. As I sit with a patient, I can offer a prayer for everyone present to trust in God’s will.

Perhaps, we really don’t need to ask for God’s will to be done; it is more a matter of our understanding and seeing that God’s will is being done, always. This translation of the Lord’s Prayer confirms God’s will on earth, rather than asking for God’s will to be done.

Our father, who is everywhere in the universe, your name is sacred. Your kingdom is come among us, your will is throughout the earth as it is throughout the universe. You give us our needful bread from day to day and you forgive us our offenses even as we forgive our offenders. You do not let us enter into materialism, but separate us from error. For yours is the kingdom and the power, and the song, from ages to ages. Sealed in faithfulness”¹¹

⁹ Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 207.

¹⁰ MK Ghandi, *Prayer*, (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Hills Books, 2000), 59.

¹¹ Ron Roth, *The Healing Path of Prayer*, (NY: Three Rivers Press, 1997), 66.

Praying in the Mystery

The cause of suffering is because the mystery of God is moving through one's body contrary to what would please their view of life.

Most of the time when we seek healing we are in enough suffering that there is a crashing of the external projections and the internal mystery moving. We have to resolve them as one. We have to be willing to let the form follow the function of the mystery.¹²

When we enter into the mystery, we enter into the nature of God. If patients could see beyond their physical condition and seek to experience the mystery they would no longer suffer. They may continue to feel pain or loss, but they would not suffer; this would be their healing.

I can explain this in a story of one of my patients. I walked into the room of an elderly man sitting with his wife. The man was hooked up to electrodes in hopes that he would have a seizure so the doctors could determine the cause. At the bedside was a Bible. The man held hands with his wife. I could feel this peace and love between them. They had been married for 50 years; they had the support and prayers of their church. Despite the condition of the husband there was peace and love; to me that is the mystery.

It is said when a relationship is sacred, there is 'me', there is 'you,' and there is a third invisible element that holds us together. Who is that 'one' that is felt when we love one another deeply? It is the divine, the sacred, the invisible friend who comes and magnetizes our hearts. And what is beyond that one? *That* is the greatest mystery.¹³

We can become instruments of the mystery. Being aware of and witnessing the mystery seems to be the key.

¹² Elizabeth Hin, "Balance in Healing and Awareness", The White Rose Foundation (audio tape), 2001.

¹³ Kamille and Kabir Helminski, *Rumi, The Path of Love*, (The Book Laboratory, Inc., 2001).

The Content of Prayer

It is more personal to offer a prayer based on the issues that have been brought to light by the patient. I take time to ask questions allowing the patient to talk about their concerns, fears, and why they want prayer.

The prime value of speaking is to help them shift from a fearful ego perspective to a love-centered state....follow your higher guidance in helping your clients to willingly release the thoughts, beliefs, and emotions triggering their symptoms.¹⁴

Allowing the patient to speak about their fears and concerns may help to lift them out of their worries. The following suggestion about the importance of the content of prayer was helpful to me.

I try to include the fears that have surfaced during my conversation with the patient, the questions that have been raised, and the uncertainty that is evident...Such a prayer, sensitively offered, can help to release patients from their fear.¹⁵

In prayer, if I address what the patient has been speaking about, I can offer the prayer from my heart. This lets the patient know that I listened to them. Praying for God to bear the pain, release fears, provide comfort, or to give strength is always appreciated by the patient.

Keep Prayer Simple

The best advice is to keep prayer simple. Just a few words, a simple blessing, prayer for healing, or guidance for the patient is sufficient. It is the connection with God that matters. Jesus said, "Whenever two or more are gathered in my name, I am there". It takes only one chaplain and one patient to gather in God's presence. When two or more are together in prayer, the prayer can be simple. What really matters has already been accomplished by just being together.

¹⁴ Doreen Virtue, Ph. D., *The Lightworker's Way*, (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc.,1997), 250.

¹⁵ Kent D Richmond & David L. Middleton, *The Pastor and the Patient*, (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1993), 50.

Prayer is communion with God. It is a matter of making connections with the One who stands at the center of all life, and joy, and of learning to live with those connections all the time...It is coming into the presence of the One who loves us all the time. ¹⁶

To pray with a patient, is to take a few moments rest from worry, pain, or fear and turn our attention to God. It is the remembrance of God's loving presence that can change the patient's focus. In that change of focus their issues or worries may be lessened or released.

The Essence of Prayer is Remembrance

I have spent time with Meher Baba's disciples and read many books by and about Meher Baba. The message is "Remember God. Remember God always". This remembrance is not a formal prayer, but a silent remembrance of God's name. Eventually this remembrance becomes the fragrance of God's love within the heart. This remembrance generates a connection between one's self and the Divine. To me, this is similar to the Christian saying, pray without ceasing. "You don't pray in order to achieve something. You pray in order to be with God". ¹⁷

No matter what words I pray, the reason I pray with others is to be with God. As a chaplain, I can walk through the hospital and remember God as I visit patients. My silent remembrance of God is offered as a prayer for their healing.

Silent Prayer

Meditation is a silent form of prayer. A simple way to meditate is to observe the breath; this facilitates a shift to a more peaceful state. Observe the breath, and become aware of the stillness, the stopping of the breath, between the inhale and the exhale, and between the exhale

¹⁶ John Killinger, *Beginning Prayer*, (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1993), 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

and the inhale. “In that stop, you become like an empty bowl, and when you become an empty bowl, divine lips will touch you. God will come to you, to pour out his love.”¹⁸

Breath is the key to many forms of meditation. Focusing on the breath is helpful to bring one’s awareness to God. When we observe the breath, we become aware that we are not the one who is breathing; we are not in control of our breath.

To enter into the mystery of God, observe your breath. Observe your own breath while listening to a patient. Observing your breath is a means of taking one out of the unnatural rhythms of worldly life, out of the mindset of worry and worldly desire into a place of natural rhythm and light. The result of observing your breath is stillness; in that stillness one can begin to perceive God’s love.

To Whom Do I Pray?

If a patient requests prayer, I ask what their faith tradition is. The prayer should be in context of their belief. Often, I pray to Eternal Beloved, or Beloved God. However, I am comfortable talking to God by any name. To me all religions are paths to God. When I pray from my heart, I offer what I say to God, and know it will be heard. “God does not listen to the language of the tongue, or of the mind, but He responds to the language of the heart”.¹⁹

¹⁸ Vasant Lad, *Ayurvedic Home Remedies*, (NY: Harmony Books, 1998), 78.

¹⁹ Meher Baba, *Beams from Meher Baba*, (Walnut Creek: Sufism Reoriented, Inc., 1958), 74.

God as Light

“All prayer is the reception of the light energy that is the presence of God.”²⁰ While praying visualize the healing love of God as light. This light can be a golden pure light one visualizes washing through the body. This light and love of God can bring healing to the soul.

A Tibetan Buddhist practice called the Phowa practice invokes the healing light and energy of a divine being. The divine being is the source of spiritual light and presence; the divine being can be any master or teacher with which one feels comfortable working. The Phowa practice is taught in the context of being with a dying patient, but I feel it can be used for anyone at any time. “Imagine that rays of light pour down on the dying person, purifying his or her whole being, and then he or she dissolved into light and merges into the spiritual presence.”²¹

Gratitude

We must be grateful for what we have. We should always consider ourselves more fortunate than many others. No matter what we are experiencing we can find good in something.

“Appreciation is the highest form of prayer, for it acknowledges the presence of good wherever you shine the light of your thankful thoughts... When you give thanks for something, you are focusing your attention on what moves your soul, and the Law of Attraction will draw more of the same into your experience.”²²

I like to bring the focus to the good things that are happening. The patient can be grateful for the support of the medical team, the presence of family and friends, and the presence and love of God.

²⁰ Roth, 36.

²¹ Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, (SF: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 215.

²² Alan Cohen, *Handle with Prayer*, (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc., 1998), 70.

God Alone is Real

In the presence of Omnipresence, is there anything to be healed, changed, reformed, overcome or destroyed? You look at every appearance, but you do not permit yourself to become disturbed by any one of them. Your eyes may bear witness to somebody's illness, poverty, or sinfulness, but Spirit tells you, "No, this is God made manifest. This is the very incarnation of God; therefore, harmony *is* true, regardless of what my eyes see or my ears hear."²³

If there is a patient or family suffering right in front of you, you can't deny that their suffering is not happening. I can hold in my awareness that all things in the temporal world do, in time pass; God alone is that which persists through all things. Everything is ever changing, and it is the element of ever that we forget. Hold on the Eternal in the moment, find the harmony that exists.

Hinduism explains that the world is an illusion. Buddhists implore that the world is suffering and that we should seek refuge in the Buddha. Meher Baba states, "Nothing is real but God". The same message has been repeated throughout the ages. This world is not real; it is a dream. Awaken to the illusory nature of the phenomenal world, and see God is the only reality.

As spiritual workers, you have to remember that the spiritual wisdom you desire to convey to others is already latent in them, and that you have only to be instrumental in unveiling that spiritual wisdom. Spiritual progress is not a process of accumulating from without; it is a process of unfoldment from within.²⁴

God is the only reality, and the knowledge of this truth is latent within everyone. The most I can do for others is to realize this truth for myself.

What This Means to Me

All the studies I pursue are meaningless unless I can translate what I learn into compassion for others. Being a chaplain is about serving God in others. My primary task is to

²³ Joel S. Goldsmith, *The Art of Spiritual Healing*, (SF: HarperSanFrancisco, 1959), 42.

²⁴ Meher Baba, *Discourses*, (Myrtle Beach: Sheriar Foundation, 1995), 347.

remember God is in and behind all of creation. My lesson is to learn the lesson of love, which translates into being compassionate with others.

The hospital is a powerful classroom that teaches and tests souls in many ways. Allow the patient to speak of their fears and concerns. Take the time to learn about the patient. Many patients never request a prayer, and many patients have no faith tradition and would not want a prayer. I offer a silent prayer for them or visualize the healing light of God around them.

For patients who request prayer, I keep prayer simple and personal. First, remember God. Let the patient know you have listened to them. Be grateful. Ask God to align our souls with God's will so that what happens is for the highest good of all concerned. Witness the mystery. Pray from the heart and the prayer will be heard by God.