One Step Back, Two Steps Forward
How Family Systems Helps Heal History

"I kneel before the Father from Whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name; and I pray." (Ephesians 3:14)

“This is the kind of life you have been invited into, the kind of life Christ lived. He suffered everything that came his way so you would know that it could be done, and also know how to do it, step by step. ‘He never did one thing wrong, not once said anything amiss.’ They called him every name in the book and he said nothing back. He suffered in silence, content to let God set things right. He used his servant body to carry our sins to the Cross so we could be rid of sin, free to live the right way. His wounds became your healing. You were lost sheep with no idea who you were or where you were going. Now you’re named and kept for good by the Shepherd of you souls.” (1 Peter 2:21-24, from “The Message”, Eugene Peterson)

"May the God of peace himself make you entirely clean; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept strong and blameless until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes back again. God who called you to become his child, will do this for you, just as he promised" (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, TLB).

“Lord, if it be to Your glory, heal suddenly. If it will glorify You more, heal gradually; if it will glorify You even more, may your servant remain sick awhile; and if it will glorify Your name still more, take him to Yourself in heaven.” -O. Hallesby.

“Prayer makes common things holy and secular things sacred. It receives things from God with thanksgiving and hallows them with thankful hearts and devoted service.” --E.M. Bounds.


2. What I Have Learned About Healing -- Introductory Principles of Spiritual Healing

Paddy Ducklow, Pastor / Psychologist ■ 604-921-9542 ■ Paddy@TheDucklows.ca
2.1. Healing means – physical healing, restoration of relationships, recovery from drug dependency, restoring right balance in the life between God and His creation.

2.2. Over the last 25 years the phrases "inner healing," "healing of memories," "prayer counselling" have entered the vocabulary of the Christian community.

2.3. This procedure is not taught specifically in Scripture and this causes some concern. But, neither are a host of other accepted activities that the church endorses: Sunday school for children, Christmas pageants, solos before sermons, musical instruments in worship, or computer mailing lists.

2.4. This presents us with a problem of hermeneutics, how we interpret the bible. As evangelicals, we forbid what the bible forbids and permit what the bible permits. However, are we to forbid or permit areas where the bible is silent?

2.5. The New Testament church and its leadership did not have an explicit model of inner healing. They did however have a conviction about:

   - The sanctifying work of the cross (the epicentre of redemption)…
   - As accessed by the Holy Spirit (the instrument of sanctification)…
   - Through faith (the necessary response of man).

2.6. Thus, when we speak of inner healing or prayer counselling we are addressing no more than the complete work of Christ on the cross, to the present, past and future life of the believer.

2.7. My conviction and defence of such a practice is based upon three theological principles, taught throughout the scripture.

   - Immanence: God is present with the believer and responsive to prayers of faith.
   - Redemption: The grace of God brings forgiveness and healing to emotionally bent people.
   - Revelation: God is the One who speaks and transforms people by His very own Word.

2.8. Putting these three principles together, I believe in and practice "transformational growth through prayer." Since there are “gifts (plural) of healing” (1Cor.12:9), I assume that this means that is are more than one kind of healing necessary for people (body, mind and spirit).

3. **What Revival Means to Healing**

Paddy Ducklow, Pastor / Psychologist ■ 604-921-9542 ■ Paddy@TheDucklows.ca
J.I Packer believes that "revival is the highest hope for the church on earth until the Lord comes to take us home."

3.1. "God comes down." A deepening awareness of God and His inescapable presence dwelling among His people.

3.2. "God's word comes home." The bible is re-established as the formative and corrective control over faith and life.

3.3. "God's purity comes through." God uses His word to quicken consciences and sin is seen and felt with new clarity... forgiveness of sin becomes the most precious truth.

3.4. "God's people come alive." Joyous assurance of salvation, conscious communion with a living Saviour, a spirit of prayer and praise, a readiness to share with other believers, and a love that reaches out to all in need.

3.5. "Outsiders come in." Drawn by the moral and spiritual magnetism of what goes on in the church.

   If, as many believe, that revival comes with repentance in this generation, what sins must this generation acknowledge? (In the Welsh revival, the repentance focused on alcohol and tobacco abuse.)


4.1. Prayer counselling is transformational growth and is variously called inner healing, healing of damaged emotions, Christotherapy, healing of memories, healing the wounded spirit, etc.

4.2. Theologically, prayer counselling is the cooperation of human resources with God's sanctifying salvation. Transformational growth is prayer in the “middle tense” – neither reactive to circumstance (e.g. pressing need) or self-initiating but participating with what God is already doing. Middle tense praying has to do with observing what God is doing and joining in.

4.3. Prayer counselling assumes that justification has occurred (that the client has given his life to Christ). Sanctification is "the God of peace himself making you entirely clean" (1 Thess. 5:23) and it is what his will for us is now (1 Thess. 4:3). Sanctification means "to make holy" and speaks of an inner transformation.
4.4. The spiritual goal of inner healing is to invite the lordship and healing peace of Christ into our present and past experiences and lifestyles. The Holy Spirit is invited by prayer to be the sole occupant of the soul.

4.5. The psychological purpose is "retroactive sanctification": enabling the believer to be released from the inflictions of emotional and psychological bondages.

4.6. Prayer counselling is not the only means of transformational growth. Growth comes from a variety of other means:

- Scripture meditation and memorization.
- Worship at church and through private singing, prayer and reading.
- Prayer (especially prayer of the scriptures).
- The Eucharist or Lord’s supper.
- Exercising the gifts of the Spirit as the Spirit leads.
- Persevering under difficult circumstances.
- Sharing burdens with fellow Christians in counselling or home groups.
- Transformational growth can be facilitated by thoughtful psychological understanding. Family systems theory is one such school that may further facilitate God’s healing.

4.7. Foundational to all these things is the conviction that transformational growth ultimately relies upon the Holy Spirit assisting the new person we are in Jesus.

4.8. Leanne Payne ("Healing Presence"): 

- "It consists of simply learning to evoke the Presence of the Lord, of coming into that Presence with the needy one. And there listening for the healing word that God is always sending to the wounded and alienated. We listen with the needy person until such time as we can teach him to listen for himself. The bondages of the "bent position" fall from him, and all idols he would cling to are show for what they really are."

- "We simply invoke His Presence, then invite Him into our hearts. He shows us our hearts. In prayer for the healing of memories, we simply ask our Lord to come present to that place where we are hurt, in simply understanding God's incarnational pattern of healing, we see miracle occur easily and as wonderfully as though they are naturally to be expected. And they are."

4.9. Payne observes that many Christian leaders ignore this power by psychologizing the gospel:
"Thinking only of the person's emotional needs and the current wisdom for meeting them, the modern minister forgets to invoke the presence of God and call down upon the needy person the grace to repent. He has neglected the root healing. out of which all ongoing progress comes. The essential will for the needy person is left untouched, and he will be unable to stand."

"The healing of the human soul is a very complex matter-- in fact, there is no end of its unmet needs-- when we bypass the Incarnation and the Cross, God's way, through His Son, of bringing us back into communication with Himself."

4.10. Tragically, many evangelical pastors function as psychologists in their approach to emotional and relational needs. They are not calling upon the Spirit to produce the transformation necessary.

5. The Ministry Of Transformational Growth / Prayer Counselling

5.1. It is a Priestly Ministry. In a non-judgemental environment believers are free to confess their sins and faults to one another: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). Giving and receiving forgiveness in the strength of the blood of Christ is the primary impact of this ministry.

5.2. It is a Community Ministry. Potentially any growing Christian person may minister to another. A more mature and experienced person may be needed for certain dimensions of this ministry. But the transformation and sanctification of Christian character is a process that takes place in the context of a Spirit-led community.

5.3. It is a Prophetic Ministry. The Word of God is brought to the person where that person is. (It is a telling-forth of God's Word to an individual life.) The living Word, Christ, is presented, or rather, presents himself, as the one who "is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). Any "picture" suggested or experienced in the prayers is inspired by Scripture and corrected by Scripture. The effect of the prophetic ministry on the client is that he is strengthened, encouraged and comforted (1 Cor 14:3) - - not dissected, depleted and disregarded.

5.4. It is a Pastoral Ministry. The prayer counsellor does not contrive, create or control the experience. Both the counsellor and counsellee submit themselves to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, allowing him to reveal himself as he wishes and to recall any formative life experience he chooses. It is not reducible to a method or technique since the very essence of the ministry is to give up one's agenda to the Lord who is the true healer, pastor and therapist. The counsellor is a soul friend who prays, intercedes, corrects, discerns and encourages.
5.5. It is a Ministry of Discerning of Spirits. The two major "tests" of authenticity are constantly applied in the context of prayer counselling.

   □ "No one can say. ‘Jesus is Lord’, except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). The confession of lordship implies sovereignty over everything in one's life, past, present and future, the very heart of this ministry.

   □ "Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God" (1 John 4:2-3). This is no mere doctrinal belief that God became a man, but an experiential recognition that God comes into the reality of our lives in this world. This is the theological basis of the transformation of the inner person.

6. The Timeless Healing Of Jesus

6.1. God wants Kingdom power in his church. He is committed to sanctifying, to purifying believers so that they may be full-functioning servants in the Body.

6.2. Time is created and is subject to God's authority. He does enter our past and our future now. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb.13:8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yesterday</td>
<td>Today</td>
<td>Forever</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3. Note the context of Heb. 13:8: "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." This scripture teaches the more general truth that Jesus transcends time. But it is also saying that the real Jesus lives through human leaders and looks the same in every generation of leaders. Real leaders do what Jesus did.

6.4. The pain of the past is normally experienced as guilt, sadness and anger. Forgiveness is the power to break this woundedness. The authority to minister forgiveness is located in the crucifixion event.

6.5. The pain of the future is usually experienced as anxiety, hopelessness and despair. The covenants of God secure the future. His faithfulness is founded on his revealed character.

6.6. "Incarnational truth" is the reality of Christ in us. We are to be "God with skin on" in our healing, encouraging and discipling ministries. The timeless Jesus is within us by the Holy
Spirit, without us (He moves alongside as our Comforter) and around us as our Sovereign Lord.

6.7. Thus, Jesus is present whenever and wherever to us and to our needs as we present ourselves to Him for transformational growth.

6.8. "Faith watching' is learning to observe what God is doing in an individual's life and cooperating with it, rather than frustrating it.

6.9. Prayer counselling includes "developmental praying.” This includes praying for:

- Experienced traumas.
- Adaptations to the painful reality of the experienced traumas.
- Emotional "cut offs."
- Generation to generation infirmities, bondages and curses.

7. **The Way We Grow Up**

7.1. The problem with us is that we had parents – and so did they. We are grateful of the theology of forgiveness that we believe and practice.

7.2. The good thing about us is that we had parents-- and so did they. We are very grateful for the theology of covenant-making or promise-keeping.

7.3. None of us had the opportunity to choose how to live in our families of origin (FOO). We adapted to “pressing circumstances” as best we could with the skills and experiences we had.

7.4. However, all of us get to choose about how we will live in our current families and interact with our various communities.

7.5. All of us get to choose how we will create and bless the next generations under our care. These are our children and grandchildren and their friends. How do we bless them? What consciously do we do?

7.6. The fundamental formula for families:

- Leave (emotional and physical separateness).
- Cleave (joining and befriending).
8. How We Try to Fit In (When Families are in Pain)

8.1. Compliance: peace at all costs.

8.2. Withdrawal: safety is in emotional and physical distance.

8.3. Rebellion: fight for sanity and safety.

8.4. Succeed: jump higher, do better, hit further.

9. Pain and Adaptation to Pain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Stage</th>
<th>Building blocks</th>
<th>Trauma &amp; Adaptation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stabilizing period around the trauma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Adolescence</td>
<td></td>
<td>#2 Repetition of Trauma – often repeats the central meaning of the first experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later Childhood</td>
<td></td>
<td>#1 Adaptation to the experience of the trauma or pain – e.g. fighting, acting out, withdrawal, procrastination, etc. This is done to balance out the experience and to maintain growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Childhood</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stabilizing period around the trauma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td></td>
<td>#1 Trauma – e.g. the death of a parent or the experience of abuse, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infancy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relative normalcy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. A Family Systems Perspective: Systems and Subsystems

10.1. Mobile analogy: every part of the family is understood in terms of the whole family and how individual parts affect the whole. Each part is considered to be interdependent upon the whole and not independent. A movement or change in one part of the mobile affects the system throughout.
10.2. Every time one part of the mobile gains or loses weight, or moves from the center of gravity, the entire mobile shifts and all part are unbalanced until the changed part returns to its original place or the other parts adjust themselves.

10.3. The shifts in the family mobile are “crises.” Think of the crisis of the middle son becoming a Christian; or the father rolling the family van over a cliff and nearly dying; or the mother not coming home after work till 9pm and looking a “bit floozy”; another child being born; the blending of families; prolonged sickness; the middle-age Dad buying a Ferrari and wearing a turquoise jogging suit.

10.4. Your personality developed in relation and response to the other personalities in your family. You did not form in isolation. You would not be who you are today without the interaction of siblings, parents and others in your family of origin.

11. Boundary Systems

11.1. A boundary is anyone or anything brought in (“owned”) and anything which is within the boundary is thought of as being part of the system. By exclusion, others outside of the boundary are not part of the system.

11.2. The family or church is a system with at least two subsystems.

☐ The parental subsystem / leadership within a church.
☐ The sibling subsystem / larger congregation within the church.
11.3. Each system is thought to be made up of interdependent subsystems. The subsystems themselves are interdependent systems.

☐ There can be other systems within the family as well: those that are Christians and those that are not; husband-wife; those that drink too much beer and those that get disgusted; males and females; deer-hunters and Greenpeace-ers. These small systems within a system are called “alliances”—they can be positive but are often a problem.

11.4. Boundaries around a system can be relatively open or closed.

☐ Many churches or families are marked by closed boundaries. The boundaries serve as barriers; barriers from others and barriers to growth. These people are closed to the world and are often defensive and blaming. People need the potentiality of growth to prosper.

☐ Some churches or families have almost no boundaries or transparent boundary system. These folk live chaotic lives. People need the security of boundaries to grow.

11.5. The sibling subsystem includes children (or in the case of an only child, a single person in a subsystem). As new members are added or lost from the subsystem, the entire system adjusts. For example: a child moving out and leaving the other members.

11.6. It is possible to consider an integrated whole as a system and then identify smaller systems within it as subsystems. For example: the church with its various cell groups as subsystems.

12. System Feedback Within the System

12.1. Any system communicates with itself. The family meal is the prime time for communication in many families. (Did you know that the family meal is considered the “temple” for Jewish families since the physical presence of the temple was destroyed?)
Person 1: "Why don't you ever talk to me?"
Person 2: "I do talk to you. I talk to you all the time."
Person 1: "No, you don't! You just don't care about me."
Person 2: "Leave me alone! Why are you always nagging me?"
Person 1: "If I didn't nag at you, you would never listen to what I have to say."
Person 2: Walks away, muttering, "What do you want from me?"
Person 1: "I Love You!" ...
Person 2: "Then Leave Me Alone!"

12.2. “Simple”: or stimulus-response. The issue is usually power and control and the end goal is conformity to the one most powerful. (“God said it. I believe it. That settles it.”)

12.3. “Cybernetic”: like the self-monitoring aspect of a thermostat to maintain the status quo or “homeostasis” in a family. The issue is the maintenance of the system and the subsystems to remain essentially the same. Sameness feels like security and safety. (“Better the hell we know than the hell we don’t.”)

At this level of feedback within the system, creating new ways of operation are not explored or considered. The reference point is backwards to how it “should” be done or how it was done before.

12.4. “Morphogenesis”: generating and creating new ways of responding to the system. A more sophisticated system, here the issue is responding to the environment with new ideas and change.

Families are provoked into this level of responding by new levels of demands upon the system. For example, the birth of a child, a family member getting sick or dying, a parent losing a job, etc.
12.5. "Reorientation": here the family reorients towards a new goal. This is a less common level of feedback operating within a system but is provoked usually when there is maximum crisis.

- For example, the urban family that decides to move to Eau Claire, Wisconsin to escape the demands of city life; or the family that discovers Christ and their values, times, finances are reorganized around new principles.

13. "Can I Be Emotionally Healthy?"

13.1. "I can do nothing to increase God's love for me and acceptance of me."
  - This is the basis of self-acceptance.

13.2. "There is nothing anybody can do to me that I cannot forgive."
  - This is the basis of personal authority.

13.3. "I will eagerly pray, 'Father, stop at nothing to make me a man (woman) of God'."
  - This is the power and commitment of Godliness.

13.4. "I will not live my life looking through a rear view mirror."
  - This is the issue of vision.

13.5. Self-acceptance, personal authority through forgiveness, the power and commitment of living a Godly life, and this issue of vision-- to know where you are going more than where you have come from. This is what it is to be emotionally healthy.

13.6. I wish to talk to you about the second on my list-- the power of forgiveness. I call it a minor miracle. Why? Because it is a miracle that goes on every day in every wholesome relationship. Those who live effectively know much of this grace and those who live poorly prefer vengeance and hate.


14.1. Ask to know and love God as much as you ask for healing. God wants to form Christ in you, not so you can be a good person but so that you can be like Him. He is always doing this through your sicknesses, difficulties and other tensions.
14.2. Look for Christ in your days. If you ask Him to be with you, expect Him to be there. Live in the expectancy of what God will do. Don’t look for an assignment called “healing”; look for Him.

14.3. Prioritize relationships while you are unwell, not just activities. Give up some activities so you are more available to people and to Jesus.

14.4. Discover God’s individual pathway of healing for you. God heals in His own way, in His timing and with the pathway — natural or supernatural — that He chooses. This is true for you personally, as it is true for spiritual healing generally. Your prayers are then prayers of agreement with God.

14.5. Listen to His voice while working closely with your doctor. Remember that while there is wisdom in a multitude of counsel, there can also be chaos. Don’t be afraid to get a second or third medical opinion. You would get multiple opinions if you were buying a car or arranging a holiday.

14.6. Accept the support and prayers of other Christians who will encourage you and minister to you as they exercise with you the “prayer of agreement.” But keep away those that work on you as a healing project or project their anxieties and worries on you. Appoint a “people diverter” to keep well-intended dragons away.

14.7. Trust is essential to spiritual healing. You need to participate in your healing by getting rid of worry, fear, and anxiety.

14.8. “Keep on keeping on” seeking your healing. If medicines are needed, take them carefully. If exercise is required, don’t let pain or lethargy deter you from it. Do what you can do. God will do what you can’t do.

15. Prayers in Pain – The Process of Spiritual Healing from the Other Side

15.1. Faith is essential to healing – if not the one hurt, then someone else. Be persistent in the faith that you have, not the faith you don’t have. Lack of faith can be a major hindrance to healing, so welcome others to have faith for you when you have none yourself. And don’t get on your case for being faithless at this time – the recipient of healing is working overtime just getting better.

15.2. Get the right attitude towards sickness and towards “institutions” — a “thankful-feisty” attitude toward disease, the hospitals and intrusive interventions is the way to go. Not anger nor resentment, but as an advocate for the one hurt. Institutions hurt as well as heal.
15.3. Be authentic in your faith and not religious. Nothing short of a pure and wholehearted life-changing invitation of Jesus Christ will permit you to offer health when someone is unwell.

16. For The Christian Community, You Need To Know

16.1. Be a generous giver if you should decide to give. The unwell receive a lot of vegetarian lasagna but not much Caesar salad and Chardonnay.

16.2. If you pray, don’t talk. Avoid godless chatter about the person for whom you are praying.

16.3. The ultimate healer is God Himself. In Exodus 15:26, God introduces Himself as “Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord God that heals thee.” Going to a physician is not a sign of weakening faith that God can and will heal you. The doctor, in a way, becomes a surrogate of God. Don’t polarize unnecessarily.

16.4. Instant healing or process healing -- at times, God’s healing is spontaneous and instantaneous. The majority of time, healing is a process that requires patience and perseverance as health is returned.

16.5. If anyone should say (something like) “he is sick because of God's judgement on his sins (or his lack of faith)” etc., refer them to Paddy. He is happy to righteously judge those who so un-righteously judge others.