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# HEALING LIFE'S HURTS

T H R O U G H

# THEOPHOSTIC PRAYER

LET THE LIGHT OF CHRIST SET YOU FREE FROM

LIFELONG FEARS

SHAME, FALSE GUILT

ANXIETY AND

EMOTIONAL PAIN

EDWARD M. SMITH

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# Healing Life's Hurts

**Experiencing the Peace of  
Christ Through  
Theophostic Prayer**

Edward M. Smith

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# Author's Statement of Faith

*I believe that . . .*

- There is one God, eternally coexistent in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father sent His only Son to become the redemption for lost mankind. The Holy Spirit was sent to complete the mission of Christ through His body, the Church.
- The Bible is the inspired Word of God and is “profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). It is timeless and relevant for all circumstances and is the fullness of God’s divine inspired revelation to man, without error in its original form.
- Jesus Christ came in the flesh fully God and fully man, yet without sin. As God the Son, He came to earth as a man, born of a virgin, fulfilled all He was sent to accomplish, died on the cross for the sins of the world, after three days rose from the dead and rules today at the right hand of God the Father. He will return in the clouds on the day appointed by the Father to call up all those who belong to Him who have been regenerated by the atoning work of the cross of Christ. Jesus Christ is central to all true renewal and freedom. Apart from Him we can do nothing (see John 15:5).
- The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He lives within the heart of the true Christian, providing the power to obey God’s Word, convicting of sin, teaching and leading into all truth, providing comfort in time of

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distress and unifying all true believers in a bond of love. The Holy Spirit is the way that God communicates with His people through opening up the written Word and through inner communication of the heart.

- The Church is universally made up of all people who believe Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins and rose from the dead by the power of the Heavenly Father, and through faith become partakers of the divine nature. The indwelling of the Spirit of Christ is the determining factor of one's authentic faith relationship with God, not one's denomination, religious practice or performance in Christian disciplines. For "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Rom. 8:9).
- The primary call and mission of the Church is to go forth and proclaim the good news of freedom in Christ to all the world (see Matt. 28:19-20), to bring truth to those held captive by the grip of the kingdom of darkness, and to prepare the way for His second coming by making ready His bride (see Luke 4:18).
- All people are born with a fallen nature separated from God. In this fallen state our hearts are separated from God and continually evil. Those who do not respond in faith to God's gracious free gift through Christ live in a fallen state and will be separated from God for eternity. Those who come to Christ in faith are made new creatures and will live in heaven for all eternity. All people sin and are in need of God's continual grace and forgiveness. Sin is an ongoing problem that must be dealt with in the life of the believer through the cross of Christ and not of works. Jesus took on our sin that we might become His righteousness. God is actively at work through the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, renewing his mind and maturing his spirit, "till we all

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come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13, *NKJV*).

- God is a sovereign God who is able to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:20, *KJV*). The reason we may not experience this reality is not due to a lack of power but rather to our not appropriating the power that is available. When we seek to do ministry in our own power, nothing divine happens.

## **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

This book is an introduction to Theophostic Prayer Ministry. Reading this book WILL NOT equip you to do this ministry. The purpose of this book is to introduce you to the concepts and principles of this ministry but not provide the "how to" of administering the process itself. Please do not attempt to do this form of ministry based upon what you read in these pages. If you desire to be trained in Theophostic Prayer Ministry you can obtain the Basic training seminar by calling 270-465-3757 or by visiting the web site at [www.theophostic.com](http://www.theophostic.com).

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# Introduction

Shari had come to talk with her pastor about the depression and anxiety that she had been experiencing over the last few months. She was already taking medication for her panic attacks, and it had helped some, yet subtle fears dogged her daily. Shari had tried to pray more, to read her Bible and to be faithful in attending the ladies' group at her church each week, yet she was still struggling. She still entertained occasional thoughts of suicide and was in deep emotional pain.

Shari did not know it, but her pastor had just completed a video-training seminar about a new ministry approach called Theophostic Prayer Ministry. The pastor was a little uncertain as to whether he should attempt to use this approach with Shari, as he had not used it before, but he decided to at least introduce her to the approach. He began by explaining the basic principles of the ministry. After listening to the pastor, Shari agreed to allow him to administer the process.

The pastor prayed, asking for guidance and discernment, and then used the principles he had learned to help her follow her fear to its origin in her memory. Within a few minutes an enormous amount of pain began to surface and she began to describe a very disturbing memory of childhood pain and emotional wounding. At times during the process the pastor did not



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know quite what to do and felt a little fearful himself. During these moments he would pray and review the principles in the training manual supplied at the seminar he had attended.

After a while he began to see that even though Shari was manifesting intense pain (almost as if she were actually experiencing the event she was describing), she did not seem to be out of control. He prayed softly as she walked through the entire memory, feeling all of its fear and pain. After a time he asked her to describe what she was feeling. She reported immense fear and panic (much like the same panic that had been surfacing in her present life). He asked her to identify what it was in the memory that she believed was causing her to feel what she was feeling. She reported that she believed she was going to die. While tempted to reassure her that she was only in a memory and was completely safe, the pastor refrained. He had learned in the seminar that this would not alleviate her fear and would only cause her to suppress it again, so he remained silent and waited. Instead, he had her embrace the fears and encouraged her to feel them completely.

Little by little Shari came to understand and identify the true source of her pain, which she discovered was not the memory itself but the false beliefs in the memory. She said things like: "I am going to die," "I can't breathe! I'm suffocating," and "This was all my fault." In

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the midst of her immense emotional and physical pain, the pastor invited the Holy Spirit to reveal truth to her in the midst of her fear and panic. Suddenly everything changed. The pastor watched as a calming wave of peace washed over her. Shari immediately stopped expressing pain; her breathing relaxed, and her countenance changed from one of panic and anguish to one of complete peace and calm.

She looked at the pastor with a smile of relief and sighed, "It's finally over. I now know that I am not there anymore. Jesus said I was not bad or shameful. It wasn't my fault. Jesus said that He has removed that pain forever with His truth." She then cried tears of relief and joy, and so did the pastor. He had never seen anyone move from such pain into such genuine peace. He later told the pastor friend who had introduced him to this ministry that, "It was like I was standing on holy ground. It was indeed a very holy moment. God was in that place!"

Shari's story has been and is being replayed thousands of times around the world as pastors, counselors, professionals, and lay ministers are administering a simple yet powerful ministry tool developed in the early 1990s called Theophostic Prayer Ministry.

## **What Is Theophostic Prayer Ministry?**

The term *theophostic* comes from two New Testament Greek words *Theos* (God) and *Phos* (light). These two words describe God illuminating a previously darkened area of one's mind and thoughts with His truth. Theophostic Prayer Ministry is God's true Light, the Spirit of Christ bringing divine truth experientially into one's historical life experiences.

Theophostic Prayer Ministry is not new in concept only in intention. God has been operating on these same principles though out history. He desires His people to walk in truth and know His peace continually. Though out the ages God has allow and often caused his people to encounter difficulties which exposed their false thinking and wayward behavior. In the midst of these trials and exposure His true children were motivated to cry out to Him where He has been found faithful to illuminate their minds with His truth and draw them into His presence and peace. Theophostic Prayer Ministry is a systematic and intentional cooperation with what God is doing in the trials we face that expose us. Theophostic Prayer Ministry is focused and intentional mind renewal at the experiential level.

Some people have confused the name Theophostic with some other groups using the Greek word for God (*theos*) that are not Christian based and are, in fact, New Age. As you will soon discover, this

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ministry approach is centered on Jesus Christ, His truth, direction and orchestration.

Theophostic Prayer Ministry is a process in which the Holy Spirit reveals specific and personalized truth to the wounded mind of the one seeking freedom. This truth never supercedes, adds to or takes away from what has already been revealed in the written Word, but rather personalizes the same for the uniqueness of the individual and his or her situation. In its simplest description, Theophostic Prayer Ministry is prayer. In the context of prayer the minister moves aside and allows the Spirit of Christ to expose darkness with light. It is Spirit of Christ revealing truth, freeing an individual of the lies that dominate his or her thinking, emotions and behavior. Jesus can set people free from lifelong fears, shame, false guilt, and anxiety, lifting the dark clouds of all emotional pain in a divinely directed moment. This is basically Romans 12:2, “Be transformed [changed] by the renewing of your mind.”

Theophostic Prayer Ministry focuses on the origin of our pain, not on the emotional symptoms or the consequential behaviors of our lie-based pain. During the ministry session, ministry facilitators don’t give advice, quote Scripture or tell the person in pain the truth, since this rarely has much impact in such context. Instead, the minister allows the Holy Spirit to reveal His specific and personalized truth to the person in pain, because that’s

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what the wounded person needs – a healing word from God. Later, after the session, discipleship and biblical instruction can be offered and be beneficial.

I (Ed Smith) spent many years seeking to help people with emotional pain by giving them my take on the truth. I prayed with them, quoted Scripture to them, counseled them, provided steps of action, made assignments, provided books to read, tapes to listen to, encouraged them and yet they still remained in pain. It wasn't until I admitted my inadequacy and depended on Christ alone to free people that I began to see more consistent miracles occur. This does not nullify the necessity of biblical instruction or all the other things I did but it does suggest that there is a time and place for both.

I personally burned out trying to care for the deeply wounded who were coming to me for help using the above-mentioned approaches. Now I enjoy watching the Lord Himself meet people in their places of pain with His truth and lasting peace. On the other hand I also enjoy providing biblical instruction to those who are walking in genuine freedom and peace in places where all they knew before was emotional duress and defeat.

Please hear me clearly in what I am about to say. *I am not* saying that without Theophostic Prayer Ministry people cannot find freedom, be released of their lies, or walk in true victory. God uses many different forms of

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ministry to accomplish His work in His Church; Theophostic Prayer Ministry is but one of many. However, I am saying that apart from the Spirit of Christ accomplishing His experiential work in me, no effort, work, or discipline on my part will ever accomplish the renewing and spiritual maturing that God intends. Christian growth and maturity is not a “you and me, God” endeavor but my being submitted to a “work of God in me.” Spiritual performance is not spiritual maturity.

Theophostic Prayer Ministry is simply a systematized model or avenue by which we can move to a place where God can accomplish what only He can accomplish. We must never lose sight of the reality that “it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

### **Definition of Theophostic Prayer Ministry**

**Theophostic Prayer Ministry is intentional and focused prayer with the desired outcome of an authentic encounter with the presence of Christ, resulting in mind renewal and subsequent transformed life.**

**“Intentional focused prayer...**

Theophostic Prayer Ministry is in its most basic form simply intercessory and petitioned prayer. It is

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focused and purposeful, in that it has a goal and a specific purpose in mind. The facilitator of the ministry session is asking the Lord to enable the ministry recipient to: 1) embrace, own and take responsibility for her emotional pain, 2) to be willing to let go of all defenses and other hindrances that the Lord exposes and that thwart her moving toward God's purposes in the process, 3) to understand, discover and expose the lie-based causes of her emotional duress, and 4) to be willing to hold up everything exposed by the Lord to Him for His release and mind renewal.

### **...a desired outcome of an authentic encounter with the presence of Christ...**

Never in the history of the Church has there been more effective biblical education available to its members. There is a Christian bookstore in nearly every city. The Bible is available in a host of translations and formats that include electronic computer versions that allow mind-boggling quick search features. However, it seems there is a shortage when it comes to people having genuine experiential encounters with God. Our cognitive understanding of God is unsurpassed but it seems we may be a bit anemic when it comes to experiencing the presence of Christ. Receiving truth through discipleship, teaching, and Biblical instruction plays a vital role in the life of the believer. However, on going authentic

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encounters with the person of Jesus is just as important. One without the other leaves a void. Theophostic Prayer Ministry is focused on encountering Christ but recognizes the need for both. When the Apostle Paul declared, “to know Him and the power of His resurrection” (Phil. 3) he was not referring to gaining more biblical knowledge. He was crying out for experience. Both cognitive expansion and experience are a necessary part of the mind renewal journey.

### **...resulting in mind renewal and subsequent transformed life.”**

When people receive truth from the presence of Christ in places where they have harbored lies, the outcome is immediate and radical change in people’s lives as a result of mind renewal. They report peace where there was pain and subsequent transformation of their behavior. One of the signs that true renewal has occurred in a ministry session is the evidence of genuine and effortless behavior transformation. If a person has an authentic encounter with God, there should be a noticeable change. If there is not, then the encounter may be questionable.

**There is an obvious connection between sinful behavior and emotional pain.** I believe that much sinful and otherwise inappropriate behavior is motivated by



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the emotional duress that people carry. Often poor behavior is a vain attempt at emotional pain management. Too often changing behavior through much effort becomes the focus of many people. When changing behavior becomes the goal, this focus can put people into a perpetual cycle of self-effort, controlled behavior and ultimate defeat. Romans 12:2, Paul declares that changed behavior/transformation is a natural outcome of mind renewal when he writes, “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Mind renewal is the expected outcome of a ministry session when Christ’s transforming truth is received.

### **How Theophostic Prayer Ministry Began**

Before I developed Theophostic Prayer Ministry, I was surrounded by deeply wounded people needing ministry, while I, myself, was becoming defeated and burned out. I would come home each day wasted, without a drop of energy to give to my family. I was meeting with a group of incest victims and knew that the pain they carried was coming from their beliefs or interpretations of the abuse and not the abuse itself. I knew that their abuse was over and not the cause of their

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present emotional pain. I had tried every means possible to get them to embrace the truth, but to no avail.

I can remember having them revisit their traumatic memories over and over, but nothing significant happened. I watched them abreact in deep emotional and physical pain as they experienced their memories, only to have the pain remain.<sup>1</sup> During this abreaction I tried to give them the truth, but they could not embrace it. I would have them tell me the truth (It wasn't their fault; they were safe now; they were not dirty, shamed, defiled) and acknowledge it themselves out loud, yet they could not make it their own.

For example, if a woman was seeing herself being brutally raped in her memory, I might ask her, "Where are you right now?" Shaking and trembling, she would tell me the truth, "I am in your office."

I would continue, "Are you being raped?"

She would answer, "No, I am safe now."

I would ask, "Can he hurt you now?"

She would respond, "No, I can stop him now. He cannot ever hurt me again!"

I would ask, "How do you feel, now that you know these truths?"

She would respond, "I feel afraid."

I would ask, "Why?"

She would say, "Because he's hurting me and I'm going to die!"

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These irrational, illogical responses perplexed me. This woman knew the truth and could verbalize it, yet her *lie-based* thinking residing in her memory would override it all and she would be overwhelmed by terror.

Week after week, hour after hour, I labored with these women, until I came to the end of my self. I was driving home one evening after a group session, tired and very disappointed about what had occurred in the session (which was nothing but more of the same). I remember feeling myself give up and let go of the battle. I cried out in my spirit to God, "I can't do this anymore!"

It actually felt good to let go of the task of helping these women. I began to make plans for what I would do with the rest of my life. My wife, Sharon, and I had already developed a very successful marriage encounter weekend that we were offering to churches across the country. My initial impulse was to pour myself into this effort and gradually end my counseling relationships.

In this place of having "given up," the Lord was finally able to get through to me. As I studied the Scriptures during my prayer times, I began to understand things that I had not seen before. *I am not saying that I had a divine revelation, because I did not.* I simply began to understand Scripture where I had not before. The main truth that I had overlooked in all my years of ministry was so basic and simple that I am ashamed to admit that I had missed it. I actually gave

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verbal assent to it, but I didn't live it out with my life. The basic truth that I was missing was simply allowing the Spirit of Christ to be present in my ministry sessions. I always prayed both before and after our sessions. However, I never actually invited the Holy Spirit to participate, and never expected Him to address the person in his or her traumatic pain. Here I was, a Christian counselor and minister, and yet I had forgotten about Jesus. What I had done in my counseling practice was the same thing that I had done in the church ministries I had served in earlier years. I had learned to "work the programs," to grow the church in attendance, to keep people coming and keep those in attendance happy, all the while rarely experiencing the presence of Christ.

When people experience the presence of Christ, there is *always* miraculous change. I am afraid that much of what we call spiritual encounters with God are program-driven events, orchestrated and manipulated to create a pleasurable moment for the recipient. Yet, if what we have experienced has not transformed our lives at some level, then it is questionable as to whether we have had a genuine God experience. The emotional response we have during the event is not a determining factor of the validity of the experience. We can have a warm emotional and nostalgic experience at a James Taylor concert. However, this cannot be said to be a

spiritual moment. (Sorry, baby boomers, this does not qualify as a God experience.) Each of us can know God experientially in those places where we have buried and carried pain and woundedness.

## **Who Needs Mind Renewal?**

Most people have not suffered a severe trauma, but everyone has been wounded at some level—all of us have memories that are imbedded with lies. We all need our minds renewed. When we experientially “know” God in these places and receive His truth, we will find His rest, joy, and peace. Paul said, “I pray that the *eyes of your heart* may be enlightened, so that you may *know* what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18, emphasis added). As the “eyes of our heart” are opened we will see who we are in Christ and come to “know” the love of Christ experientially.

This is my prayer for you as you read this book. You can find freedom from the lies you believe and walk in His peace. I am not suggesting that the journey will be easy, without effort or determination but He has promised us His peace. “May the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance” (2 Thess. 3:16).

Just ask this fellow in the following story.

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He had always been an introvert. He would honestly say that throughout his entire childhood he was friendless and desperately lonely. As a child he was branded by his peers as an outcast and a target for their cruel jokes and scornful rejection. The years of continual mistreatment left him with a “landfill” of lies he believed about himself coupled with immense anger and resentment. Later as an adult he was careful to keep people out of his life for fear of further pain. In his early years of adulthood, others viewed him as being aloof, arrogant and uncaring. The truth was, he was lonely, frightened of relationships all the while in desperate need of human relationship. However, as the years passed he learned to bury his pain and perform in a more socially acceptable manner. But he never knew genuine intimacy even with those in his immediate circle to include his wife. He later became a successful minister serving in many different churches for nearly twenty years mastering the skill of performance-based spirituality.

When he first began to receive Theophostic Prayer ministry he was not even sure if he needed it since he had so carefully and successfully buried his pain beyond his conscious awareness. He viewed his lack of emotion (and especially anger) as “self-control” and spiritual prowess. He had come to the place where he actually believed he was “together” and had successfully put “his past behind him.” However, as he continued to

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seek ministry the deep pain he had buried began to surface and became noticeably evident. His renewing journey was initially slow and laborious but rewarded with continual evidence of genuine transformation. Others around him began to report noticeable change as well. He has now been on this mind renewal path for nine years and can honestly say that he is walking in more genuine freedom and peace than he could ever believe possible. If you do not believe him, just ask “me.”

You can, too.

### ***Special note to pastors and counselors:***

Please understand that this book is *not* training in how to do Theophostic Prayer Ministry. *Please do not* attempt to administer this process with others without having completed the full Basic Training. Many of the primary principles of administering Theophostic Prayer Ministry are not included in this book, and you may experience negative results if you attempt this process without adequate training. This book does *not* contain all you need to administer the process. *You may cause more harm than good if you seek to lead a person to the places of pain in his or her mind without all the tools you need to deal with what you open up.* Please be wise as you minister to hurting people.

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Know that training in Theophostic Prayer Ministry or any other similar approach to ministry does not make you a counselor, therapist or qualify you at any level as such. Minister within the parameters of your qualifications, expertise and experience. Lay ministers should seek to minister under the supervision of your pastor or other Christian mental health professional.

**Warning:** Some of you reading this book may become uncomfortable with a few of the stories that I share. The content of the stories may very well trigger the pain in your own past. If you become bothered by a story, I would suggest that you skip over it until you can be in a place where you can receive qualified ministry and care.

*There are distinctions in Theophostic Terminology.*

There are many different terms and phrases I use when describing this ministry process. Some are consistent with others' definitions, while I have redefined some and coined others. The terms "healing," "inner healing," and "healing of memories" have been around for a while now and have different connotations for different people. The term healing, when used in regard to Theophostic Prayer Ministry, describes the outcome of mind renewal. For clarity, I have chosen to deliberately avoid the term healing for the most part and replace this term with mind renewal. I believe that the term mind renewal is more



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descriptive of what happens in a Theophostic Prayer Ministry session. Mind renewal occurs as the truth of God replaces the falsehoods people believe. When truth is experientially realized, perfect peace follows. As truth is embraced, what was emotionally painful as a consequence of lie-based thinking becomes peaceful, transformed by the Lord's light and freedom. Once the lies are removed from a painful memory, a true metamorphosis/life transformation should be evident in that memory. In a Theophostic Prayer Ministry context, this result would be described as mind renewal.

## Chapter One

# The Hurt Is Gone – ALL Gone!

### *Margaret's Story*

Margaret was clearly in intense emotional pain. As she sat in the chair in front of me in my office, she resisted eye contact by either looking away or holding her head down in a shamed posture. Each time I spoke to her, her answers were short and truncated. When I asked her a question, she would hesitate and then respond as if I had called her back from some distant place in her mind. When she answered, her inner pain would become more acute and apparent, as though my questions were forcing her to connect with a painful reality that she wanted to avoid. Her eyes filled with tears and she held tightly to her frayed and wadded tissue, nervously twisting and folding it over and over.

Margaret reported to me that when she was eight years old, her father had begun to sexually and physically abuse her, and he had continued to do so throughout her childhood. Her adult life had been filled with depression and defeat, failed marriages, joblessness

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and distrust of others. Her doctor had prescribed heavy doses of medication.

In the past I would have told Margaret that she would need to see me for two to five years of counseling, and even then the best she could hope for was to become more functional and live a more productive life. Even after years and years of counseling, the incest survivors with whom I had worked (prior to Theophostic Prayer Ministry) still had some residual pain in their memories and all had some difficulty being sexually intimate with their spouses. Sexual intimacy was a guaranteed trigger that would incite their emotional pain from the sexual abuse.

Today it would be different. Today she would choose to face the lies stored in her abuse memories and embrace the painful emotion thereof. It would be in this painful context that she would also find genuine and transforming peace as she encountered the presence of Christ. She would discover that the “Lord of peace Himself [does desire to] grant [her] peace in every circumstance” (2 Thess. 3:16). She would not be coming back for endless weekly sessions or joining a survivor’s recovery group; today she would find freedom from the pain in the abuse memories she surfaced.

I began by asking her if she truly wanted to be free of her pain, and she told me yes. I then shared the Theophostic Prayer Ministry principles and asked her if

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she wanted to undergo Theophostic Prayer Ministry, and she said yes. I asked her to focus on the emotional pain she was feeling and to see if this emotional smoke trail back to the memories that might harbor the source of that pain. The goal of our session would be to receive a decisive word from the Holy Spirit, which would, in turn, release her from the pain of the lies that were the true source of her emotional discomfort.

Before we began the session, Margaret's traumatic memories had shamed her, condemned her and made her feel dirty, nasty and somehow responsible. Yet as she processed her painful memories, one by one, her emotional pain disappeared as the Spirit of Jesus revealed His truth to her. At the end of the session, I asked Margaret to bring back to mind all the memories of her father molesting her that she had surfaced during the ministry session, and asked her to tell me what she felt. She exclaimed, "It's gone! All the shame, guilt and pain are gone!"

To this day, Margaret reports complete release from the pain and shame she had felt in her abuse memories with which we dealt with that day. Margaret is on the road to genuine freedom.<sup>1</sup>

***Paula's Story***

Paula was over 70 years old when she came to me for help shortly after one of her relatives had died. She told me that as she had been standing next to the coffin, she had noticed that all the other family members were expressing genuine grief over the man's death. Many had been crying and were overwhelmed with sadness, but all she had felt was rage and a sense of relief that he was dead. The longer she had remained at the graveside, the more her anger had swelled. Finally she had excused herself and gone home.

This experience had confused Paula, and she had come to me for Theophostic Prayer Ministry. She had tried to understand her feelings, but nothing in her conscious mind explained her anger and rage. She was perplexed.

During the Theophostic session an old, forgotten event emerged. Paula reported to me that when she was only eleven years old, a distant family member had snuck into her room one night and forcefully raped her. The pain had been excruciating, and the fear and confusion overwhelming. After the attack, she had quietly cried in the bathroom while she had washed the blood out of her underclothing. She had decided to keep quiet because she felt no one would believe her, since this person was favored and respected in the family. She had

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also felt a great sense of dirtiness and believed that she had been defiled by what he had done.

Paula buried the memory, but her rage and shame haunted her throughout her life. Her disruptive anger had filled her relationships with turmoil, and she had suffered from addictions, compulsions and four broken marriages. Her anger had finally made its grand entrance at her abuser's graveside. Yet after several sessions of Theophostic Prayer Ministry, Paula's rage was gone and her mind was at peace concerning the abuse. This one consciously hidden event had robbed her of joy for over 60 years, but it is never too late to find freedom from our pain.

### *June's Story*

June came to me suffering from what she described as an irrational fear. I explained to her that I believe that for the most part, there is no such thing as irrational fear. Fear is the natural response to a perceived danger, threat or harm. When we experience feelings of fear for no apparent reason, this is not irrational; it's simply irrational in the present context. When something triggers a lie-based memory, we feel the *rational* fear, shame and guilt of the original event. In its original context it makes perfect sense but in the present context it seems illogical.

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June argued that her fear made no sense, saying that for the last six months it had come each night shortly after she went to bed and everything was quiet. She knew she was safe, and couldn't understand why she felt so afraid. I asked her if she had ever felt this same fear in other situations. She said that she had, but it had been under different circumstances and never at night in her bed.

We tried to find the source of her fear but did not get very far in her first Theophostic Prayer Ministry session. However, we were able to reach several memories that held negative emotions, and freedom came to those places. Yet June's fear remained. I asked her to go home and at bedtime to be aware of what her mind focused upon just before the fear surfaced. The next week she reported what she thought was a strange discovery – the fear was somehow connected to her clock ticking by her bed. She also realized that her bedtime fears had begun after she had purchased this clock. Her solution was to get rid of the clock and thereby be rid of the fears.

I realized that the clock was not the problem, and that the ticking had triggered the lie-based pain of a painful memory. I asked her to think about lying in her bed, listening to the ticking of the clock and to allow the fear to surface. Within a few moments she felt the fear. I applied the Theophostic principles, and within a few

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moments she found herself in a frightening memory from her childhood she had long tried to forget. As a little girl, someone had come into her room, molested her and threatened to kill her if she screamed or made any noise. While the trauma was happening she had endured the event (dissociated) by focusing on the ticking of a grandfather clock that was in her room.

Her newly purchased clock had become a nightly trigger that surfaced the fear and pain contained in the memory of that childhood experience. As June was willing to go through the memory, feel the fear and identify what she had believed about the abuse (false interpretation), we invited the Holy Spirit to reveal His truth to her. As she received His truth, the fear vanished and His perfect peace took its place. Later she reported that the clock no longer triggered any fear, and she was having peaceful and restful sleep. She had also decided to keep the clock as a reminder of God's renewal and healing.

### *Sandra's Story*

Sandra had been in and out of mental hospitals and was heavily medicated. Overall, she was an emotional wreck. She could not work and lived with her parents even though she was 30 years old. Her misinformed yet well-meaning pastor had warned her to



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stay away from Theophostic Prayer Ministry. He had read some of the misinformation and criticism circulating on the Internet. Nevertheless, out of curiosity, she had looked up the word *theophostic* on the Internet and had found our Web site: [www.theophostic.com](http://www.theophostic.com). (It is incredible how God takes that which is designed to discredit this ministry and uses it to bring about good.) What she read on the Web page was contrary to what her pastor had told her. As she read the testimonies of others who had reported restoration from their lifelong emotional struggles, she felt hopeful for her own situation.

When Sandra came to my office she was as emotionally downtrodden as any person I had ever seen. She handed me a stack of medical records that documented her journey over the last fifteen years. She had already spent thousands of dollars out of her own pocket over the many years of treatment, yet she was still in great distress. Her extensive medical and mental health records, from a host of counselors and doctors, revealed a list of diagnoses that included chronic depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder and several phobias. She sat quietly and non-responsively as I skimmed through her file.

When I finished I laid it on the table beside me and asked her to look up at me. Her eyes were empty and filled with despair. I looked into her eyes and asked

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her what I ask everyone who comes to see me, “Sandra, do you want to be free of your pain? Do you want Jesus to release you?” I needed to know what her will was in the moment. Not everyone that comes for help wants to be free. She slowly but clearly responded, “Yes.” I recognize the absolute requirement of engaging a person’s true will when doing ministry. In the Theophostic Prayer Ministry Basic Seminar Manual one of the chapters is titled “The Human Will; the Second Most Powerful Force in the Universe.” Though God is of course the most powerful force there is, He has limited His omnipotence to our choosing. Something or nothing always happens in a ministry session because of the person choosing. I went on to say to her, “If this is true that you desire freedom, then you meet all biblical requirements – faith and willful submission to Him – as far as I can tell, for God to release you of your pain.” I went on to ask her, “Are you willing to go to any memories that hold the source of your pain? Are you willing to feel all of the pain and identify the true reason for why you feel the way you do?” There was a longer pause before she responded, but eventually she spoke with a clear and firm “yes.”

Sandra had scheduled several sessions with me, which is what I recommend for those who are highly traumatized and have a lot of trauma memories. (Keeping in mind that mind renewal is a life-long journey

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that includes both cognitive learning and experiential encounters with Christ as is reported in but not limited to TPM sessions.) Day by day, we revisited memory after memory, for hours on end, walking through some of the most horrific experiences that can be imagined. The presence of Christ came into each and every memory, in the midst of seemingly endless pain, bringing perfect peace with His truth. At the end of the three days, Sandra said that she felt peace and genuine release.

Sandra's initial visit with me was over four years ago. She is no longer depressed, she is no longer dissociated and she is no longer obsessive. I still see Sandra from time to time, because we live in the same town. When she experiences pain because of additional lie-based memories, she comes to see me in order to bring Christ's renewing to those memories as well. Mind renewal is a lifelong journey as God continually exposes our lie-based thinking so He might release us with His truth.

Some might suggest that when I ask a person to look for the source of their present pain that I may be implanting a false notion that a painful memory is present when in fact there may be none. I trust the neurological principle of association to be true and valid in this context. I believe that everything we know, feel, think or perceive is connected to life experience and thus my present state is in some form associated with my past.

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We have no mental information that did not come to us originally by way of experience. Thus what a person feels in the present moment is connected to something that he or she has already experienced someplace, sometime. The present feeling is connected to a belief that he or she arrived at somewhere. Even if a person believes that what he or she feels is limited to the present situation, this present moment is actually history in that it has already occurred and thus it too is memory. If we are going to help people in emotional pain with any counseling or ministry approach we have no other option but deal with memory since everything except the actual present moment is past tense and only accessible as memory. Some people suggest we just put our past behind us. If we actually could do this we would have nothing from which to live in the present. Every thought in our minds is rooted in our past. All we have are memories and the immeasurable moment we call the present tense.

Margaret's, Paula's, June's and Sandra's stories are typical of those who receive Theophostic Prayer Ministry. The renewal experienced is genuine and lasting. I receive literally thousands of emails, cards and letters from people all around the world who are using this approach to ministry and are giving witness of the glorious things that God is doing in the lives of wounded people.

**Note:** Though all the above stories were about sexual abuse, the efficacy of Theophostic Prayer Ministry is not limited to this type of emotional wounding. Theophostic Prayer Ministry is applicable to any area where lie-based thinking is at the root.

### *One Episode of My Story*

A few years ago, I was at a conference listening to a speaker making a presentation. Some of the things he was saying caused me to emotionally react in a negative way. As I sat there listening, I noticed a growing anxiety and a tightness in my chest. In the past I would have dismissed this and suppressed my feelings, often covering them over with anger or feelings of offense. I have learned that many negative emotions, such as fear, helplessness, anxiety and worry are often hidden by anger. I got up from my seat and went into a small back room. As I sat in the chair, I allowed myself to feel the increasing anxiety. I began to apply the principles of Theophostic Prayer Ministry and soon discovered the memory in which I had first felt that same emotion.

I remembered a time from the second or third grade when I was on the playground. Two children had been appointed to choose sides for the game we were about to play. I was the very last child to be chosen for a team. I watched as the team captains argued over who

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had to have me on their team. I felt rejected, unloved, not good enough and angry. The messages underneath these feelings were lies that I believed, and were the source of the pain I was experiencing. I continued with the Theophostic process, and soon the Spirit of Christ revealed these words to my heart and mind: *I love and want you and I chose you*. The instant I understood these words, the anxiety and tightness in my chest vanished. I went back into the conference and listened to the rest of the lecture without any further noticeable emotional reaction.

My memory of what happened on the playground is not traumatic, was not about abuse and yet it contained lies that were hindering my adult life. I share this personal experience to say that mind renewal is for everyone, not just those who have been traumatized with abuse. I am just like you; when I feel bad feelings, I am prone to make poor decisions and act out my pain. However, the more I find freedom and am released to walk in God's perfect peace, the better equipped I am to make good choices.

Every person on the face of this Earth is carrying some level of emotional pain. We have all been infested with lie-based thinking. If you think you have not been infected, just ask those who know you. If you become aware of how you are feeling throughout the day, you will begin to pick up on when your lies are being

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triggered. For example, when that fellow gets your parking place at the shopping center, be aware of what you are feeling. The emotion you feel is likely based in a memory of another time when you felt similar emotion. Maybe you are like me, I did not even know I was in need of ministry. I had buried my pain so deep that I rarely experienced it. Should the pain sneak past my defenses, I would quickly deflect it by blaming others, making rational excuses or quickly suppressing it. Most of us have opportunities for renewal every day (in other words we are exposed in some manner or the other), if we will just watch, feel and listen. I know I do.

If you are hurting or know others who are, Theophostic Prayer Ministry may be the very thing for which you have been searching. Life doesn't have to be a constant emotional struggle. You don't have to settle for tolerable recovery or wait years for renewal of your lie-based pain. You can begin an intentional renewal journey now. As you read this book, I hope that you will be sensitive to areas of your life in which you need renewal. God desires this for you. He desires that you walk in truth and come to know Him experientially.

## **The Basic Principles of Theophostic Prayer Ministry**

This is a very abbreviated discussion of some of the basic principles of Theophostic Prayer Ministry. For a complete understanding of this ministry approach you may choose to order the complete training program. (See ordering information at the end of this book or visit [www.theophostic.com](http://www.theophostic.com).)

**Principle One:** *Our present situation is rarely the true cause of our ongoing emotional pain.*

More often than not, the emotional pain we feel in the present tense has been triggered by *lie-based thinking*, which is rooted in memory. Lie-based thinking is the false belief one holds in memory learned during a specific life event. For example, a man raised by an alcoholic parent might believe the lie that he was somehow the cause for the chaos in his home and responsible to resolve it. This might in turn play out by him being stressed, anxious and over-reactive to life situations where there was perceived lack of order. If we blame the present situation for the emotional pain coming from the earlier memory event, we will be trapped in an irresolvable cycle of emotional pain and defeat. To believe that other people or circumstances are the cause of our emotional upheaval is to empower them



to control us emotionally until *they* change. When we find freedom from the lie-based thinking we will no longer be triggered by it and can walk in peace, content in whatever circumstance we find ourselves (Phil. 4:11).

This is a common scenario in marital conflict. Each partner in the relationship assumes that the pain he or she feels is being caused by the other. When in reality, each one is merely triggering the other's lie-based pain. It is difficult to admit that one's mate is not the source of the pain and that they are only exposing what was already there. It is easier to make someone else the cause than it is to choose to hold myself responsible for the emotional pain in my life. This is not to say that what the other person may have done was inappropriate or justified, for it may not be. However, our emotional response often goes much deeper than the current moment. If what I am feeling is rooted in my own lie-based thinking and I blame another, then I am doomed to suffer in this pain until the other person changes.

**Principle Two:** *Everything we presently know, feel or are mentally aware of has its roots in a first-time experience.*

This concept does not require a degree in rocket science to figure out. Everything in my brain got there at some point in time. Therefore, anything that I access in

the present tense from my thinking had a point of entry. When we react negatively to a present situation, our mind is automatically transferring the negative feelings stored in the memory of the original experience to the present moment that is similar to the original experience. This is a natural neurological process of association that is active during all thinking moments. Our minds are continually networking and linking our present moment to the information learned in earlier places. Our minds provide input as to how to respond to a current situation based upon how we have responded to similar situations in the past. Actually, we respond to the present based upon what we have come to believe to be true within the past events. This automatic superimposing of past emotional responses onto later similar situations will have great bearing on what behaviors we choose to act out. We tend to act out the way we feel. If we act out our present pain, we will likely manifest sinful behavior. This is not to say that some people will deny the pain and choose to act rightly as opposed to acting out their pain. It is merely suggested that many people, much of the time, tend to act out of the pain that has surfaced. For those who choose rightly, they just feel bad while doing the right thing. Both places feel pretty miserable.

**Principle Three:** *If we try to resolve our present conflicts without resolving our historical lie-based woundedness, we will find only temporary relief for our emotional pain. However, if we find renewal for our past, we can redeem our present.*

Some of today's counseling and ministry methods typically try to change the present behavior of a person by providing new insight and steps of action to modify the behavior they are to carry out. This is often only a stopgap measure and may not result in true and lasting victory if the underlying lies are not addressed. This is not to say that discipleship and teaching are not important, for they are. However, some have been led to believe that controlled behavior is equated with spiritual maturity when in fact many nonbelievers are doing a good job of performing in this same arena. True victory is a work of Christ in us. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

It is not based on my effort, determination or willpower but is a natural overflow of His work in me. This does not negate obedience, repentance, discipline or effort on the part of the believer, but rather puts all of these practices in a divine perspective. Salvation is by faith and grace, and so is the walking it out. The apostle

Paul declared that we should walk in Christ in the same manner that we have received Him (see Col. 2:6). Self-control that is provided and maintained as a byproduct or fruit of the Holy Spirit (see Gal. 5:23) is different from controlled behavior that is a fruit of man's effort. When I know the truth and reside in the peace that Christ gives, my "self" is under control as a work of God in me. When I am walking in falsehood and experiencing emotional duress, I have to control myself to keep from acting out on the painful urges. Controlled behavior is better than sinful choices but self control provided by the Holy Spirit is best.

***Principle Four: Since many of the negative emotions we currently feel are reflections of the past, they provide opportunities for the wounds of our lives to be exposed and thus for renewal to occur.***

It is difficult to address that which has not been identified. God will either allow or orchestrate our surroundings to bring us under duress and testing in order to expose what is our true core belief system (see 1 Pet. 4:12-13). It requires little effort to perform at a high level of "spirituality" when things are going well with us. However, when the fire comes, our impurities are made evident and whatever is on the inside (our true belief system) is made evident. These impurities, falsehoods

that we believe, will express themselves through our emotional state and consequential behavior. What we truly believe is made evident through our feelings. As I have already stated, we will feel what we believe. If we choose to follow the “smoke trail” of our stirred-up emotions back to their original memory source, we may discover the lie-based belief causing the emotional pain. It is here we can find complete freedom from the emotional pain produced by these lies as we receive truth from the Spirit of Christ.

**Principle Five:** *To facilitate emotional renewal, we need to identify the three basic elements in the renewal process: (1) the present emotional pain, (2) the original memory container and (3) the original lie(s) implanted in the memory container.*

The present emotional pain is the feeling that surfaces in our current situation when a memory-based lie is triggered. The original memory container is the original event in which the lie-based pain was implanted and stored. The original lie is the belief that was implanted in the original painful memory causing the present pain. Each of these three elements play a part in our thinking, feeling and behavioral responses to life. The present emotional pain is an indicator that a lie-based belief is being exposed. All lies have their original root in

a memory source. When the lies contained in these memory sources are identified and exposed to the light of Christ, freedom can follow.

***Principle Six: People are in emotional bondage due to two basic factors, belief and choice. These two factors are rooted in the context of deception.***

This is a very important concept. Belief and choice is the foundation of everything about me. Because I believe the things I do, I make choices. These choices maintain the perpetual cycle of bondage in which I suffer. However, freedom also involves these two primary factors. As I come to know God's truth (belief), I am able to make different choices. Freedom occurs as I receive the truth from the Lord and then choose to walk in it. The one additional element in this truth process is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. For it is God who grants us new thoughts, leading to the knowledge of His truth which allows us to come to our senses and escape the snare of the devil (2 Tim. 2:25-26).

***Principle Seven: When we believe a lie, the outcome will often have much the same consequences as though it were true.***

The power of a lie is such that if we believe it to be the truth, it will play itself out in our lives as though it

were true. Our belief dictates much of our present reality. Therefore, as my thinking changes so does my reality. When the Spirit of Christ brings truth into my thinking, He replaces the lie with truth and I find genuine release and peace where I once only knew pain.

It is common for a person to contain opposing beliefs at the same time. I can believe that I am forgiven for a sin in my life (logical truth) and still feel shameful when I think about what I have done (experiential knowledge). The belief producing the shame has the real power in my life and is also that which will produce the most consequence. My emotional state will point you to my true belief system. It does not matter that what I believe is false; it will have much the same outcomes as though it were true.

**Principle Eight:** *To be free of the lies we believe, we must identify and own the lies rather than suppress or deny we believe them before we can be free from them.*

Our natural inclination is to deny that we believe lies and to bury the apparent pain they are producing. If we do this, however, we will maintain a cycle of perpetual defeat in our life. As long as lies remain embedded in our minds, they will continue to surface as pain every time they are triggered by situations similar to

their original implantation. If I believe that I am worthless and this lie causes me to feel such, I may choose to deny this belief and perform with “confidence” and become an overachiever with notable success (this was my personal experience). On the outside this appears to be a good thing but the purpose of the behavior is to deny and bury what I really hold to be true thus keeping me in bondage. Freedom requires that I acknowledge and take responsibility for what I believe and feel its corresponding emotional pain. I must choose to lay down my feeble defenses and attempts to deny my pain, project the pain onto others or onto life circumstances. In this honest context, God is released (by my will) to free me.

***Principle Nine: In the midst of our “darkness,” we must come to realize how utterly bound we are to the lie and how helpless we are to overcome its debilitating grip on our lives apart from God’s divine intervention.***

As we experience the emotional pain in the memories, we realize that we are helpless, we are trapped in our emotional bondage and we cannot make the pain go away. This is the same place people in the New Testament were when Jesus healed them physically. It is the same place Paul found himself when Jesus spoke truth into his painful circumstance when He said, “My



grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Cor. 12:9). When we try to break free through self-effort and working hard, we will eventually fail. We have no more ability in ourselves to overcome the sin and lies in our life today than we did before the cross. Christ in us is our power to overcome, not self-effort. Freedom is not a "you and me, God" process, but an "I am weak, but He is strong" realization.

**Principle Ten:** *No person, including ourselves, is capable of talking us out of the lies we believe. We will be free only when we receive the truth from the One who is Truth (John 16:12).*

God is not limited in the ways he chooses to deliver His truth to us. Theophostic Prayer Ministry is but one method He uses. However, much of the training seminars and self-help books being written are based on the idea that if a person can be helped to see what is wrong in his thinking and be provided with truth, he can then choose to replace his false thinking with the truth and change his life. Cognitively receiving truth may have little or no impact on releasing a person from the lie-based emotional pain in his life unless it is delivered to the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is incorrect to assume that

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people can walk in victory by making right choices and trying hard. Self-effort and controlled behavior can achieve moment-to-moment abstinence but not true victory. Such thinking lies at the heart of works-sanctification and is the basis for most other world religions. The truth is, most people already logically know why they are in pain and logically hold the truth they need, yet they are still in emotional misery and still cannot find their way to freedom.

When I was preaching regularly from the pulpit, I never ceased to be amazed how I could deliver what I thought was a life changing message and then no one changed. However, on one of my bad days where the sermon fell flat, people might respond and experience true transformation. My conclusion to this was that when the Holy Spirit is speaking to people who are listening, glorious things always happen. My best sermons may not move people, but when the Lord speaks, hearts are revived. Theophostic Prayer Ministry simply encourages people to listen as the Lord reveals His truth to their hearts and minds.

I believe 2 Timothy 2:24-26 is one of the clearest passages in the Bible that describes this process. Here the apostle Paul gives instruction on helping someone who is believing falsehood. "A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, [if God

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perhaps will grant them repentance. The original meaning of repentance being a change of thinking], so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”

Notice that we as ministers or “servants of the Lord” are called to teach and correct those who are in opposition (this is discipleship), but it is God who accomplishes the task of setting them free. For until “God grants them *repentance* [change of thinking]” they cannot come to “*know* the truth.” It is important to note that the word translated “repentance” here is not necessarily “turning from sin” as is often understood but rather the changing of one’s thinking. The *Dictionary of Biblical Languages, Theological dictionary of the New Testament* and the *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon* all define repentance as “change of mind which results in change of life (style).”<sup>2</sup> The word “know” here means to embrace experientially as oppose to having just logical mental assent. This is the same word that Mary the mother of Jesus used when she said to the angel that she had not “known” or had intercourse with any man.

We ministers have an important role in leading people to the place where they are willing to submit themselves unto God and receive from Him. However, unless He grants them repentance or a change of thinking, they will never be free. When God grants new

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thought, people come to “know the truth” and “come to their senses” and thereby “escape the snare of the devil” (the snare is the lie-based thinking). The words translated “coming to their senses” can also be understood to mean to “sober up” or see clearly. Those of you who have already administered the Theophostic Prayer Ministry process know exactly what this looks like. You have probably already watched people in deep pain crying out in their painful memory suddenly “sober up” and enter into complete peace and clarity of mind as the Lord reveals to them His truth. As the Lord grants “change of thinking” the raging swell of pain becomes a placid calm. This verse contains the essence of what is taught in Theophostic Prayer Ministry.

**Principle Eleven:** *When we know the truth experientially, having received truth from God in our memory experience, we can walk in genuine maintenance-free victory in these areas of our lives.*

The areas of our minds that are renewed with truth will no longer be stirred up with lie-based pain. Since our emotional pain is a primary motivator for our inappropriate behavior, we are able to walk in permanent and maintenance-free victory in these specific places when our lies and painful emotions are no longer present. Knowing the truth experientially frees me to

walk in my present righteousness so that I might experientially agree with the apostle Paul who declared, “Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; [which I tend to do when I am emotionally stirred and in pain] but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God [which is effortless when I am walking in the truth and peace of the Spirit]” (Rom. 6:12-13). When I say maintenance-free victory I am referring to the fruits of the Holy Spirit that are produced not through my self-effort, but as a natural byproduct of the abiding truth of Christ and His residing peace.

**Principle Twelve:** *In times of crisis or in emotionally charged life situations, our experiential knowledge tends to override our logical truth.*<sup>3</sup>

Experiential knowledge (not necessarily truth) is that which I have come to believe through experience. This knowledge is primarily my interpretation of the experience more so than the details of the event. For example, if I was abused as a child my experiential knowledge may be that I believe that I am dirty and shameful. Logical truth is that which is confirmed truth learned through cognitive processes such as personal

study and biblical instruction. The power the *experiential knowledge* holds over the *logical truth* is in the painful emotion, which is often attached to the knowledge learned in experience. I can know logically that God loves me and has forgiven me of my sins and yet not be able to shake the bad feelings of worthlessness, rejection, self hate or shame attached to the lie-based thinking in my experiential knowledge held in memory. When these lies are triggered, I have no choice but to feel their pain. Some suggest that we should just deny these feelings and walk in victory. Although some practices this, most would confess that this approach is lacking joy and fulfillment.

It is difficult to appropriate logical biblical truth if what we have learned experientially is contrary to our logically held truth. But as we go to the lie-based sources, discern the lie and receive the experiential truth God has for us, we can readily appropriate the logical truth of Scripture we comprehended only cognitively before. It is easy to logically believe that we are loved and fully accepted by God when we experientially hear Him tell us "I love you" in our painful memory experiences. This is not to say that we should not choose to obey the truth and do what is right even while in the midst of our emotional pain. However, while obedience in the midst of lie-based pain has merit and is praiseworthy, it is better to be able to obey from the heart without having

lie-based pain in our face. This is effortless victory that comes when the knowledge of our experience lines up with what we already know logically.

**Principle Thirteen:** *Lie-based pain can only be removed as the lies causing the pain are replaced with truth, whereas, sin-based pain can only be dealt with through the cross of Jesus.*

The only cure for sin is the cross. This pain is different from the pain one carries as a consequence of lie-based thinking. Theophostic Prayer Ministry does not minimize the role sin plays in the life of a person. If we sin, we will and should feel pain. However, it is not an either or but a both situation. The writer of Hebrews said that we must “Lay aside every encumbrance [weighty things and lie-based pain] and [both] the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (12:1).

**Principle Fourteen:** *Mind renewal is a lifelong process.*

People *cannot* be released of all their lie-based pain in a single session of Theophostic Prayer Ministry. Some have suggested that I teach that they can, but this is not true. In reality, total release would not even be possible within a lifetime. All of us have an abundance of lies that are harbored in our minds. It could require a

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lifetime to address all that the Lord would eventually expose in us, that is, if we choose to cooperate with Him. I have often said that the finish line in the renewal process is at one of two places; either when we die or when the Lord returns. However, it is very possible for people to find complete and lasting victory and residing peace in *specific* areas of their emotional pain as their lies are replaced with the Lord's truth. It is also common for people to experience increased levels of emotional duress as they allow the Lord to expose the pain that they have kept hidden and suppressed. It is because of this that some have suggested that Theophostic Prayer Ministry causes people to worsen in their emotional state. The truth is that some people may become more emotionally stressed as they are willing to feel what they have denied for so long. As people become willing for the Lord to expose their inner thoughts, they are often surprised to discover just how much pain they have carried throughout their lives. Personally, I have been amazed at the pain that I have carried all my adult life, even though for many years in my Christian life I genuinely thought that I had it all together. Rarely a day goes by that the Lord does not expose some level of my lie-based pain. I am a "landfill" of lies that He is committed to exposing and renewing with His truth. As a result of what the Lord has done, there is no question that I am in a better place today in my spiritual journey than I have ever been



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before, even though there were times when I thought I was in worse shape than when I started.

I am not suggesting that Theophostic Prayer Ministry is the only way to accomplish this level of renewal in people's lives. Theophostic Prayer Ministry is a systematic way of leading people to the place where God has always been. He resides in truth and rewards those who seek Him. This is nothing new in relation to what God has been doing within His people all along. Theophostic Prayer Ministry is merely an avenue or process for effectively appropriating one aspect of God's process of mind renewal and sanctification.

**Note:** Though many of the examples in this book are about traumatic abuse, this author does not assume that all people or even most people have suffered trauma in childhood. He does believe that all of us are in need of mind renewal and are infested with lie-based thinking no matter our childhood experience.

## **Chapter Two**

# **Genuine Recovery Versus Tolerable Recovery**

### **What Is Tolerable Recovery?**

I was raised Southern Baptist and served in their churches for over 17 years before beginning a counseling ministry in 1991. After almost five years of working with adult incest victims and seeing only marginal progress and recovery, I was burning out. I believed that the best any person in emotional pain could hope for was to get better, and that renewal from the deep wounds caused by things such as sexual abuse would take years and years. I honestly did not think true resolution from traumatic memory was possible. It seemed more reasonable to teach people how to compensate and live life in spite of one's losses.

My approach to helping people was similar to most traditional Christian counseling practices. I sought to understand why a person was in trouble, conflict or pain, and looked for ways that the Bible could be applied

to his or her particular situation and thus give good advice. I saw myself as a troubleshooter of human issues and a biblical applicator to these troubled places. I rightly believed that people were in emotional pain, conflict or trouble because they either had sinned or believed lies, which produced a predictable emotional upheaval from which they would make their choices, resulting in more problems and more emotional pain. I believed that their only way of escape was to know and act on truth.

For many people, getting better is not such a bad place to be. For example, the medicated sufferer of emotional pain is happier being chemically stabilized after years of highs and lows. Emotional stability is a welcome improvement. Feeling better is an improvement. However, I call this *tolerable recovery* and what I offered all my ministry life to those who came to me for help. However, this is not what Jesus offered people.<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that in some cases medication is the right and only choice (apart from a divine intervention), but medication has its limits and not all that have been prescribed provide valid treatment.

## **More Knowledge Does Not Necessarily Equal More Freedom**

Many ministers and counselors are successful in discerning the core beliefs that cause a person pain. The

problem is not in discovering the reason for one's pain, but in knowing what to do when it is discovered.

Traditional counseling tends to focus on helping people by supplying them with new knowledge, developing new habits and skills, cultivating better methods of communication, overcoming bad habits through support and maintaining some level of abstinence. This has its place in the total scheme of things but is lacking when solely offered.

Those who believe that people can walk in freedom simply by supplying them with biblical truth alone may have misunderstand what the Bible teaches and overestimate the power of self-determination and human willpower. We cannot successfully keep the Law or apply truth through self-effort. Scripture teaches just the opposite. The Bible says, "When the commandment came, sin became alive and I died" (Rom. 7:9). The Law was given to expose us, not to heal us. Yet we often equate knowledge, controlled behavior, willpower and self-effort with spiritual maturity when in fact this is the foundational stone for all other world religions: self-effort.

I know, because that was exactly my approach to counseling. I believed that all I could do was offer truth and then trust that the person had enough willpower and determination to apply that truth. This approach looked much like legalism and works, and produced only more

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frustration, hopelessness and defeat. Only those people with strong self-discipline, determination and controlled behavior can have any measure of success. As I just said, the Law of God was not given to save us but rather to expose us and condemn us and to become a “tutor” (Gal. 3:24) that would drive us to the mercy and grace of God found in Christ.

Jesus didn’t offer people tolerable recovery. When Christ healed people, the renewal was always complete and total as a result of their faith in Him.<sup>2</sup> When the lame man told Jesus that he wanted to be healed, Jesus healed him and told him to walk (see John 5). Jesus did not say, “My friend, put these braces on your legs and take My arm for support, and come hobble along with Me down to the Jerusalem Physical Therapy Center. In no time you will be walking on your own. Now friend, you must understand, you may walk again, but you will probably have a slight limp. You will never be able to run or dance and you may be required to wear these braces for the rest of your life. Be of good cheer, for at least you won’t be sitting here on the curb, begging. You will be in better shape than you are now, and that will be tolerable. Come hobble along with Me, for you are healed . . . sort of. *So take up your bed and limp!*” No, the healing that Jesus offered was complete and maintenance-free. This man did not have to work at walking, focus on his steps or fear relapse – he was healed!

True Christian victory has nothing to do with me – it’s God’s grace and Christ at work in me. True victory is maintenance-free and is easy because it is not based on my self-effort or willpower. Though Jesus called us to take on His yoke that is light and easy (see Matt. 11:29-30), few Christians would describe their Christian walk as easy. Much of what I believed doctrinally and theologically I rarely realized experientially in my Christian journey. I do not believe that this has to be!

More biblical truth and personal application of that truth does not guarantee true freedom, which is effortless. It may give us all the right answers, yet we may continue to suffer. Some of us are good at saying the words, such as “My God shall supply all your needs” (Phil. 4:19), “I can do all things through Christ” (Phil. 4:13, *KJV*), or “We are more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37, *KJV*), and yet struggling to find entry into their reality. Just because we believe these statements logically does not mean that we know them experientially.

## **Beyond Truth to Experience**

Freedom – *genuine recovery* – comes from going beyond knowledge into experience. We must learn the truths of God cognitively and logically (thus the necessity for discipleship and biblical instruction) but at the same time come to know them and Him experientially so we

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might discover the truth of who we are in Christ, and thereby come to know the love Christ has for us. God wants us to “know the love of Christ which *surpasses knowledge*, that [we] may be filled up to all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19, emphasis added). This goes beyond a cognitive understanding.

I am *not* saying that personal Bible study and instruction aren’t valuable or important. The Bible clearly states that we should “study to show [ourselves] approved” (2 Tim. 2:15, *KJV*) and we should “let the word of Christ richly dwell within [us], with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Col. 3:16). However, knowledge without experience is like faith without works – it is dead (see Jas. 2:17). We need to know God experientially as well as cognitively.

Many have difficulty living the Christian life, not because they lack zeal or determination to do better, but because of lies they believe. They may logically know the truth, but their memories are permeated with lies, and their knowledge of God is cognitive rather than experiential. Every lie we believe hinders us from living effortlessly in the finished work of Christ. When we find freedom from a lie, we can walk victoriously and effortlessly in that area of our life. The lies we believe keep us in bondage to the negative emotions and the behavior that follows.

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Jerry came to me very angry with his father and ready to dissolve the family business. He said that all his life his father had been overbearing and critical and had made him feel worthless and inadequate. He said that the way he was treated caused him to feel like a helpless little boy. I told him about the principles of Theophostic Prayer Ministry and asked him if he would be willing to look to see where he had first felt these feelings. He agreed.

Jerry had many different memories of times when his father had said or done hurtful things to him, and in each case lies were implanted into Jerry's thinking. I led him through the renewal process, and as a result, Jerry reported perfect peace in all the memories we had visited.

I ran into Jerry a couple of years later and he shared with me this wonderful testimony. He said he was still in business with his father, even though his father had not changed. Then he told me, "He just cannot stir me up anymore! It's like his words have lost all power to penetrate." He went on to say that he now saw his father as a very wounded, angry and unhappy man. He said that he hoped someday his father would be willing to go to the places of pain where he needed to find renewal. When I asked Jerry if he had to work at maintaining this newfound peace when working around his dad, he told me no. He said that it was effortless!



Like Jerry, we are hindered by the lies we believe from living effortlessly in the finished work of Christ. Every time we find freedom from a lie that has hindered us, we are able to stand victoriously in the healed area of our thinking, without any effort on our part to maintain it.

## **Genuine Recovery Is Maintenance-Free**

Over the last six years my wife, Sharon, and I have *not* worked much on our marriage, yet our marriage is stronger today simply because we have been faithful to go to our own lie-based thinking and have allowed the Spirit of Christ to give us truth. One by one, we are bringing the presence of Christ into our individual lie-based memories, and fewer and fewer things cause us pain or trigger negative feelings. I haven't arrived at total freedom in all areas of my life (all you need to do is ask Sharon about this). Yet I'm freer today than ever before. The truth is, our marriage has not been in trouble. We have merely been exposing each other's lie-based pain. As we are willing to own what is exposed, not blame the other, and allow the Lord to replace our false thinking with His truth, we are finding that we relate very well. The only time we are in conflict is when we are "triggered" by our own individual lie-based woundedness.

***True victory is the absence of battle and struggle.***

True victory cannot be claimed unless the enemy has been defeated, the dust has settled, the victory flag has been raised and the war is over. Victory does not require me to defend the same territory in future battles.

Tolerable recovery, which includes abstinence, stands in sharp contrast to the blind man who received his sight. His response was, “one thing I do know that, whereas I was blind, *now* I see” (John 9:25, emphasis added). He did not say, “Once I was blind but now I can see a little better and am seeing more and more as I continue in my recovery process, and I am really hoping that I don’t go blind again anytime soon.”

When Christ heals, God’s Spirit replaces the lies that are causing the pain with His truth, memory-by-memory, lie-by-lie. When a counselor or minister provides truth for the wounded person’s mind, the lies very well may still linger. Cognitive truth is not enough on its own. If this were the case the Scribes and Pharisees would have been free indeed. Though they had much knowledge they lacked experience. Truth must go down into the heart before it results in true freedom, and freedom comes from experiencing Jesus. We must grow in the knowledge of Christ but we also need the experience of Christ.

Merely fighting against sin, controlling behavior, and diligently making an effort to overcome may not result in

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maintenance-free victory, since victory dependent on struggle is continually dependent on waging the fight. I might call this battle-dependent victory “present victory” or “moment-by-moment victory” in that we are not succumbing to the present temptation but we are wrestling with its draw on us. This too is victory but with the necessity for struggle. Let me be quick to say, resisting temptation, choosing to walk in obedience and truth is indeed victory in the moment and a necessity for each of us who desire to live godly lives. Whenever a believer makes the choice to obey rather than sin he is experiencing victory even if it is through some effort or much effort. We are called to “abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul” and as we do we walk in victory. (1 Pet. 2:11). This obedient victory is well pleasing and will be rewarded by the Lord in eternity. I do not want the person who may have to battle every day of his life to maintain his obedience, and does so, to feel that his success is a second-class victory or not true victory at all. I believe if anything God will reward him all the more for his faithfulness under extreme and lasting pressure. If God will honor him, I would never want to discourage him by suggesting that he is not truly victorious?

However, I would suggest that there is also a victory that is effortless for the believer in the places where the Word of Christ dwells (Col. 3:16), where the Spirit of truth rules, and where the believer can actually rest. This victory can be experienced in specific areas of life where once the vain hope

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for squelching emotional pain was sinful choice and behavior, driven by emotional pain and aroused by sinful temptation.

It is obvious for each of us that there are areas of sin in which other people struggle that we ourselves never give a second thought to. For example I do not struggle today with the temptation to smoke cigarettes though many people do and I use to. Why is this? I believe that there is a reason that I struggle in some areas but face no temptation in others. There were areas in which I used to struggle but today give no thought. There are some areas in which I have maintenance-free victory without any battle. I believe that at least in many cases, this absence of temptation in particular areas of life is directly linked to resident lie-based thinking and the corresponding pain these lies produce. Where there is emotional pain, temptation to resolve this pain through sinful behavior crouches nearby. It is no coincidence that the Apostle Peter warns us to be alert for the “roaring lion” in the context of suffering (1 Pet. 5). When the fire is turned up whatever we believe will become evident. If we believe lies we will experience emotional duress to match these beliefs. Providing a way to escape this pain is what the roaring lion does best.

This effortless victory is most available in areas where the sinful behavior was the predictable choice of action taken in defense, such as is commonly seen in marital conflicts and other relationships. I know that this is true in my own life and especially in my marriage and in relationship to my father. There are places today that used to be guaranteed “landmines”

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of relational conflict with both my wife and my father. Whenever certain things were spoken, actions taken or assumptions inferred I had uncontrollable emotional pain surface in my inner being. This emotional pain was a knee-jerk reaction to the lies I believed. This emotional duress created a major conflict in my mind concerning whether I would act out in defense (which I usually chose to do) or grit my teeth and bear it. Sometimes I experienced “present-victory” by not choosing to act out the emotional pain, but it was always a struggle. However, as Sharon and I have chosen to go to our own lie-based emotional pain and have found His truth, many of these places are no longer a problem in our marriage. There is truly “effortless victory” in many places where we only knew struggle and conflict before. Today, the relationship I have with my father appears to be conflict-free and has been for about the last five years, and I do not have to do anything to maintain it. The only reason that I can give for this victory is that I now know experiential truth and residing peace in the “little boy” memories that once carried emotional pain. The good news in my marriage is that we no longer even have to work at these places that were always before guaranteed trouble spots. I have “maintenance-free victory” in these specific places.

I believe that as you seek to allow the Lord to expose the painful places in your thinking you can have this same victory. In the meantime, you must still choose to walk in the truth you know, resist the temptations sent your way, and

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choose to “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light” (Col. 1:10-12).

*Let me say clearly that Theophostic Prayer Ministry will not result in complete recovery of all wounds in a single session.* I am also not saying that by going through a few ministry sessions that you will be free of all struggles in your Christian life. I am merely suggesting that you can know real and lasting maintenance-free victory in places in your Christian life. I know this is true because I have and do enjoy this as never before. In later chapters you will read several stories of people who spent many hours and many sessions going through the Theophostic process in order to identify and replace the lies embedded in their memories. Freedom comes memory-by-memory, lie-by-lie. I have been actively and intentionally pursuing my own mind renewal using Theophostic Prayer Ministry for many years. As I am stirred emotionally, I follow the pain to its memory source. I am finding peace in each place I go.

Some people come to me with years of trauma-filled memories piled one on top of another. I may spend

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many sessions with a person who has experienced numerous traumatic events, but I also see instantaneous recovery *memory by memory* in each session. Even though it may take many sessions with some people, when a person is led to the position where he or she is ready to receive from the Lord, incredible results will occur.

The goal of Theophostic Prayer Ministry is coming to know Christ. As the apostle Paul declared, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8). It is uncanny how the truths that people report having received during a ministry session all seem to reflect either the nature or character of God. People are not just receiving truth, they are coming to know Him experientially. I can memorize the passage that God will supply all my needs, but it is another thing to experientially know this reality. My children never have the thought of whether they will be fed each day because they “know” me. They know I will provide.

### **When Is a Person Completely Free?**

Where is the finish line for this process? When does a person become completely whole? Mind renewal is a lifelong journey. The finish line is at one of two places: when we die or when the Lord returns. However, we can go to the places where the lies are stored and find

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release, lie by lie. With each lie we remove, we are better able to appropriate the deeper truths of who we are in Christ.

I am learning to be aware of my emotional pain in my daily walk. Today, more often than not, I am choosing to allow the Holy Spirit to lead me to the places in my mind where I am harboring lies that are causing me pain. As a result of these choices, I am becoming more and more free! I have come to the place where I have decided that I no longer want people and circumstances to dictate my emotional status. I want to be free and to learn to *be at peace in whatever circumstance I find myself* (see Phil. 4:11). How about you?



## **Chapter Three**

# **The True Source of Our Emotional Pain**

### **Looking in All the Wrong Places**

When we suffer from emotional pain, we usually look in one of two places to determine the source of that pain. We either try to find someone or something in the present to blame or we look to our past and blame those who have hurt us in childhood. However, if we seek to find the cause of our pain in either of these two places, we will never find resolution and never know the peace that God has for us.

If something happens between Sharon and me that stirs up a negative emotion within me, my initial reaction is to blame her and accuse her of being the cause of my pain. I might tell her, “You make me so mad!” or “I wouldn’t feel this way if you would just stop this or start that.”<sup>1</sup> If it were indeed true that my wife was the cause of my pain, then I could never be free of that pain unless she changed. When we blame another person for our painful feelings, we are giving that person power over our emotions. This doesn’t have to be.

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Of course, there are times when a person in the present is the original source of our hurt. For instance, if you discover that your spouse has been unfaithful, then much of the pain you feel can be directly attributed to his or her actions. However, similar forms of betrayal that you may have experienced in the past will also surface along with the pain you feel from the present betrayal. If you were abandoned or betrayed as a child, then the pain you experienced at that time will flood the current situation and create an emotional overload.

Emotional overload occurs when a painful situation in the present is inundated with old pain, causing the current situation to feel more painful than it should. When we experience emotional overload, our emotional response will be more intense than the situation may warrant. For example, if a person takes our parking place, our emotional response might call for some mild irritation but not rage. The rage is coming from somewhere else.

Not only do we blame people in our present life for our emotional pain, we also blame the painful childhood experiences themselves. While this might seem logical, especially considering all the horrible things that some people have endured in their childhood, past events are not the present source of our pain. While it's true that had an incest victim been raised in a happy, loving and caring family, he or she would be in a

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different emotional place today, the actual abuse and mistreatment that person received in childhood is not the present source of his or her emotional pain today.

Granted, the initial abuse did cause a traumatic reaction and may have been physically and emotionally overwhelming, but the event itself is not the *present* source of the person's emotional state. If it were, then abuse victims could never find peace because they could never undo what had been done to them in the past. They would always be victims of abuse, no matter how long they lived or how much ministry or how much counseling they received. The original trauma may have been physically painful, but the body has healed. Original trauma doesn't cause lingering emotional pain. Rather, *the source of our present pain is found in the interpretation we have given the event.* For example, if I feel shame when I think about being raped, it is not the event but rather what I believe about the rape that is producing the shame: *It was my fault.*

If we find ourselves blaming people in our present life or those who have hurt us in childhood, we will be perpetually emotionally wounded. However, Theophostic Prayer Ministry seeks to discover what we believe, and looks to the Spirit of Christ for freeing truth. Freedom results, not from blaming others or by undoing our past (which is impossible), but from identifying the

lies attached to our life events and then receiving truth from the presence of Christ.

## **The Role of Memories and Pain**

The memory is the mind's container of historical data and interpretive information. If the memory holds information that is true, it cannot be changed. So, if it's true that little Mary's grandfather raped her and that she was mistreated at school, abandoned by her mother and raised by an occult group in the deserts of Nevada, these facts will remain in her memory. Facts can't be changed, nor are they the cause of present emotional pain.

Little Mary's beliefs about the abuse – not the abuse itself – are the cause of her pain. If she believes that she caused the abuse, then she will feel guilt. If she believes that the rape defiled her, she will feel dirty and shameful. If she believes that her mother abandoned her because there was something wrong with her, then she will feel inadequate, worthless and unlovable. If she believes that she belongs to the occult, she will feel trapped, helpless and powerless. Mary's beliefs about the abuse are the source of her emotional pain.

Whenever something painful happens to a child, the child will interpret that event and store the interpretation in the memory of the event. Even when the child becomes an adult, his or her interpretation of the

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painful event becomes the source of present pain every time something or someone triggers the memory. For example, Carol was abducted and raped by a man in her neighborhood when she was 14 years old. Now 36 years old and married, she still has panic attacks when her spouse tries to be intimate with her. When her husband goes on a business trip she becomes so fearful that she calls him several times a day.

This happens because God created our minds to work by way of association. Our minds record both the information of the events and our interpretation of the events. That means that many of the experiences we have as children have been stored in our experiential memory bank, along with our emotional responses to the event. Any time someone says or does something, or any time something happens that consciously or subconsciously reminds us of a similar situation in our past, our mind brings this information to the forefront and we feel what we felt the first time it happened.

Memories that are not easily consciously accessible are as powerful and dictating as conscious memories; it doesn't matter that we aren't conscious of them. When something occurs that is remotely similar to the original event—even a word or a look—the original lie and emotions may emerge, causing discomfort. When we experience an event, our brains not only record the expected physical detail of the situation, such as who,

what, when and where, but they also record insignificant elements, such as the color of the person's clothing, someone snoring in the next room, the toy bear on the dresser across the room or the ticking clock as seen in June's story in an earlier chapter. Any of this recorded information holds the potential to trigger the emotional pain we felt during the event. Remember too, it is not the details of the memory that carry the emotional pain but rather the interpreted belief. This is why I do not need to see the memory in the present moment to feel its pain. This is why Janice said to me, "I do not know why I do not like my husband to hug me, I just know it makes me feel trapped and panicked when he does."

For example, if during a childhood trauma I fixated on a teddy bear in my room, later when I see a teddy bear in a store it might trigger intense feelings of anxiety. Or if my boss asks me how the report I am working on is coming along, my response will depend on the beliefs I have stored in my experiential data. I may feel inadequate and shamed or feel just the opposite, depending on my history. If I interpreted the original event through lies, then my thinking will be lie-based, and similar events will trigger those same lies.

## **What Is Lie-Based Thinking?**

To understand how Theophostic Prayer Ministry works, you need to understand the concept I have already referred to as *lie-based thinking*. The mind contains information that is a composite of lies and truth. Logically, we know the difference. I know there is no Santa Claus, even though as a child I believed there was. I know that two plus two is four and that Canada is somewhere north of Kentucky. This is what I call logical truth. My logical mind also contains information such as “My God shall supply all your needs” (Phil. 4:19), “The Lord is my strength and my shield” (Ps. 28:7) and “I can do all things through Christ” (Phil. 4:13, KJV). I can spout off these verses with ease and impress my Sunday school class with the right answer. Yet while I know these things to be true on a cognitive level, I may not know it on an experiential level. My emotional state in a given situation will expose the difference.

Unfortunately, even though we may know the correct answer in a given situation, many of our choices and responses are based on what we believe experientially and thus feel. If we truly believe that God is our shield and protector, then we should never live in fear. If we believe that God is the supplier of all our needs, then we should never be anxious over finances. If we believe that God is in control of our lives, then we should never worry about what is happening around us.

Yet we can honestly and logically believe all the above and live in fear, worry and uncertainty. What we feel in any given moment reveals the truth about what we truly believe. Our emotions expose our core beliefs.

I do not think it is possible to change our core experiential beliefs through willpower or by simply telling ourselves the truth. Many people have tried memorizing Scripture, posting positive statements on their mirrors and refrigerators, thinking positive thoughts (which are all good things in themselves) and yet still walk around in emotional defeat. We feel what we believe experientially – not logically. As much as we would like to believe otherwise, our emotions will always expose what we truly believe. *If what we believe is false, then it is lie-based thinking.*

## **The Power of Lie-Based Thinking**

What we think dictates how we feel. If we believe a lie is true, then it doesn't matter that it's not, for it will have the same consequences on our lives. If we believe we are shameful because we were sexually violated as children, it does not matter that we were innocent. The shaming lie will work itself out in our lives as though it was true, and the consequences will be the same. Here are some additional examples of this:



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One day I was working in our backyard on a project. It was hot and I was tired. My lovely wife came outside to check on me out of kindness and concern. She walked over to where I was working and asked, “Why did you do that like that?” My immediate response was anger — *I do not need her out here criticizing my work!* — and I said, “Why don’t you and your criticism go back in the house and leave me alone!” Suddenly the 45-year-old man became a hurting little eight-year-old who was feeling like he could not do anything right.

Years ago, I was serving a church in Kansas City, Missouri, as a minister to single adults. There was a woman who worked as a secretary in the church office who was deathly afraid of spiders. I knew this and teased her from time to time about it. One time I put a big black rubber spider in her top desk drawer as a joke. As it turned out, it wasn’t very funny. She found the spider but nearly had heart failure. I felt badly for playing such a cruel trick, but she had no real reason to be afraid. The spider was not a spider at all, yet she believed it was real and because of this she felt real fear and panic . . . of a piece of molded rubber.

Much of this experiential knowing is not always consciously present. What we are thinking at the conscious level is often contrary to what we are thinking and believing at the subconscious, experiential level. When a woman suffering from claustrophobia walks into

an elevator and begins to panic, she is not consciously thinking about the time her mother locked her in the closet all day. Instead, she feels the suffocation experienced in the original event as though it were still happening.<sup>2</sup> This forgotten memory contains the source of her panic, but she can give no logical explanation for her present feelings.

## **Lie-Based Solutions for Pain**

Most people are surprised to discover how much their lives are influenced by the lies they believe that were implanted during difficult moments in their childhood. For example, infidelity usually has little to do with the marriage itself. More often than not, the motivation for an affair is rooted in a desire to resolve emotional pain that comes from lie-based thinking.

Before Theophostic Prayer Ministry's inception, I counseled Christian people's infidelity *solely* as a sin problem, as a willful choice of immorality. While adultery is a sin, the feelings driving the decision to commit adultery are usually rooted in a person's lie-based thinking. It and other sinful behaviors are often predictable consequences of deception, producing emotional pain that consummates in sinful choices. James 1:14-15 says, "Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has

conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” Notice the stages one passes through before a sin is actually committed. First there is temptation or lie-based deception (you are usually tempted only by that which you believe you need or want). Then you are carried away by your own lust. In the original language the word translated here as *lust* does not only suggest sexual feelings, but any strong passion or emotion. When someone triggers my lie-based thinking, my lust or strong emotion is stirred. When I embrace this strong passion, it gives birth to sinful behavior. We tend to make our worst decisions when we are caught up in worry, anxiety, anger, frustration, feelings of abandonment, worthlessness, helplessness, powerlessness, etc. We tend to have the greatest difficulty *not* making a decision or taking some action when emotional pain is present. The emotional pain tends to drive us to do something to resolve the duress. This is simply a difficult place to be and where bad things tend to happen. This is why we are commanded to “let the peace of Christ rule in your heart” (Col. 3:15).

This is made obvious in the context of an extramarital affair. While sex is often a consequence of the relationship, it is rarely the driving force behind it. People tend to commit adultery because emotional pain has surfaced in their present relationship and they believe that the adulterous relationship promises some

level of relief. When their strong painful emotions are stirred up, they deceptively see the other relationship as a solution to their present emotional pain. Christians and non-Christians alike are often driven by their lie-based pain. Those who engage in affairs experience pleasurable feelings and often mistake them for love. Of course, there can never be love in an adulterous relationship, for how can agape (true love) and immorality coexist? The truth is, most people get married for the same reason they enter into an affair (which is not love). They hope their future spouse will provide them with an ongoing supply of the warm fuzzy pleasure that they have felt while dating and have mistaken for love. This elation is stirred by the hope that the other person will fulfill some perceived need, take away some longing, resolve inner pain, complete that which is believed to be lacking and so on.

Then they get married and fall out of love in a few years (or days) when their partner fails to come through with what they expected and believed their partner should have delivered. As a result, they may be tempted to turn to someone else outside the marriage and repeat the process.

Each partner will trigger the lie-based pain in the other person's mind. When this happens, the partner may look (feel) like someone from the past who has wounded him or her. This is when people start saying

things like, “You are just like my mother,” “You sound just like my father” and so on.

Just as sex is not usually the motivation for adultery, neither is it usually the motivation for sexual addictions. The sex addict is using sexual gratification as a means for covering a deeper painful emotion.

Whenever the painful emotion is triggered, he or she looks to sexual gratification to cover the pain. After a time, this process becomes automatic and appears to be a sexually focused addiction. Yet if you can uncover the lie-based emotion that drives the behavior and follow it back to its source, the person is in a good position to receive the truth, which can break the power of this assumed addiction.

Most addictive disorders have two primary roots. One is the physical addiction of the substance itself. Many people make abstinence the goal, but as I have already suggested, abstinence is not true freedom. It is merely the cessation of an undesirable behavior by way of willpower, determination and group support. People do accomplish abstinence through different programs, and I am in support of this effort, as abstinence is better than sinning, even though it is not true freedom. Yet if the only thing a person does is abstain from his or her addiction, that person is a potential relapse waiting to happen. If a person’s lie-based pain ever becomes greater than his or her resolve or if that person loses his or her

support system, that person may crumble and there's a good chance that he or she will revert to the addiction or engage in another addiction.

The other primary root of addictive disorders is lie-based pain. Any time that a lie is triggered, it produces the same painful emotion the person felt the first time the event occurred. Somewhere along the way he or she discovered that drinking, smoking, overeating, drugging or viewing pornography masked the pain.

A great amount of what we do when our emotional pain is triggered are efforts in pain management. We may have learned this means of coping from watching others in our family system, or we may have discovered it on our own. No matter how we discovered it, the addiction is not really our problem – in fact, it is our solution for pain.

Abstinence will resolve the physical cravings, for the most part, but it will not remove our emotional pain. If, however, we are willing to look at the source of our pain and discern its reason (the underlying lies), we can find truth. When we know the truth in our innermost parts, the pain will leave and the need to do the addictive behavior will no longer surface.

Paul came to us as a chronic alcoholic. He would stay intoxicated for weeks at a time. This behavior had cost him several jobs and was about to cost him his marriage. His wife had given up on him, was tired and

did not want to deal with him any longer. She had already moved out and refused to speak with him unless he got real help.

My schedule was full and I simply could not work him in, so my wife offered to minister with him. Sharon is not a trained counselor and does not profess to be. However, she has completed all the training that is offered through this ministry, and God is using her mightily as a lay minister. She began seeing Paul weekly for about two hours each session. It is important to note that she did not work on his drinking problem. She rarely mentioned it or asked how his abstinence was going. Sharon knew that his drinking was not the problem but rather his nonproductive solution for his emotional pain.

Each week she encouraged him to look back to the deep wounds of his childhood. Paul discovered that as a teenager he had found “peace” for the first time by drinking. As Paul was willing to feel the pain and discern the lies he believed in these earlier memories, the Lord began to give him truth. As each truth entered into his mind experientially, he drank less. After a few months went by he reported that he was not drinking at all.

We saw Paul a couple of years ago. It had been over a year at that time since he had last seen us, and he had not had a drink and reported that it was happening effortlessly. The exciting thing was that he said that he

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never thinks about it. When there is no pain, there is no need for a solution.

People remain addicted to alcohol or drugs, or maintain eating disorders, because lies remain embedded in their memories. Expel the lies and those suffering from these addictions will be emotionally free. With the passing of time in abstinence, these people may become physically free as well. I do not believe that “once an addict, always an addict.” I do not remember the blind man Jesus healed saying, “Even though I can see now, I will always be a blind man.” “Once a blind man, always a blind man” is a falsehood. The truth is that this man was once a blind man, but now he can see.

Can you see the problem with making sin or the addiction the focal point in a counseling or ministry session? If I make sin the primary focus and do not address the lie-based thinking, I will be forcing the person to enter into a defeat-confess-repent-adjust-perform cycle.<sup>3</sup> There is a necessity for balance in ministry. Sin can be and often is a problem but so is lie-based thinking. This is not an either/or issue but a grander solution of seeking the Lord’s grace and forgiveness for the sins we have chosen to commit and seeking His truth for the lies we believe.



## **Finding Truth and Freedom**

When we follow our present emotional pain back to its *source*, we may find a memory of something occurring that made us feel the same emotion that we are presently feeling. We can find truth and freedom in this place. The Spirit of Christ can reveal His truth to us. Christ removes the lie and replaces the painful emotion with peace. Theophostic Prayer Ministry is a process by which we can discern a person's experiential lie-based thinking and help him or her receive a freeing word directly from the Holy Spirit. When God replaces our lie-based thinking with truth, we can walk in effortless victory, which is maintenance-free. That's what Carla has discovered.

### **Carla's Story**

Carla was an alcoholic attending four AA meetings a week. She was in abstinence but was daily battling the temptation to drink. Her marriage was on the brink and she was flirting with an extramarital relationship. She was on several medications for her mood swings and depression. She also suffered from an eating disorder, and had come to me for help with her present troubles. I asked her if she was willing to look to see where her present pain all began. She said yes. At

first we had some difficulty getting to any memories, due to the dissociation in her mind.<sup>4</sup> However, as we processed through the dissociation, a painful reality began to emerge.

Carla reported that her grandfather had molested her when she was between the ages of seven and nine. He would take her on “special” walks and trips. During the abuse, he would tell her that this was the way he expressed his love for her. He was very gentle as he performed oral sex on her. She was confused by this behavior and at the same time did feel a sense of being special. She also experienced feelings of sexual pleasure, causing even more confusion. After it was all over, she felt a deep sense of shame and guilt for what *she had done* with her grandfather.

As a young adult, she often felt deep self-loathing and shame, especially when she would try to be intimate with her husband. She had repressed the sexual abuse but could not suppress the emotional feeling coming from the lies. Her eating disorder had brought her close to death due to malnutrition.<sup>5</sup> She was physically worn out and an emotional wreck.

In our first session we discovered two basic lies in her thinking. One was that she was shameful and disgusting for allowing her grandfather to molest her, since she did not resist or try to stop him. In essence she believed that the abuse was her fault. A second lie was

she was a willing participant in the abuse because she felt pleasure during the ordeal and that made her bad.

As a little girl, Carla discovered that if she focused on the pleasure she felt during the oral stimulation, she did not feel so overwhelmed by the shame and guilt of what her grandfather was doing. Yet afterward she felt shame because of the sexual pleasure she experienced.

During a Theophostic Prayer Ministry session, she reported that God had given her this freeing truth: He had created her body to experience pleasure, and her focusing on the physical pleasure was her way of getting through her grandfather's shameful act. She sensed that God told her that she was not dirty or shameful for surviving. This truth replaced her lie-based thinking and Carla's eating disorder subsided, allowing her to progress on through her renewal. Her lies had produced severe pain, which she had sought to manage through destructive behavior. As each lie was replaced with truth, Carla's present life transformed and calmed down, and she was able to walk in true peace and let go of her solution for pain.

## **Why We Can't "Put Our Past Behind Us"**

Many people have tried to put their pasts behind them and not think about them any longer. I tried for 30

years but this approach has never really worked. However, this has not stopped the propagation of this teaching, and as a result some Christians have been misled into believing that they should be able to leave their pasts behind them. Consequently, many of these same people believe that something is wrong with them spiritually because they cannot lay their past wounds at the cross as they have their sins.

This teaching is based upon the statement of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3:13. This is probably one of the most misinterpreted Scripture passages in this regard, and is often used to defend the need to just put our past behind us (and, therefore, negate the need to do things such as Theophostic Prayer Ministry). In it, Paul says, "I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet [the resurrection]; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead." To interpret this verse correctly, we must view it in its context.

In this verse the apostle Paul is *not* referring to the wounding or negative experiences that have happened to him over the course of his life. As a matter of fact, he sees great value in the painful experiences of his life and alludes to them often in his writings. When he says he is putting the past behind him, he is not referring to his painful past, but rather the long list of self-attained great accomplishments of his life he has mentioned previously

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in this same passage. He provides a hefty list of his accomplishments and works in self-righteousness, and says he counts them as rubbish and is putting them all behind him. He says, concerning his life accomplishments:

I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things [his accomplishments] to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ (Phil. 3:4-8).

If we were to put this into contemporary language, it would read, "I am laying aside every degree, accomplishment, position or status I have obtained in life that elevates myself or leads to self-righteousness and calling it all cattle poop compared to knowing Christ."

Because all of us are emotionally damaged at some level, putting our past behind us is not an option. However, genuine renewal is! Some of us deny and hide our lie-based thinking better than others, but we all need

God's truth to find renewal. It is not a question of whether we are wounded, but rather how extensively we have been damaged.

The cross of Jesus was sufficient for all our sins and emotional wounds, but sins and wounds must be dealt with differently. The trouble is not in the effectiveness of the redemption, but rather in the application of the redemption. God has indeed redeemed us from our sins once and for all, but every day we are in the process of mind renewal as we are being exposed of the lies we believe and being given the opportunity to receive the truth that will release us of our emotional bondages. Until we find freedom from these lie-based wounds, we will struggle with the consequential sins these wounds manifest.

All of us have been hurt by others and through life circumstances at some point misinterpret things that happen. This misinterpretation is the lie-based thinking that cripples us in the years to follow. If my parents tell me that I am not good enough, I will probably internalize this lie. Later, when anyone or anything triggers this thought, I will feel the same emotion as I did with the original wound. This emotional surge will be a primary motivation for the choices I make in each situation. Until the Spirit of Christ reinterprets this experiential lie, I will not be able to live out the reality that I am acceptable, righteous and made complete, since I am raised up with

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