

DOROTHY MATHIESON, PhD

SEEDS OF JOY



THE HEALING POWER
OF STORY-PRAYER

"I found Dorothy and George to be gentle, accepting, theologically trained Christians with a sincere heart to research and critique the most effective understanding of Christian healing. Their simple approach is informed both by neuroscience and the idea of practicing the presence of Jesus. It does not engage with the pain story or pain identity from that story until there is a connection with stories of joy, involving an experience of the incarnational God through creation, others, ourselves. This is a rare experience for most of us, particularly for those whose identity has been formed out of stories of neglect or abuse in relationships. A different sense of self unusually blossoms in the telling, recording and listening back. This is gold in my opinion, a tangible experience of being loved by the God of love."

*-Vanessa Daughtry,
Clinical Counselor & Lecturer in Counseling*

"In this book, healing is about leading people into a revelation of Jesus. In story after story and in the practices set out by Dorothy and George, we see how wonderful our Jesus is. Our Lord is always with us and at work in our lives, even when we've been too distracted by the pressures and pains of this world to be aware of His presence, or have yet to know Him by name. This book is a manual for healers, evangelists and all who desire to minister Jesus. It is a beautiful guide to mining the 'sapphire' truths of His enduring faithfulness, love and greatness in our lives."

-Jennifer, Companion in Prayer

“Dorothy and George Mathieson are an incredible resource for our larger urban poor ministry. They use the bulk of the prayer time to bring people into the presence of Jesus. They hold back from giving advice or problem solving and expect Jesus to lead the time. When we know that Jesus is speaking to us and leading us, hope becomes real, joy is built, and old scars become signs of His healing. This process feels slower, messier, unpredictable, but it actually helps break the pattern of people seeing their identity revolve around their pain.”

-Pastor Chris Rattay, New Life Community Church, Los Angeles

“Dorothy and George offer a unique and life-changing approach to the ministry of healing. They define healing as no more or less than experiencing the presence of Jesus. Their decades of sacrificial ministry and mission and vulnerability in personal healing have shaped CompanionLIFE. Their work gently integrates the ministry of healing with empowerment—all followers of Jesus, regardless of their level of formal training, can live out of their friendship with Jesus by being companions to others in their healing journeys. Over the years I have had several profound personal experiences of Jesus’ presence while praying with George and Dorothy. But the greatest blessing by far has been learning how to connect with Jesus more in the midst of my regular daily life. May you experience Jesus’ presence as you read this book and become a healing companion to others in Jesus’ name.”

-Lisa Engdahl, Co-General Director of Servant Partners

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OF STORY-PRAYER**

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Servant Partners is an interdenominational evangelical missions agency that sends, trains, and equips those who follow Jesus by living among the world's urban poor. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we seek the transformation of communities with the urban poor through church planting, community organizing, and leadership development.

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INTRODUCTION

THE MAIN CHALLENGE of prayer healing is this: How do we connect people to divine healing resources when they're convinced that God has abandoned them in their pain?

In over 40 years of missional and pastoral ministry, I have never seen Jesus fail to appear in the stories of hurting people. My conviction is that God has placed healing seeds in every person's story, and we are privileged to companion people as they rediscover these seeds. My husband George and I discovered these personally crafted, divinely created healing seeds in our own stories first. Then, over a lifetime of listening to the stories of others, we gradually developed a process that empowered us and many others to become story-healing companions.

It's been a great joy to see so many people grow confident that they, too, can help others discover the power of narrative prayer. We now offer this CompanionLIFE prayer process, as we have called it, for you to freely use and adapt in your own context as well.

My Story of Healing

MY CHILDHOOD HOME was filled with recently released criminals, recovering alcoholics, resting missionaries, and

unofficial foster children. My parents provided a loving community long before “community” became a buzz word in church circles. They worked tirelessly for the restoration of many broken people, but always introduced our guests simply as friends. I grew up assuming everyone lived this way.

One Christmas, an ex-criminal carpenter guest delighted me with a fabulous doll’s house. It represented months of secret work and was modeled on my favorite house in an upmarket Brisbane suburb. As we drove past, I’d always say, “That’s my house,” and then, by a seeming miracle, it was. My doll’s house story continues to assure me that every person is a potential contributor to our healing. The ex-criminal, my friend, never knew that for over 50 years many other little girls enjoyed his doll’s house and experienced in it the joy that is essential to healing.

Healing was mentioned in my father’s preaching only in the context of those spurring-on-the-gospel stories of the early disciples. But this theology did not preclude Jesus’ healing presence at our communal Sunday lunches. Among others, Mrs. McGuckin usually attended while my father searched for her alcoholic husband on the streets. Eventually they were reunited, found faith, and spent their remaining years together. No elaborate declaration of healing—just doing what Jesus would do.

Many guests to our home were restored in this quiet manner. However, as some guests returned to their old ways and others committed suicide, father pondered in his old age if it had all been worthwhile. When the stories were unfinished, senseless, I’d hear him sigh deeply, “Come, precious Lord Jesus, come.” Jesus was my parents’

source of patient endurance for the mystery of the usually long healing journey—only the presence of “precious Lord Jesus.” He is still that source for me.

After happy times with missionaries in our home, my call to mission seemed to be absorbed naturally with my breakfast cereal. In my early missionary days teaching at a Bible college in Papua New Guinea, I was amazed at the revival stories of the trainee pastors from their practical ministries: stories of healings, fording swollen rivers, speaking languages they’d never learned, releasing demons. Our task was to continue to teach that these demons were fear-based imaginations indicating a lack of biblical knowledge, which of course we could excellently remedy. Then on a retreat, one of my well-taught students had a demonic attack. This time I was the untaught one. “Do something, Jesus!” was my frightened cry. He did more than something. She was released, and my script of New Testament healing began to be decisively re-written.

Still, I was not aware of my own need for healing. Persistent heartaches about singleness, people-pleasing, striving to serve, and dumbing down to win approval were all subdued under busy sacrificial service. I was in my thirties and lecturing at an Asian leaders’ conference when a fellow missionary finally said, “You need the baptism of the Holy Spirit for all these internal tensions.” I was quite shocked at her noticing my confusions and was unsure of her theology, but she was lovely and gently prayed for me. My surprising response was a new language, new joy, and a new song which I quickly wrote down and later sang to the conference (a minor miracle for a non-musician).

Not long after, my first husband died after one year of marriage. Most Christians had nothing to say to me other than that it shouldn't have happened to someone who'd lived so sacrificially. Then two older ladies offered me weekly healing prayer so I wouldn't be crippled for life by this devastating shock. My theological credentials hardly embraced their labelling every aspect of my pain a demonic spirit that needed to be cast out. However, their loving companionship silenced any theological critique as all sorts of accumulated fears and lonely striving for male acceptance tumbled out.

After a year of prayer healing, my friends declared me healed enough to go on, and they felt I was called to a healing ministry. Was this true? Later that day in my lonely house, I sensed Jesus the Healer come close and assure me that I hadn't been abandoned by this death, but released to offer similar loving, healing companionship to many people.

Right then His healing presence poured into a memory of when I was 18 and a leader at a Christian camp where a doctor talked on sex. Later in personal conversation, the doctor told a friend and me that we were too intelligent, too un-alluring to ever attract a man. Imprinted from then on in my longing young heart was this notion: love will be hard to get. My husband's death triggered this old fear-based conclusion. Would I ever be loved again? There was no specific answer or assurance of another marriage, but the healing presence of Jesus softened that old fear of anticipated loneliness. In Bible teaching and pastoral ministries I could confidently assure hurting,

lonely women: Jesus embraced me in my pain—let's ask Him to assure you too of His presence.

Years later, as a missionary in a Manila slum with Servants to Asia's Urban Poor, my status as a widow (not my doctorate, not my theology degree, not my roles as pastor or lecturer) became my most endearing qualification to my poor neighbors. They considered me like themselves: deserted and longing for love. Our shared abandonment fused our healing journeys. No scurrying for solutions, but singing together, "How sweet is the name of Jesus..." as we swatted mosquitos in the power outages and shared the simplest delicious meals. Gradually I was being wooed way beyond a limited theology of healing, in which I would use my gifts to help others, to healing as a together-encounter with the Healer Himself, precious Jesus.

It was also in Manila's slums that seeds for physical healing were planted by my bold, faith-filled slum neighbors. One Sunday in our little slum church, a blind lady walked in asking for healing—quite a usual church event there. "Jesus is here to heal you," the people assured her with their ecstatic singing and uncontrollable shaking, which they said was a sign of the Spirit. Embarrassed, I distanced myself, but they drew me into the healing circle, assuming I was used to praying for the blind to see. I mumbled some apologetic prayer filled with cautious caveats. With their shaking and wild praying, I wasn't really sure who needed healing more desperately: the blind lady or the out-of-control worshippers. Then they asked the lady what color blouse I was wearing. Red, she said, and she was right.

I continued to join their nightly healing forays in the slums, still hesitant about their theology but amazed at the miracles. Huge thyroids disappeared. Twisted limbs were restored. And my narrow-mindedness was healed. No longer would I try to manage healing or rigidly categorize its types (physical/emotional/spiritual). Jesus is far too creative, too theology-shattering for that. It's all about asking, "What do You want to do today, Lord Jesus?"

After my happy one year of marriage cut short by death, I entered confidently thirteen years later into my second marriage with George. I was Dorothy, and Dorothy means, "God's Gift." I had prayed for the blind to see. I had spoken at huge charismatic rallies and prayed for many to be released from their burdens. In my estimation, marriage difficulties were in the minor league of miracles. Any problem that surfaced, I'd confidently say to George, "You can be healed in the name of Jesus right now."

My sensitive husband was not impressed! "Living with you is like being in a constant charismatic convention. Even your prayers are manipulating me to change," he said. Deeply disturbed, I apologized. It was clear that my earlier discovery of the mutuality of healing had not taken deep root. It was also achingly clear that my confidence in quick solutions was more about my fear of not coping, rather than about my trusting Jesus to accompany us on His unique healing journey in our marriage. Into my own story gradually dawned a different basis for healing, way beyond theological correctness and control, to intimate, vulnerable, healing relationships—with my husband, others, and Jesus.

Our healing has opened up the wide horizons of grace-filled loving and doing prayer ministry together. In ministries to international students, and then training Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) for mission, this became our sustaining motto: join in the work Jesus is already doing in people's lives. He is at work; it's His work. We are His companions—with eyes wide open for what He will do next.

Seeking a Model for Prayer Healing

THIS IS THE SPIRIT in which we attended a mission conference about 15 years ago. George and I thought we were there to call others to mission as usual, but we were surprised when we received a call to companion people who were longing for healing from their often-secret burdens: pastors crippled by sexual addictions, missionaries striving hard to compensate for past failings, mothers blaming themselves for the mental illness in their adult children, theology students finding no healing in their academics. Over and over, we heard their cry: could they ever be released from the conflict of unruly, inner turmoil to serve God in freedom?

From that point on, George and I studied, attended seminars, examined and experienced many healing models, and prayed with whomever the Lord sent to us. John 14:12 became our conviction: that we would do the same kind of work Jesus did on earth, and even greater works than He did: the healing ministry of Jesus is for all Christians. Just do it, says James 5:14. For Christians, healing is—or at least ought to be—as normal as singing.

In our journey, we had two dreams. Firstly, we wanted to develop a user-friendly prayer healing model for evangelical Christians. Many pastors are afraid to venture into the conflicting waters of theological debate and potential church splits over healing. Yet they agree that their churches are full of unhealed people. To make the model accessible, we wanted to avoid the use of extra-biblical concepts and emphasize the church as the foundational healing community. The aim of healing as nothing less than revival is George's constant prayer.

Our other dream was to promote prayer healing in mission. Inspiring this call were the healing stories of workers with so-called "unreached peoples" in other cultures, including the stories in my own history. After trying to teach correct doctrine without much fruit, these missionaries have taken a different approach: they ask people, "Would you like to meet Jesus personally in your pain?" Healing prayer in the name of Jesus bypassed cognitive and cultural defenses to enable many to be touched. Some become overt, others secret disciples. We wished we'd discovered prayer healing as a basis for cross-cultural ministry much earlier.

To carry out these dreams, we needed a process that would be accessible to all. From the multiple gifts of healing described in scripture (1 Corinthians 12:9, 12:28, 12:30), we gradually learned God was leading us toward prayer healing for emotional pain, though this often leads to physical healing.

As we sought information about emotional healing, we came across godly neuroscientists and neurotheologians who have challenged us: if God made the brain to process

pain in a certain way, why don't we do prayer healing that way? Often in early prayer healing, we had rushed with people into their stories of trauma—because pain is so consuming, demanding attention. This new challenge encouraged us instead to invite people first into the presence of Jesus, then into their stories of joy, and only later into their stories of trauma. This breakthrough provided the distinctive piece that has opened the door for so many to find safe story pathways to healing in Jesus.

When one severely abused person realized that not all sections of the church advocated a healing ministry, she looked stunned. “Tell them to get a life,” she said. We took this advice personally. That simple word, LIFE, resonated with us. It clarified our call to companion as many as possible to life-transforming healing.

And thus, the CompanionLIFE process emerged. Though boundlessly flexible, our prayer sessions consistently follow four major steps:

- L** Live in the Presence of Jesus
- I** Identify Past Stories of His Presence
- F** Find Him in Those Moments Where He Seemed Absent
- E** Express Thanks to Him

We are thankful for this rhythm because it is replicable, teachable, and adaptable. We invite you to read and absorb what we've learned of each stage, integrating as much as you'd like into your own life and ministry.

Use of This Book

THIS BOOK AIMS to equip the reader with the tools to find healing seeds in your own stories, to walk with others in this work, and to host supportive groups of prayer healing. People of all theological and educational backgrounds have found this process powerful and accessible. Essential to the LIFE process is a willingness to meet Jesus as Healer in our own lives first.

As the name suggests, the idea of companionship is central in the CompanionLIFE process, and I do recommend reading this book with others who will walk toward healing with you. If that is not available, I would encourage you to find trusted friends or mentors who can listen to and support what you are learning about yourself, about story healing, and about Jesus as you read. Though companionship can be inconvenient, vulnerable, and even counter-cultural, it really is a central piece in our healing.

An important note here is that this model does not imitate or replace professional therapy. Trauma psychotherapy, with its diagnoses, treatment plans, and sense of the practitioner's authority, is the domain of licensed professionals. But a peer companion in mutual healing can play a key role in empowering others to face even the most horrific trauma, and even the bewildering saga of mental illness. We are humbled by referrals from therapists who recognize that their clients need to build joy and quiet in the presence of Jesus before they can move forward. A storytelling friendship with Jesus and others has blessed countless people on their journey to mental health.

INTRODUCTION

We rarely engage this process with children under the age of 16. The basic principles behind the LIFE rhythm are more firmly in place in adult brains. In our experience, the greatest healing resource we can offer to children is equipping parents with healing habits that they can model and teach to their children. We trust that children in healed homes may grow into adults who are equipped to process pain by living in the presence of Jesus.

On a final note, we deeply recommend that narrative healing prayer be offered freely and without charge. It's our conviction that we shouldn't charge people for the work that Jesus is doing in them. Our payment is the joy of companioning many into the presence of Jesus.

What's Inside

THE FOUR SECTIONS of this book follow the four phases of the CompanionLIFE rhythm. Each section has three chapters that explore the theory and practice of that phase. You'll find illustrative stories from real CompanionLIFE sessions. Exercises also confirm that the healing process is both a present (God's part) and a practice (our part).

Due to the sensitive nature of many prayer sessions, names are almost always changed and other identifying information has been removed from stories. But every story quoted here is both true and deeply precious to us.

The appendix contains activities, further reading, and other resources for prayer healing. A fuller library of the tools we use can be found at this book's website, www.ServantPartnersPress.org/SeedsOfJoy.

Though we hope this book will provide new insights into the power of narrative prayer, much in this book is not new. I did my best to cite any ideas that were traceable back to original sources; however, the insights absorbed over the years have become so integrated into the model and into who I am that citations are likely not complete. I respectfully ask the grace of those whose insights comprise the lineage of this model.

This journey of story-healing continues to be transformational within our own lives and ministry. We pray it will be so for you also.

PART ONE:

LIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

SAMPLE

1

HEALING IS CONNECTING TO JESUS

LIVING IN THE PRESENCE of Jesus is our only qualification for ministry.

Nothing else—no credential, no external affirmation, and certainly no book—can empower us to walk with others toward life restoration. Transformative healing is connecting the Jesus who “heals the broken-hearted and bandages their wounds” (Psalm 147:3), who shows the greatest love anyone has ever known by laying down His life for His friends (John 15:3). We are healed “by His stripes” (Isaiah 53:5), and the root of the word for “stripes” is related to the word “friend” in modern Hebrew.¹ By His friendship we are healed. And only by His friendship can we offer His friendship, His healing, to others.

A woman who recently came for prayer told my husband and me, “I can see that a Jesus focus, not a pain focus, guides every aspect of your ministry. I never thought that my story would connect me to Jesus like this.” Our hope is that if our CompanionLIFE prayer process is distinguished by anything, it is this: every participant in our ministry

and yours reconnects with Jesus, their Healer and Friend, in their stories.

Connecting or reconnecting comes first and builds our joy foundations for healing. If you are aching for immediate solutions, or if you work with people who want healing without connections, this beginning might bring up feelings of impatience. But neuroscience has taught us that joy is essential for healthy brains, and that by first securing ourselves in joy-filled companionship (with peers-in-healing and with Jesus Himself), we can successfully move through places of great pain and onward into more healing. Our process celebrates both Jesus' promised friendship and His incredible design of our brains, enabling us to build joy and quiet with Jesus, others, and ourselves.

In this sense, 'Live in the Presence of Jesus' is both the first step of any prayer process, and the constant aim of the entire project. See if you can't find Jesus' presence in all four phases of the CompanionLIFE rhythm:

The CompanionLIFE Process²

A PRAYER SESSION is almost always initiated by the person seeking healing. We recommend two prayer leaders, male and female, as a safe combination for hurting people. We also encourage the person to invite a supportive, non-relative companion if possible.

L - Live in the Presence of Jesus

The prayer leader explains the aim of prayer healing: to live in the presence of Jesus. The person seeking healing tells the reason for asking for prayer ministry, and outlines some details of their pain. If present, the companion will be prompted to introduce themselves and their friendship to the person seeking healing. The leader affirms Jesus' presence is the only source of healing the person's true identity. The leader or companion welcomes His presence by anointing with oil, sometimes communion. Those present then build joy before quieting in prayer together.

I - Identify Past Stories of His Presence

The person seeking healing is prompted to tell in detail a specific story when they sensed the presence of Jesus. The leader then asks the person to reflect on their story by asking, "What were you like in the presence of Jesus?" and "How did He treat you?"

This story contains the seeds of healing needed for current pain. It is so vital, in fact, that the prayer companion will tell the story back to the person prayerfully, slowly, so they can re-encounter the presence of Jesus and absorb more deeply what they discovered about themselves and Jesus in His presence.

F - Find Him in Those Moments When He Seemed Absent

The person is invited or prompted to tell stories related to the wounds that brought them to the session, often stories where Jesus' presence is unclear or unrealized. The companion/leader will ask Jesus to restore His presence

in the person's area of pain, to come as He did in the person's first story. Those present wait together to see what Jesus will do.

E - Express Thanks to Him

The person seeking healing and their companion/leader celebrate the way Jesus has restored His presence in the person's pain. Connections to a relevant biblical story will enhance the value of the person's story and build courage to pursue lifelong healing. Certificates and other mementos can help to mark the person's journey.

This outline is not a rigid checklist, but a rhythm that has become comfortable and meaningful to us over time. Often we don't complete the whole rhythm in a single session. We might spend several weeks building joy, building capacity to connect to the presence of Jesus, before someone is even ready to face their pain. We might hold sessions in a home, office, or out in nature. They might involve painting, singing, movement, or anything else that feels appropriate and comfortable.

The following brief accounts of real prayer sessions will enrich your appreciation of the variations of the process.

Session 1: A Lion Story

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, my husband George and I were delighted to meet Josie, a missionary with an incredible ministry among child soldiers. She was renowned, credentialed, and yet personally *aching* for safety. We

respected her ministry at home and overseas, but didn't know anything about her needs.

L - Live in the Presence of Jesus

We began by articulating our assurance that Jesus would guide the process. We asked Josie what she liked about Jesus. "He defends me," she said. We recognized the connection to her presenting need for safety. We quieted together with Josie by repeating the phrase, "Thank you, Jesus. You are my defender," while she breathed slowly, deeply. We prayed this simple prayer a number of times slowly, the first half of the prayer said as she breathed in, the second half as she breathed out, until her body and mind became peaceful. As this integrative preparation for deeper sharing wound down, she unexpectedly began showing us photos of lions that she'd saved on her phone—her favorite animal, she said. Rather than treating this as an interruption, we were thankful for the opportunity to share some of Josie's joy. We didn't need to initiate joy building this time, as she'd done it spontaneously!

I - Identify Past Stories of His Presence

We asked Josie if these lion photos reminded her of Jesus in any way. She shared that her favorite picture of Jesus is as a lion, "like Aslan lying down with me, bearing his teeth, saying, 'Don't come near my kid. I am her Defender.'"³ We asked Josie what she felt like in the presence of her Defender Jesus. She responded, "With Him I feel protected and secure, even in all my mission ventures and ups and downs." We then paused to pray and affirm Josie's description of Jesus, that she was protected in the presence of

Jesus, by praying, “Thank You, Jesus, that you are like the great, strong, beautiful lion Aslan, and you defend Josie. Thank you that you lie down with Josie and keep her safe.” Then we asked if she had any more lion stories, and we enjoyed these together.

F - Find Him in Those Moments When He Seemed Absent

Then Josie remembered a pain story—a story from almost 40 years ago, when she was just 11 years old and had never heard of Jesus. She had seen the movie *Born Free* and fell in love with Elsa, the beautiful lioness. “My heart leapt. I wanted to live on the edge like her. Lions to me were safe, but people weren’t. I can hardly believe it now, but Elsa inspired me to say no to my Grandfather’s secret abuse.”

We might have asked Josie to reflect on Jesus’ involvement in this story, but she did this spontaneously: “No wonder I later came to love Jesus, the lion,” she said. “He’s been my safe Defender and still is as I go into risky mission to defend others.” Then we stopped to pray thanks to God for giving courage to Josie to say no to her grandfather’s abuse through the story of the lioness Elsa, and to Jesus for revealing Himself as Josie’s faithful and defending Lion, and the Holy Spirit for revealing these healing insights.

E - Express Thanks to Him

Josie was overjoyed to realize that Jesus was active in her story before she ever met Him—and that He was still her Defender. We celebrated this by Josie’s retelling more recent stories where she had seen this wonderful

quality of Jesus. She realized that she could stay centered through focusing daily on Jesus her Defender in quieting prayer. Josie has since told us that she recognizes signs of God's healing Lion-friendship in ordinary daily events: challenging meetings, disappointed mission outcomes, family dilemmas. We wrote out Josie's story on a certificate, honoring and celebrating Jesus' friendship in her life, and Josie now lives out of a deepened gratitude to her Defender.

Session 2: Hope in Healing Water

ELANA CAME TO US for prayer healing with a trusted companion. Though she was part of Australia's middle class, she said she needed a safe path out of a war-zone life—the bitter private and internal wars of her personal devastation. She felt had never connected with God in relationship, but I would learn that she had a powerful story about Him.

L - Live in the Presence of Jesus

Like many people, Elana came to the session expecting to focus on her pain. As soon as she sat down, awful stories began to tumble out—stories of an outwardly Christian but incredibly cruel father, stories of a controlling husband too much like her father, stories of a severely disabled daughter whom she felt helpless to care for. As soon as we could do so without cutting her off, we asked if we might pause to quiet. We would do this by having the companion Elana had brought along with her affirm Elana in prayer. She thanked Jesus for Elana's courage

and strength—Elana was a teacher, her companion shared in prayer, who stayed present with her students in the worst of her pain. Hearing this affirmation began to build Elana's joy.

I - Identify Past Stories of His Presence

It was then easier to ask Elana to tell us a story where she sensed the presence of Jesus. We quieted again through deep breathing, and focusing on the characteristic of Jesus she connected to: His strength. After this, what she remembered was remarkable. "A friend gave me some holy water from Lourdes to help my daughter. '*What hocus-pocus*,' I thought, and left it on the shelf. One day while she was fitting terribly, I cried out, 'God if you can forgive me, if you think we're worthwhile, allow me some connection.' I grabbed the Lourdes water and poured it over myself. I was at the end of the line. At that very moment I met a Father of love (not like my father), a haven, not judging me, just waiting for me." We responded with celebration and affirmation of her sense of God being a good Father to her. Her companion repeated her story back to her in a prayer of thanksgiving, giving Elana a chance to focus on this healing connection.

F - Find Him in Those Moments When He Seemed Absent

We then asked Elana if there were any similarities between her life during the time of the story and now. She responded that not much has outwardly changed since then—perhaps her pain was at a 10 out of 10 in that moment, and now it was an 8 out of 10. Still intense, and still incredibly wearying. We asked the Father of Love

to come into her heartbroken current story. We quieted our bodies and minds in silence long enough for this to happen.

E - Express Thanks to Him

Elana said, “I can see that my connection to God the Father of Love, to Jesus, is real, and that I need to keep it up every day.” Though it took years for new medical insights to help stabilize her daughter, her deepened connection both to God and to her companion sustained her in more joy and peace along the way.

Session 3: I Got the Answer

IN OUR TRAVELS to the United States, George and I frequently visit a cross-class urban church in Los Angeles that has adopted us as its grandparents. At one point, Gustavo, a new Christian and a member of the church, was grappling with massive anger problems. He attended a CompanionLIFE seminar and afterwards asked for a session with us.

L - Live in the Presence of Jesus

Gustavo brought his mentor, Pastor Chris, to the session as his companion. We started by asking Chris and Gus what they enjoyed about each other. They had a lot of joy to share! Gus quieted by breathing deeply in and out, and as he did, praying to Jesus, “Thank you, Jesus, I am loved.” We then laid hands on him and prayed this same prayer along with him.

I - Identify Past Stories of His Presence

When we asked Gustavo to share a story of Jesus showing up in his life, he took about 40 minutes to tell us five back-to-back stories. He just couldn't stop talking about how much Jesus had changed his life. His companion Chris looked concerned that we were never going to get to any pain because of his nonstop joyful sharing!

F - Find Him in Those Moments When He Seemed Absent

When he wound down, we asked Gus about his reason for visiting. He quickly brought up a key moment in his 'anger story.' Some years ago, his wife gave birth early to their only daughter, but she lived for just six hours. He held her before she died, but this just increased the pain of losing her—he was angry at God and at the hospital, which wouldn't intervene because of his lack of insurance.

We asked Gus if he would be willing to go back to that moment when he was holding his daughter and ask Jesus to come. When both Gus and Chris tensed up, we asked them to recall the goodness of Jesus in his many joy stories. Then Gus looked to the ground and fidgeted for about a minute of very awkward silence. Finally, he looked up and said, "Ok, I'll try."

My husband asked Chris to lead the quieting prayer. Chris stood next to Gus's chair and placed one hand on Gus's forehead, the other on the back of his neck—a comforting and tension-relieving gesture. Chris slowly repeated the phrase, "Thank you, Jesus, you give me answers."

As Chris finished, Gustavo started giggling! He blurted out, "I got the answer. I got the answer I've been looking

for all these years! Jesus just told me that He didn't rob me of my daughter! He *gave* her to me—for six whole hours! My wife and I got six hours to meet and hold and love our baby girl before she went to Jesus. He loves me!"

E - Express Thanks to Him

We were all in awe at this revelation. Through six months of mentoring Gus, Chris had never even considered saying anything like this to Gus—and of course he couldn't have. Only Jesus could tell Gus what His heart was. Our small part was guiding Gus in giving Jesus space to do that, and He had been faithful.

We closed the session in praise to the Jesus who gives answers—deeply satisfying, unexpected answers. Now, instead of viewing this moment in his life as one of his most painful, Gus sees it as one of the most precious gifts Jesus has given him. It has become one among his growing collection of joy stories as the roots of his anger continue to disappear. Chris and Gus now lead healing teams to many disadvantaged communities. Healing multiplies through Gus's healing.

These three stories illustrate that the CompanionLIFE process is all about re-connecting with the presence of Jesus. It is the first step, and in this book it is the first chapter, but we will regularly and intentionally return to the presence of Jesus throughout every phase of this process and in every chapter of this book.

Your Healing Is Your Best Gift to Others

IN OUR EXPERIENCE, it is exceedingly easy to forget that we are not the healers in the prayer process. We are recipients of healing, inviting others to be healed along with us. To make this true and meaningful, we must take the vulnerable path of seeking our own healing first.

There are two reasons for my adamant recommendation that any prayer companion receive prayer healing before praying for others. The first is that no matter how well any person seems to function, we all carry pain and disconnection within us. The only meaningful variable from person to person is whether we invite Jesus into our unique burdens.

The second reason is that we can relate to anyone seeking healing so much better when we too live in the presence of Jesus and regularly and humbly admit our healing needs. In prayer we test what comforts us; we feel the ache of waiting for Jesus to appear in our pain stories. This qualifies us to be true empathetic companions in another person's healing.

This is a key reason that I recommend reading this book with others. We practice both the presence of Jesus, and the specific tools in this book, most effectively with a partner or community. We can't be healed alone. Many times, it will make sense to take turns guiding and receiving prayer and instruction with a partner or group. If you are reading alone, seek out friends to try different applications with you along the way.

Activities for Application

1. Reflect on the three session examples earlier in this chapter. Which person seeking healing reminds you most of yourself? Which encounter reminds you most of the way Jesus has appeared in your own life?
2. Reflect on the CompanionLIFE rhythm. Does the LIFE process remind you of anything you've tried or experienced before? Does any phase or aspect of the process seem particularly valuable for meeting your needs and the needs of your community?
3. Practice the CompanionLIFE rhythm within yourself. You may have already picked up some tools and principles to infuse in your prayers with others, and you will certainly pick up more along the way. For now, flip to the adapted personal script in Appendix A and try it in your next prayer time.

¹ Stripes: Chabburah (Strong's *Greek Lexicon* #H2250); Friend: xaver (modern Hebrew).

² This is a basic introduction to the rhythm of CompanionLIFE. Sample scripts are found in Appendix A.

³ Aslan refers to the God figure in the *Chronicles of Narnia* series by C. S. Lewis.

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