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- *Healing on the spiritual, emotional, and physical levels*
- *Spiritual growth through suffering and service*

God joins each of you and your guides as you are gathered in a spiritual union to offer your prayers and to seek guidance. We would like to devote the bulk of our time with you to the subject of healing.

For many, healing is the absence of suffering, the absence of sickness. When one prays for healing, one frequently offers a supplication to God that an individual be relieved of suffering and be returned to a state of wellness. This is, of course, one element of healing, but it is a very small part. Indeed it is the least significant aspect of the potential you call healing. It would be more helpful for you if you would recognize that a prayer for healing is really a prayer for oneness with God. It is a prayer for the recognition of God's presence. It is a prayer for peace and the ability to accept what is and the faith to accept what may be.

There is much more, therefore, to healing than the issue of wellness. We do not mean to discourage a prayer for healing in its most common use, for that is indeed a worthy goal, a worthy conclusion to ask God for. We would rather spark your interest and insight into the broader applications of the meaning of healing.

As illness may be characterized as physical, emotional, or spiritual, so too, can healing be described. Physical illness is the least important of all illnesses. Emotional illness is afforded a more serious position, but spiritual illness occupies the position of greatest importance, for it is the spirit, as you know, that is the permanent part of each of you. It is the spirit and its growth which is central to the direction, the purpose of your lives.

An individual who suffers physically and emotionally but grows spiritually has a life of fulfillment. One who lives physically and mentally in good health at the expense of spiritual growth pursues a meaningless objective. Healing, then, can be viewed at all three levels. The one who suffers physically may find solace in the recognition that mentally and spiritually growth is being achieved. One who suffers physically and emotionally may find peace in the recognition that there is spiritual growth. When growth of the soul proceeds forward, the impact of physical and emotional misfortune is diminished.

There is a kind of priority here which states in simplest terms that what happens spiritually is all that matters. It is difficult to translate this sense of priority to the practical side of living, for it is often troublesome to recognize when any spiritual growth takes place. At best, one recognizes such growth only in retrospect. One cannot observe it close at hand. But one may easily observe physical or emotional suffering at close range. Because of this difference, it is easy for all humans to become involved in the negative waves created from physical and emotional struggle.

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When you are surrounded by suffering, your own or another's, you must focus your attention toward what benefit may be achieved in the long run of a spiritual nature. How is that benefit observed? How is it measured? One could say strength of character, the capacity to love, the willingness to be loved, compassion—that is evidence of spiritual growth. One who suffers may still have compassion for another, for compassion is never selfish; it is always directed toward another. Patience is a manifestation of spiritual growth. One who suffers may learn what it means to be patient.

It is in giving that one grows. The giving is evidence of growth. That giving may be in the form of compassion or love or patience. It may be in the form of a quiet presence. The quiet presence can give strength to another, but it reflects an inner peace.

Suffering, you see, is never complete, for no matter what one endures in life, one always is given the strength to grow forward toward God. There is no roadblock which is set up to prevent such spiritual growth. There are, however, many who choose not to grow but to remain where they are. That is their choice. But for everyone who seeks growth, who seeks a clearer view of God's brilliance, that growth shall never be denied. When such growth occurs, whatever suffering is endured becomes meaningless.

The body is merely a shell. It is not so important as a measure of the value of life. A child who suffers because of a physical abnormality may still enjoy a life of purpose and direction. One who suffers greatly on an emotional level may still be afforded a glimpse of spiritual growth.

Each of you has been touched by the lives of others who have gone through difficulties, and each of you has experienced physical or emotional pain. But such experiences are indeed temporary. It bears repeating to emphasize that it is your soul which goes forward, not your emotional or physical selves. The body is important, for it is a house of the soul, but the soul is not limited to the body. Your souls are greater than what you can see. The energy that your souls generate far exceeds the physical limitations of the body. Such energy also exceeds the scope of your emotional lives.

Therefore the suffering, both physically and emotionally or mentally, which you observe is but a fleeting shower in an otherwise sunny sky. When it rains the sun remains. The sun is constant. The earth may turn; weather may change. But the sun is there. So it is with your lives, that as your lives twist and turn in many directions, the light of God remains forever there.

Suffering is relative. When one suffers physically, one may still maintain contact with those nearby. When one suffers emotionally or mentally, one loses such sense of contact and proximity. But when one ceases to grow spiritually, one feels somehow within a shadow, shielded from God's light.

Your prayers for healing, therefore, should begin with prayers for a spiritual directing, a spiritual stability, and then let the other areas fall into place. In such an act

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of faith you must be willing to let yourselves be free and to let God be. Don't fight God, or set up some kind of control with which to manipulate the power of God's presence. God's light must be allowed to shine forward.

Each of you has a wonderful potential in life to be the servant of others. Such service must be offered through selfless love and a faith in the directing hand of God. You do not live your lives alone. Your lives take on meaning through your interactions with others. The nature of that interaction provides for your spiritual growth. Such growth, therefore, is the result of your activity not for self-benefit but only for the benefit of others. Activity oriented toward self is defeating and stifling. It isolates the doer from the world without and prevents the evolution of the world within. It is in your reaching outward that your growth takes place. It is in the recognition that all life is sacred that your lives take on their meaning.

Search for ways of enhancing the life of another, of giving it meaning, of giving it purpose. Find a means of providing joy without looking constantly for the means of achieving joy. Yours is a life of giving; it is not a life of receiving. Your prayers for healing should be prayers for giving. You are giving life to the soul of another; you are giving life thereby to your own soul. When you pray for your own healing, you pray first for your spiritual growth. Do not become bound up in concerns related to physical or emotional development.

Seek in your lives means for providing grace to the life of another. It is true God gives grace, but grace is only given through another person. When you receive grace, you receive grace through someone. It originates with God, but it is activated by humans. Your prayers for the development of your own lives and for the healing of others must be bound up inexorably in the offering of such grace.

Your prayers for our development are always helpful for they are unselfishly given and therefore are means of grace for us. We pray for your growth, for that is God's grace in your lives. We pray for your inner peace, for that is God's grace upon your soul. God's presence is for all time. God's peace may be your peace. God's love is yours for the taking. Reach out and feel God's presence.

Amen.