

Title: How Long Will It Take for Me to Be Healed?

Greetings all,

June 29, 2001

Just posted another new essay.

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Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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“How long will it take for me to be healed?”

(Revision 6/30/2001)

Many people who have heard about Theophostic but who have never seen a session have asked “Is Theophostic really as fast and effective as it sounds? Is the healing really ‘instantaneous’ as Dr. Smith describes?” When Theophostic healing did not unfold as quickly and easily as they expected, many clients and/or therapists/ministers have asked “What’s wrong? Why isn’t it working? Why is it taking more than three sessions?”

It is definitely true that some people have experienced life-transforming healing around long-standing problems after only one or a few Theophostic prayer sessions. We have seen this in our practice, and many other Theophostic ministers have reported similar dramatic and rapid results. It is also true that some people have found faster and deeper healing from Jesus through Theophostic prayer than they did through other types of prayer or counseling – but that the healing took more than a few sessions, and felt like a process rather than simply a “moment.”

Our experience is that the Theophostic paradigm and approach to Christian prayer for emotional healing is more thorough, more effective, and faster than any other form of prayer or counseling we’ve seen. So, whether it takes one, twenty, or even more sessions to resolve the presenting concerns, if the healing occurs more thoroughly, completely, and quickly than through other means, we think it’s worth it to use the Theophostic approach. It’s natural to hope that my problem will be one of those that can be cleared up in only one session of a couple of hours. After all, who doesn’t want to be healed and free sooner, and be able to spend one’s time and resources on other things, like raising a family, carrying out some other

ministry, or even just relaxing. The reality is that there are a number of factors that influence how fast or slow healing may go, even with Theophostic prayer ministry. Some of these factors can be guessed at before one begins, but mostly, you don't find out until you try which ones will be issues for you.

What factors influence how long it will take?

I. Individual lies vs. "Total recovery"

Individual lies are completely resolved instantaneously when Jesus speaks healing truth, but "total recovery"¹ is a process that takes a lifetime. The person experiences steadily increasing freedom and steadily decreasing symptoms as more and more lies are resolved.

II. The amount of wounds there are to heal.

Some people experience the somewhat disheartening revelation after beginning Theophostic that they have more wounds than they realized. The encouraging side of this picture is that the positive change with healing is usually proportional to the size of the pile of wounds. If the pile of wounds is much larger than initially expected, the benefit with healing will probably be larger and have wider implications than initially anticipated.

III. Getting to the moment of healing can be slow, even for individual lies:

All of our experience and observations are consistent with Dr. Smith's claim that individual lies are resolved instantaneously when Jesus speaks healing truth. However, although the moment of healing resolution for an individual lie is instantaneous and complete, our experience is that even individual lies can take months to resolve if there are strong defenses in the way of finding and connecting with the traumatic memories and if there is complicated clutter in the way of Jesus coming with the truth. All of the factors discussed below can determine the amount of time and energy required to resolve a single lie.

D. How accessible are the memories which contain the lies.

Our minds are some of God's most amazing creations, and they have many fascinating ways of protecting us from traumas too difficult to bear consciously – at least at the time they happen. The speed of healing will be greatly affected by the extent to which the lie-laden memories are blocked from one's conscious attention. Advanced Theophostic skills are highly effective in identifying and working around the blockages, especially those caused by the mental process called dissociation. Our experience, however, is that some blocked memories are not solely dissociated in one clean action of the mind, which can then be reversed by one willing part of the mind who hears the "OK" from Jesus. Not uncommonly, memories have been "put away" by the mind in a multi-layered process of decisions over time. Getting those

¹"Total recovery" is the term Dr. Smith uses for the healing of all traumatic memories and freedom from all lies. See Beyond Tolerable Recovery, pp. 7, 12-13, 30 for Dr. Smith's comments regarding healing of individual lies vs "total recovery."

memories back into consciousness via Theophostic prayer is indeed possible (and still more effective than any other way we know of), but addressing each layer of the blockage does take time. Removing these layers may include: 1) releasing self-protective vows such as “I will not remember,” or “I will never talk about it,” or “I won’t feel it,” 2) willingness to let go of idealized images of myself and/or people who wounded me, 3) recognition of and willingness to release the ways I presently cope with or numb out or displace my pain rather than face it honestly (for example, methods of avoidance such as self medication, psychological defenses such as dissociation, denial, and repression).

B. How ready am I to give up my existing ways of avoiding or coping with the pain (my defense mechanisms, or strategies of self-protection).

Sometimes it seems that the most challenging folks to minister to are not the ones whose lives are in the midst of crisis, or what therapists would call “decompensation,” but those who are mostly keeping their act together, at least where other people can see it, but have some intractable fear or depression or problematic behavior they want to be rid of. We suspect that the reason this latter group of people (including ourselves!) are so difficult to minister to is that deep down they think that their defenses – their ways of avoiding or disguising their pain – are still working. Also, they’ve probably gotten a certain amount of self-esteem over the years from “handling things” themselves, and they greet the prospect of confessing and experiencing their own helplessness with ambivalence at best. Since they still have their external image largely intact, it feels harder to lose. For these folks, the length of time it takes to heal will be directly related to their attachment to their various defenses, and their prideful self-sufficiency. Psychological defenses are many and varied. Some examples of letting go of defenses are: 1) Being willing to see myself and others in my past and/or present as we truly are, rather than as I wish we were. Only the truth will set us free. 2) Being willing to take responsibility for my own feelings, rather than holding others responsible for them: “he *made me* so angry,” “I can’t rest until *you* agree.” 3) Being willing to stop blaming others for my problems or conflicts, but instead looking inward to what sins or lies I bring to the situation.

C. How willing am I to embrace my suffering? (Escaping the self-pity swamp)

Probably all of us at one time or another get bogged down in the swamp of self-pity. Karl and I have been humbled to discover far more self-pity lurking in our hearts than we would have guessed before doing this deep healing work. Self-pity is a place from which one must choose to leave. It is a unique prison. Like other prisons, the walls are thick and impenetrable, and it is dark and unpleasant. The unique part is that all the locks are on the inside. No matter how much those on the outside may want to help those imprisoned there, they cannot open the doors. The ones on the inside must want to get out.

Even the most high-functioning people have secret (even from themselves) pockets of self-pity. “Yes, I will continue to do what’s right, even though somebody owes me. But don’t expect me to let go of my bitterness toward my wounder, because it was just too unfair, too unjust.” Such people may be struggling with the fact that the people who wound us are rarely the ones who walk with us to find healing – and they are never the ones who actually heal us, because only the Lord can do that. Some part of one’s mind is holding out for God to apologize for letting us get wounded, and refusing to let go of the pain until He does.

The person mired here is quick to notice all the reasons why his distrust is justified, or why she should never have to risk being hurt again – even in seeking healing.

What is the antidote for self-pity? One answer is to embrace one's suffering. To embrace our suffering is not to seek out pain, or to wear our suffering as a "martyr's" badge. It is not to take on the role of the tragic hero, nor to expect any compensation for one's suffering. It is to recognize that every life contains some suffering; my life is no different. I don't have to be happy about the hard things that have happened to me, but if I am going to be healed, I do have to accept that they did happen, and that God allowed them to happen. I do not believe that God wants us to suffer, but He certainly does allow us to suffer sometimes. Can I accept that God is good, and that I have suffered some traumatic thing? Can I honestly grieve what I've lost, feel the pain of what I've suffered, and then let it go?

Someone who wants a magic pill to make them better without facing their pain or taking responsibility for their lives will not succeed in getting healed through Theophostic prayer any more than through any other means. Theophostic might help them, however, to get a clearer picture on why they're not getting healed, so they can honestly face their choices and decide how much they really want to get healed.

D. The "fit" with the minister/therapist

Although Jesus is the healer in Theophostic-type prayer, the person doing the ministry definitely affects the process, and therefore is a factor in how long healing will take. The pattern of wounds and lies and sins in the minister will shape how she or he works with someone seeking healing, giving him or her an overly sensitive "meter" in some areas, and a blind spot in others. All of us are wounded, so it's unrealistic to expect to find a Theophostic minister who is completely healed, and free of any hindering or distorting "junk" of his or her own. It may be a good idea, however, if working with one minister seems to be stuck, to try having a different person do the ministry. We say, "a different set of eyes, a different set of lies," meaning that the combination of a different facilitator and the issues one is facing may yield some new insight into what's cluttering the way to healing.

The gender of the minister is also a possible issue in ensuring a good "fit" for healing work. If the person receiving ministry is triggered by men in authority, for example, then working with a male minister may be very difficult. Sometimes, if the one receiving recognizes that his fear of the minister is an emotional echo, then he can focus on it, stir it up, and follow it back to the historical memory. If the level of triggering is too great, however, and the person receiving cannot see behind his present-moment fear, then he should work with a female minister. This type of problem is not an issue of the minister's woundedness, but of the nature of the lies in the one seeking healing.

E. Other factors determined by the facilitator:

The facilitator's knowledge: Some sessions are straight forward, and a minister with only the basic training can successfully facilitate the Theophostic process. In other sessions, the facilitator's knowledge can make a big difference. For example, before we knew how to work with dissociation, the Theophostic process would frequently bog down because important memories and emotions were "missing." Now we know much more about dissociation and are usually able to work with the dissociated parts carrying the "missing"

memories and emotions. Before we learned about vows, we would remain stuck for long periods of time whenever a vow was blocking the way. Now that we understand much more about vows, we can quickly identify and neutralize them. Another way to say this is that the Theophostic process can bog down when there is something in the way that we don't yet know how to recognize and/or resolve.

The facilitator's experience: Confident, experienced facilitators will be more time efficient. We have been clumsy and slow with each new piece we learned. Now we can see this same pattern in those we train. People are usually clumsy and slow as they are learning. This factor could make the difference between getting a certain wound and lie resolved in an hour as opposed to 2 to 3 hours. It shouldn't cause healing of a specific target to take 20 sessions as opposed to one session.

F. Sometimes seeming "pauses" or delays in the healing process are desirable.

We have had clients who reached a certain place in working on their healing, and then decided that they didn't want to move ahead just yet. "This is the first time I've ever felt permission to be angry... I think I'm going to let myself feel it for a little while before I go on." Someone else recognized a deep sadness and loss about a specific aspect of his childhood, and wanted to give himself a bit of time to grieve before completing the healing in that area. These situations could be considered delays to healing, but on closer inspection, it seems that God was leading the people on at the pace which was just right for them, to give them the fullest healing possible.

G. Sometimes there is more than healing of specific wounds going on.

Although we're sure that God doesn't want us to suffer unnecessarily, we believe that the true joy that comes from connection to Himself is a *higher priority* than the removal of all our pain. So while we are spending a lot of time receiving Theophostic prayer for the healing of some particular pain, we may discover that God is using that time and effort for other significant purposes as well. One of our colleagues who does a lot of Theophostic ministry described one such journey with one of his clients. After some months of working on healing for a particular wound, the client reported with satisfaction that he could see many evidences of real and positive transformation in his life, even though the original target remained unresolved. Along the way, the Lord had been reshaping his way of looking at life, his way of dealing with his problems and conflicts, and had been deepening his spiritual life. Furthermore, the client could see that he was much closer to being able to face the original target wound than before. It wasn't an either/or situation -- either grow closer to the Lord in discipleship or get healed of this lie -- but rather a question of priority and sequence. The former apparently was part of the process of getting to the latter².

²A particular benefit to using the Theophostic prayer approach to emotional healing is the inherent connection between one's relationship to Jesus and one's healing. One cannot get healed without encountering Jesus in a real way, and contact with Jesus is always beneficial in developing as His apprentice or disciple. In my (Charlotte's) experience, Theophostic prayer is always an occasion of increasing honesty in the depths of my being, and that often exposes some pattern of sin about which I need to repent, along with exposing the lies which Jesus will replace

with healing truth. For non-believers, meeting Jesus and experiencing his personal love and care is often a bridge to their surrendering their lives to Him, and experiencing salvation. These spiritual benefits may not be one's initial reasons for receiving Theophostic prayer, but they are non-trivial to say the least -- and worth taking the time to accomplish.

Karl and I have certainly experienced this type of process in our own lives as well. I have two painful memories in particular that we have worked on repeatedly, and although I can tell that they are both somewhat desensitized, they still get triggered and so I know they are not completely healed. What has happened along the way, however, is that the Lord has been leading me through the recognition, confession, and repentance of many ways that I have managed my life, pain, and even the people around me (!) that are not founded on truth. These would, of course, be some of my defense mechanisms. I feel as if the Lord is showing me where the edges of the plastic coating on my personality are, and then giving me the opportunity and the grace to peel them back and throw them away. I feel like I know who I am. I am less stressed and more honest than I can ever remember feeling in my adult life. Everything I do is affected for the better in one way or another. I can think more clearly, minister more effectively, feel more peaceful when facing others' anxiety or anger, pray with more faith, and discern more accurately. So, although dealing with my defenses wasn't *my* goal originally, I can see now how it was/is an important part of the Lord's goal for my overall healing and discipleship, and I am content to let Him lead the way. We'll keep working away at the resolution of those two particular memories, and I trust when the other necessary ingredients are in place, the healing will happen.

IV. The phenomenon of continually raising one's expectations

When we began doing Theophostic ministry with one another, we were amazed at the real internal transformation which resulted. Problems which we had fought for years were simply gone, and were no longer a struggle at all. We tasted the fruit of genuine healing, and we knew there was no going back. Furthermore, the more experience we got with Theophostic, both with others and with ourselves, the more we began to see the evidence of lies in our lives. It's not that new problems were created (though in one's moments of prideful denial, one might assert that), but that our eyes were opened, and we began to see what had been there all along. That revelation was not welcome at first. "How depressing! I never realized that I was so wounded and, dare I say it, 'dysfunctional'! It'll take years to do Theophostic on all of these lies I've got!" Perhaps some of what happened was receiving a healthy dose of humility. We had to own up to our own woundedness, and the sin which always grows up with it, and grieve the death of our former images of ourselves as much better off than we were! The good news is, however, that after taking those first hard but healthy steps out of denial, the wonderful promise of God's grace hit us. "Wow! If so much of the stress and pain and conflict in my life is caused by my lies, then it's curable! I don't have to live like this forever – it's not like being stuck with some biological trait that I just have to accept – God has made real change possible!" We began to see whatever healing work we did as a wonderful investment. We found we could actually do more work more effectively and with less stress as the Lord removed our lies about having to be perfect, earn acceptance, etc. So even as we could see more and more issues to be healed in ourselves, we also felt more relaxed about it, knowing that there was only benefit to be had as we pressed in.

We know that we will always be seeking more healing and freedom from the Lord. There will be seasons of greater intensity when life circumstances trigger previously unrecognized areas of woundedness, causing them to be accessible for healing. It's likely we'll spend more hours working on our own healing than most, because studying the process is part

of our life's calling, and every personal healing we get usually gets translated into some note that goes out to benefit others as well. Also, why stay miserable if you live with someone who can pray with you and help you get the clutter out of the way so Jesus can heal the wound? So to answer the question of "How long will it take for me to be healed?", ultimately, we say that what it means to be "healed" is a moving target – once you've reached one summit, you see the next one, and after a bit of a rest you set out. It's not that you can't experience joy until you reach that ever-unreached goal – no, you experience joy in the Lord all along the way. But the expectation of how much we can receive of the Lord into every fiber of our being keeps increasing.

In the last book of his Chronicles of Narnia series, C.S. Lewis describes the adventure of a group of people who finally reach the end which is really only a beginning. In this fantasy story which gives a picture of heaven, those who have come to know and love the Christ-figure, Aslan, in the old world, find that in the *real* Narnia of heaven, the "inside is larger than the outside."³ As they run on in tireless joy, pressing further and further in to the heavenly country, they discover more of the Creator's wonders and rejoice that there is so much more of Him to be known. Although we certainly do not live in heaven now, we do have the "down payment" (see Ephesians 1:14) of the Holy Spirit in us, giving us a foretaste of the Kingdom, and enabling us to press in to God through healing and discipleship. The more of the baggage of our wounds and sins we shed, the more room we have to experience God and be filled with the things of God, and to join Him in his Kingdom purposes. So rather than saying "how long until we get there?" our rallying cry is, "Further up and further in!"⁴

V. Reference points/examples: We thought it might be useful to provide some concrete reference points regarding "How long does it take".

"God the psychotic cult leader." The case study "God the Psychotic Cult Leader" (see Case Studies page of our website) describes my (Karl's) experience with a lie that affected my faith and relationship with the Lord for 35 years. I had spent hundreds of hours battling this lie with prayer and cognitive tools, but with only temporary symptomatic control. This lie was completely resolved in one 90 minute Theophostic session, and has remained completely resolved since that single session in 1998.

300+ hours of Theophostic ministry Other wounds and lies have moved very slowly. Our estimate is that I (Karl) have received 300+ hours of Theophostic ministry. One reason things have gone slowly is that we experiment on me whenever we learn something new -- hence many clumsy and inefficient sessions. Another reason is that we were working on Theophostic targets that were blocked by problems we did not yet understand. Probably the biggest reason is that I personally provide good examples of every one of the defenses and hindrances that can cause things to go slowly. Another part of why I have logged on so much Theophostic time is that we have been constantly raising our expectations (see section IV above).

³Lewis, C.S. The Last Battle, (New York:HarperCollins Publishers, 1956) p.207.

⁴Lewis, C.S., p.198.

Wide range with phobias It is common for a specific phobia to be rooted in a small number of traumatic memories, and there are many well documented cases of specific phobias resolving completely and permanently in one to several Theophostic sessions. In other cases phobias can be deeply rooted and much more difficult to resolve, as illustrated by one of our clients who came in with claustrophobia. He has been working hard, now with more than twenty 90 to 180 minute sessions. We have found a large pile of early, severe, dissociated traumatic memories that appear to be the source of the claustrophobia, and he seems to be making steady progress, but the phobic symptoms have not yet resolved.

Steadily improving efficacy as we get more knowledge, experience, and healing We were seeing significant progress/healing of some kind in probably 10% of our sessions when we first began using Theophostic in our psychiatric practice in May of 1998. This has steadily increased as we have continued to learn, gain experience, and work on our own healing. Now we see significant healing/progress in maybe 50 to 60% of our regular office sessions, and in 80 to 90% of our consultation and demonstration sessions.⁵

Our personal experience with wounds and lies hindering efficacy We have observed that our own wounds and lies hinder our efficacy as facilitators, especially impairing our discernment and creating blind-spots when working with clients who have the same wounds and lies. We often didn't realize why the work with these clients was stuck until we got healing for a certain wound and lie and then each of our clients with that specific wound and lie suddenly began to move forward. In retrospect, we could see how our unresolved wound and lie was creating a blind-spot that was hindering the process. This has happened so *many times* in our own experience that this possibility is close to the top of the list when something seems stuck and we are asking "why is it taking so long?" We would especially encourage therapists/ministers to work more on their own wounds and lies if progress is consistently slow (by Theophostic standards) with most of their clients.

Dr. Ed Smith's efficacy We have observed Dr. Smith facilitate more than 35 hours of Theophostic ministry. Our assessment is that significant progress and/or tangible permanent healing occurred in close to 100% of these demonstration sessions. It is helpful to keep Dr. Smith's efficacy in mind as a reference point. When pondering the question of how long healing will/should take, Dr. Smith's work provides a good inspiration and motivation for the rest of us to keep pursuing further training, personal healing, and experience.

Not always the facilitator I (Karl) have received Theophostic from some of the best Theophostic facilitators we know – Dr. Smith, Charlotte, and a close colleague. Certain

⁵We have wondered about the significant difference between our regular office visits and our consultation and demonstration sessions. One thought is that since we haven't been taking any new clients for some time, the ones still in our practice are those with especially difficult issues and/or with hindrances that we have not yet figured out how to resolve. Another thought is that there are subtle dynamics that increase the intensity and efficacy of consultation and demonstration sessions. The additional intercession usually present for consultation and demonstration sessions probably contributes. We also wonder whether the Lord is using behavior modification on us – He wants us to do more training so He "rewards" us with success when we do consultation and demonstration.

wounds and lies still seem to be moving slowly in spite of the best possible facilitators. As mentioned above, I personally provide good examples of every one of the reasons things can go slowly.