

HEALING HEARTS AND SOULS

Short Stories to Encourage and Inspire

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SHIRLEY WILSON

Tex Ware
Everett, WA

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Names of some counselees have been changed to protect their privacy. Such names are indicated by an asterisk (*) the first time they appear.

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my parents,

Ann and Garland Bray,

Who had no idea what they were starting

When they married that day in May.

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I also want to thank all of the people I have prayed for over the years, for trusting me with their stories and for their trust in the Lord. They have brought me great joy.

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Mostly, I want to thank the Lord Jesus for His guidance, love, and faithfulness. I would not want to imagine life on this earth without Him!

Introduction

Believe me; I was ready! I had followed the Inner Healing Ministry for years but taking the class was never possible for one reason or another. Now, at last, the time was right. My children were older and I had more time to pursue this desire of my heart. My enthusiasm even spilled over to my daughter, Christine, and her friend, Melanie. So we all showed up at St. Alban's Church in Edmonds, Washington, on that first day of class, excited and ready to begin. I had heard about Rita Bennett and her Inner Healing Ministry for years. I even read all of her books. Now, finally I was going to actually sit under her tutelage and get some firsthand experience. I couldn't wait!

In the past, I had done some Inner Healing for myself and it worked pretty well. I didn't know what I needed prayer for; I just knew I was an emotional mess and, as a new Christian, I knew God had the answers. I was desperate, so I got on my knees and prayed through my life in segments, five years at a time. Since I didn't know what to pray for, I just trusted the Holy Spirit to guide me. And He did. It was amazing what He brought to light.

God's Spirit led me to start the prayer of the first five years, at my very beginning, in the womb. He helped me understand that my mother was very worried about me because she had a stillborn birth before she got pregnant with me. I never realized before how much grief my mother must have experienced in silence. She never spoke of those things.

After praying through my whole life in this way (it took about a week), I felt a measure of relief and more peace than I had ever known. Now, I was hungry for more. I knew that joining Rita's class, where I would learn more answers to deeper questions, would take me to the next step on my Inner Healing journey. It was like crossing over a bridge to something exciting on the other side.

From time to time we hear about building a Kingdom Bridge. How do we, as Christians, prepare ourselves to do whatever that entails? While discussing this with a friend, she told me that she envisioned the Bridge as going over *something*. It was a means of getting from point A to point B, but over what was it going? We decided it must be something pretty icky because we don't want to go through it, but over it. Perhaps it's all the past hurts, generational ties, addictions, compulsions, and other soul-related problems that we carry with us and deal with every day. Assuming that Jesus is the Bridge, it only makes sense that He has devised a means for us to get to the other side. When we get there we are washed clean, with none of the icky stuff sticking to us. Yes, I was ready to begin this second phase of my healing.

Part One

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Chapter 1: Cross over the Bridge

Cross over the Bridge

My first Inner Healing experience in a formal classroom was amazing. I learned that God can do so much more when we allow other people to pray for us. I had received healing while praying on my own, yet I knew God had more for me. As the Scripture says, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). We were asked to think of someone we needed to forgive. I couldn’t think of anyone because I thought I had forgiven everyone when I prayed through my life earlier. Yet a name from my past popped into my mind, so I took that as a nudge from the Holy Spirit and volunteered to be prayed for.

That *pop-up* person was Kenneth.* We were only fourteen years old and had hung out together in a group so I assumed it would be okay to ask him to go with me and another couple on an afternoon hayride in our community. I was thrilled when he accepted my invitation, but later, when the time came, he didn’t show up. To my horror, I had been stood up! I was, of course, devastated. The other couple and I waited and waited thinking he would show up any minute but to no avail.

The other part of this story is interesting because it shows how creative God can be in accomplishing His purpose. Since I had prayed earlier to forgive Kenneth, I was puzzled why this memory came up again. My doubt was confirmed when I didn’t feel any particular emotional release when praying the forgiveness prayer. Then the Holy Spirit directed me to my mother and how she fit into this story.

My mother was never a good housekeeper. I guess that’s understandable with seven children. As a young girl, I was ashamed

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to bring friends home. As far as the hayride was concerned, I figured we would only be in the living room for a short while and then be off on our fun day. That was the only part of the house I cleaned. Since Kenneth didn't show up we were in the house much longer and eventually needed to use the facilities in other parts of the house. I was so embarrassed for my friends to see the mess. Yes, I was angry with my mother.

Then I realized that the Lord had directed me to pray about Kenneth because it was the only way I would see the need to forgive my mother. I could tell we were on target. I felt a deep-seated anger that had never been expressed nor even recognized. I loved my mother and didn't want to admit that she was flawed in this way. As an adult I understood that she did the best she could under the circumstances, but the child part of me had some anger festering deep inside that had never been addressed.

My small group leader invited Jesus into the scene to see how He would handle the situation. I was amazed. Jesus came into our house like the White Knight, or maybe it was Mr. Clean. As He whirled through the house, doing His magic, the house became spotlessly clean. I could even smell the freshness of the gentle breeze coming in through the window. The most amazing thing was that I no longer felt anger toward my mother. When Jesus touched me, I crossed over the Bridge and was set free from the unforgiveness that had entrapped me for years.

We cannot heal anyone in our own strength. However, when we are empowered by the Holy Spirit and have the knowledge to know how to pray, it is amazing what God can do. It's exciting! It also draws us into a closer relationship with Jesus. I believe this is an important element in crossing over and building the Kingdom: growing in our relationship with the Lord Jesus. Until we grow closer to Him, we probably are not going to grow in our relationships with each other and become the community that God intended.

Inner Healing Prayer helps us do the work needed to forgive at a deep level. Relationships are the only things we will be taking to

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Heaven with us, so it's important to get them healed and be able to form new ones; not only for this life, but also for the one to come.

I'm glad my Heavenly Father loves me so much that He arranged for the Kingdom of God to come that day and set me free. Wouldn't you like to cross over the Bridge and see what's on the other side?

Luke 10:9 – “And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ”

A Gift in Time

When I was a senior in high school our class was asked to write a term paper. I chose to write mine on the subject of mental health. That was the beginning of a long journey. From that point on, I knew I wanted to be involved somehow in helping people feel better emotionally. College at that time was not a possibility for me, so my dream went on the back burner.

After meeting the Lord at the age of thirty-two, God began to open doors in my mind that would eventually direct me on a path I couldn't have imagined at the time. Raising five children was in itself a challenge and kept me very dependent on the Lord. He would always come through, though, when I would cry out to Him on my knees for help. Little did I know then how valuable that life-experience would be. My Heavenly Father was teaching me to trust Him and at the same time, showing me His power to guide and to heal, all valuable gifts.

As the kids got older and I had more free time, I started asking the Lord for a healing ministry but He remained silent on the subject. At the time, I had read everything available on Inner Healing Prayer, but there just wasn't a lot of material on the subject, until Rita Bennett's book, *You Can Be Emotionally Free*,¹ came along. I was excited about this publication because it was a book of “how tos” (another

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valuable gift) and I knew more than ever that Inner Healing was something in which I wanted to be involved.

Still, the Lord was silent as far as my ministry was concerned, except to say, “Your family is your ministry right now.” Well, that remark gave me an idea. I could practice on my kids. We began to invite Jesus into the children’s hurts and problems. To our amazement, He would always show up with His gentle presence and His healing power. We were excited. Our God was alive and involved in our lives.

I started an intensive Bible study (Bible Study Fellowship) at a friend’s urging and realized how little I knew about the Bible. After I finished the five-year program (plus two more) I felt much better equipped to do whatever the Lord was leading me to do. During this searching time, I met Rita.

This is how it happened: my friend, Betsy, and I were having lunch at a little sandwich shop in downtown Edmonds, a suburb of Seattle. Betsy and her husband, Dick, were visiting us for a few days from Sandpoint, Idaho. Betsy had a huge part in my accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior a few years earlier. In those days, we would go to St. Luke’s Church in Ballard, a community in Seattle, to their Friday night praise and worship meetings to hear Father Dennis Bennett speak. Those were such memorable times; we hung on every word. So at the sandwich shop, Betsy and I were talking over those *good old times*, when to our surprise, in walked Father Bennett and his wife, Rita.

I couldn’t believe our good fortune when they sat down at the table next to ours. I suspected they were there for a nice quiet lunch but I just had to speak up and tell them how much I enjoyed their ministry. Rita graciously invited me to St. Alban’s Church in Edmonds, Washington, to attend the class they would soon be having on Inner Healing Prayer. I attended that class with my daughter, Christine, and her college friend, Melanie. I was not disappointed; it was the gift I had been waiting for. Our lives were changed forever.

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That was 1987. I have been working in the Inner Healing Ministry ever since. Rita mentored me all those years and we became prayer partners and good friends. I thank God now for His wisdom in not turning me loose too soon, until after my children were grown and not until I was better equipped. Needless to say, I had a lot to learn but the rewards are great when we listen to the Lord, persevere in our pursuit, and wait for His perfect timing. There are some gifts we should not receive too soon.

Psalm 27:14 – “Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!”

Storms

Each spring I hope, and sometimes pray, for a warm and beautiful summer. This was especially important to my family during our boating days. Boating is so much more enjoyable when the waters are calm and the weather is sunny.

In 1996 I had a wonderful experience on the water in Israel. Our tour group was in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. The water was so calm and still. I don't think I have ever experienced such peace, before or since. However, the captain of the small vessel we were on told us that storms often come up unexpectedly on the Sea and it can be very dangerous at those times to be out there. Those of us on the tour were glad that it happened to stay calm for us that day.

Psalm 107:23-30 says in part, “Those who go down to the sea in ships... they see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens. They go down again to the depths. Their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.” Reading this almost makes you feel seasick, doesn't it?

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The Psalm goes on to say, “Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still... So He guides them to their desired haven.”

I believe this passage is talking about the storms of life as well as the storms at sea. They, too, can come up very quickly and catch us off guard. It’s at those times we need to remember to *cry out to the Lord*, because as the Scripture assures us, He is there to help us.

It’s encouraging and comforting to me to know that we have a powerful and merciful Captain who desires to calm the storm and to bring us to a safe harbor.

Psalm 89:9 – “You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, You still them.”

Battleship Island

There is a small island in the San Juan Islands in Northwest Washington, near Roche Harbor, called Battleship Island. If you were traveling along in a pleasure boat in that area, and the island came into view, you would swear there was a majestic battleship looming in the distance. However, as you got closer, you would realize it was not a battleship at all but a small clump of rocky land with a few trees situated in such a way as to give the illusion of a large ship. I always felt a little disappointed as we got closer in our boat and the image of the battleship began to fade. Perhaps I felt a little foolish as well for having been taken in by this façade in the first place.

That island has always fascinated me. It got me thinking about how we sometimes keep troublesome things at a distance so we don’t have to deal with them. They make a much prettier picture from far away, and if we keep them there, we don’t have to take action or admit that we might be wrong.

Many people live their lives like this: as though illusion is reality. This world we live in is full of the fallacy that if you make more money, get more *stuff*, and give your kids all the advantages, you will be successful and live happily ever after. However, as Christians, we know that is not true. The illusion can quickly fade like the battleship and you are left with nothing of real value. The reality is that happiness and a sense of satisfaction come when we invite Jesus to come into our lives and be our Lord.

At some point, some people look at the view and hesitate to make a decision for Christ because they think they would have to give up so much. They may fear being left with only a *small rocky clump*. Or they may have become used to the image of the battleship and not realized they were in danger of it becoming an idol. The truth about the riches they would inherit as a child of God has escaped them at this point. They do not believe that Jesus is waiting for them to possess the land and that He has a wonderful plan for their lives.

The question is, how do we possess the land and grab onto this power that we have been promised? My personal answer to this question has come through reading and studying the Bible and through the Inner Healing Prayer Ministry. I have learned who I am in Christ and what that means, including the miracle of forgiveness, how to do spiritual warfare, and much, much more. I have also learned how to make Jesus Lord of my prayer life. This has helped me experience a tremendous amount of emotional healing in my life and witness it in the lives of others, setting us free to be more the persons God created us to be.

Maybe it's time to take a closer look at the battleships in your life and trade them in for the true Vessel, Jesus Christ, who is waiting to lead you to a safe harbor.

Isaiah 44:20 – “He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, ‘Is there not a lie in my right hand?’”