

Stories
OF
Spiritual
Healing

BECOMING WELL



KWANG-HEE PARK

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All stories are based on real-life anecdotes. Names of persons have been changed and some stories are autobiographical. Printed with permission of the main protagonists. We are very grateful to them and hope that others will find healing through their stories!

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(1) Then Forgiving Comes by Itself

*“In my heart of hearts, God is closer to me than I am
to myself.”—Augustine (354–430)*

Kay created a bi-weekly women’s prayer group: Four or five women with diverse ethnic backgrounds gathered and shared their life concerns. They prayed for one another in silence or aloud.

Every time a different woman volunteered to be the facilitator for the evening; once it was a Jewish lady’s turn to lead the prayer group. Louise and her older sister lost most of her Russian and Polish family and relatives during the Holocaust. She asked the group to take half an hour to write an autobiographical story about forgiveness in their lives.

Kay became immersed in thought over the word “Forgiveness.” Strangely enough, no one person came to her mind. True, she had been hurt by broken relationships when former boyfriends left her because of a lack of commitment or other women. But she never felt the need to forgive them to cultivate her spiritual well-being. She also dismissed the reasons for these unsuccessful relationships as behavioral problems or cultural issues stemming from a failure of men and women to understand each other. When she thought about them, she would become depressed and sad.

Eventually, Kay developed her own method to heal her pain. She prayed alone or with others. She came up with a ritual to start her days with a prayer. Her prayer time became longer and longer, from five minutes to 30 minutes and then to one hour and sometimes even several hours. As time passed, she no longer focused on her depression or on the boyfriends whom she thought had caused her pain.

She felt guided by a profound spiritual sense. She thought it to be the Holy Spirit. In her meditation, the word “Hamartia” arose. The Greek root of the word means “to miss the mark,” and is often used to define sin.

It was an awakening moment for her. She realized when she would “miss the mark,” she became obsessively fixed on bitterness, regrets, unresolved sadness, fears, and despair which she thought was caused by the former boyfriends. Her prayer life helped her healing. She became in touch with spiritual feelings, especially with the love of God.

Kay was delighted to release her obsessions. Closing her eyes, she saw an image: A small, new heart growing within a broken heart. The little heart became bigger and the broken heart gradually peeled off. In the image, her daily prayer was the channel through which the love of God flowed into her inner small heart. She would simply lay out all her concerns in front of God and then listen.

Deep peace, a small voice, images, and insights arose. They encouraged her, consoled her heart, guided her mind, and strengthened her. Now she understood why she didn’t make or even force herself to forgive her former boyfriends. She didn’t need to. Forgiving came to her.

She shared her insight with the group, “For me, forgiveness is not an active effort. Rather, it comes naturally to me when my heart is filled with the love of God.”

Spiritual Practice

- (1) Write a short autobiographical story on forgiveness. Allow 20 to 30 minutes to write your story. If you need more time, keep writing.
- (2) Imagine you are reading your story to God. Write what you heard as a reply.
- (3) What might be your channels into which Divine love can flow?

Prayer

God, here are all my hurts. Hold my wounded heart in Your love so that my broken heart will be filled with Your love and recover joy again.

(2) I Grow My Backbone

“This is to me the hour of greatest joy I ever had in this world. No ear can hear, no tongue can utter, and no heart can understand the sweet incomes and the refreshing of the spirit of the Lord, which I now feel.”

—Mary Dyer (1611–1660)

Thomas was attracted to theology after he experienced the profound sharing of personal recoveries in Alcoholics Anonymous groups. He also felt a satisfying sense of natural flow whenever he contributed his thoughts in conversations about God and faith.

But his personal problems and struggles with previous relationships made him feel insecure, often fragile, and vulnerable. He worked with a psychotherapist and was glad for that. One day he saw a course in chaplaincy offered at a hospital in Hawai'i and he imagined he would find some of the answers he sought there. Hawai'i, he thought, with the ocean waves, the rainbows in the mountains, and the volcanic land still growing, was a place where spirituality came naturally.

The chaplaincy program, however, was more demanding than he expected. By the end of the spring semester, he needed to rejuvenate his energies to feel peaceful. The outdoors was Thomas' place and he reveled in the quiet experience of nature: the ocean, trees, gentle rain, birds, and surfing all comforted him.

He invited his girlfriend Melanie to visit a friend's farm with him where they could camp together. She was delighted and accepted immediately. Thomas prepared for their camping adventure by gathering an air mattress, water bottles, flashlight, tablecloth, cooking utensils, and of course, coffee. When they arrived on the farm, their friend Jim welcomed them, and they spent some time visiting together.

Thomas wanted to set up the tent before it got dark. The site was not at ground level but was instead situated on an elevated wooden platform, surrounded by a side rail overlooking a valley. Thomas and Melanie had to climb up several steps. As they pitched their tent, they were surrounded by the wide-open nature. "What fresh air!" they exclaimed as Thomas took a deep breath.

They woke up early the next morning. The sun was out and they began to prepare breakfast. It was a beautiful place. Thomas was happy to be able to use his old camping pot, a gift from a friend. The sound of boiling water, the smell of coffee, and birds singing in the trees made the couple feel rested. Melanie said, "What a gorgeous and peaceful place this is!" They started to eat a simple breakfast together.

Deep in conversation, Melanie pointed to the side rail that surrounded the wooden platform of their camp. She said, "Thomas, look at these two diagonal bars here that hold up the top bar of the rail. I feel that you are like these diagonal bars: a bit off-center and not grounded. But if you practice prayer, then you will be like these other two vertical bars here in the middle that hold up the top rail. A life of prayer will give you a strong back, so to speak. You will be centered in God." This thought reached deep down into Thomas' core. He thought to himself, "With such a prayer life, I may no longer need to depend on psychotherapy and medication. I may still need to consult with my therapist, but I think I will be able to develop my true core in God and with God."

In time, Thomas developed a firm desire to ground his life in prayer. He called it his backbone theory—centering in God with a daily prayer.

He stayed and worked on the farm a while longer. Every morning he took the time to sit quietly and pray, “God, Your healing touch be with me today. Help me to be centered in You.”

One day a young boy named Tim came by on the way to the summer program at the elementary school near the farm. Thomas greeted Tim, “How are you doing today?” The boy looked at him and was silent for a while and answered, “Good. I feel connected with God this morning.” Thomas was curious, “How do you know you are connected with God?” The boy pointed to his abdomen and said, “Whenever I see my navel, I remember a dream that I had when I was in my mother’s womb where I am connected with a long string to God in heaven.” Thomas remembered what he realized on the campsite platform and was touched by what the boy said.

Two months later, Thomas was working at a local vegan restaurant, peeling garlic in the kitchen. In that moment he paused and for some reason experienced an intense connection with God. He was very content and filled with peace. It was a profound moment he would always remember.

Thomas continued to practice daily prayer. Centered in God, his insecurities and concerns for the future gradually lessened and he began to focus on the present, learning to appreciate who he was. He continued with psychotherapy, but he was no longer dependent on it.

Spiritual Practice

- (1) What is your center in life that holds and guides you?

(2) How do you nurture it?

(3) How might you invite God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit to nurture your soul?

Prayer

God, I desire my life to be solidly centered in You and to be nurtured by Your presence. Help me to have joy in practicing a life of prayer.