



# Praying for those with Cancer or Other Serious Illness

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**By Brother David Jardine**

## General Comments

In Divine Healing Ministries in recent years we have received a great number of requests to pray with and for people suffering from cancer. I have learned lessons during those times of prayer which I have tried to put down in this pamphlet in the hope that they may be of help to others. I do it in the firm belief that an ongoing ministry of prayer will bring great help and healing to those battling against cancer.

*The prayer principles outlined in this leaflet for those praying for people with cancer can also be used effectively when praying for those with other forms of serious illness.*

## God on Our Side

I believe that when we pray for healing we are asking the Lord to give us something that He wants. Maybe in the Gospels that is best depicted in the healing of the leper, in Matthew 8, who approached Jesus, bowed low and said *'Sir, if only you are willing you can make me clean'*. Jesus replied, *'Of course, I'm willing, be clean again'*, and his leprosy was healed immediately. There are all sorts of reasons why many people are not fully healed, even when they receive much prayer. Maybe we will never fully understand some of those reasons this side of heaven. But the teaching of the Gospels and the life of Jesus seems to me to make clear that when we pray for healing the Lord is on our side.

In Luke 4:18-19, when Jesus was just about to begin his ministry, He went into the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth and read from the book of the prophet Isaiah: *'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me. He has sent me to*

*announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the broken victims go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'.*

It seems to me that right at the beginning of His ministry Jesus was setting out what He had come to do, to set people free from everything that oppresses them; first of all from sin and the consequences of sin, but also from sickness. That is good news and should encourage us to keep on praying for the sick.

## **Cancer NOT the Most Powerful Force In the World**

It is important for us to be clear in our minds that cancer or other serious illness is not the most powerful force in the world. God's Holy Spirit is, the Spirit who came down at Pentecost and completely transformed the lives and ministries of the disciples. Jesus had given His disciples clear instructions not to move from Jerusalem until they were armed with that power from on high. Then He made a promise to them which I believe He still makes to us today - *'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you'*. When we pray for people we simply bring them to Jesus and welcome Him to heal them by releasing that Holy Spirit right throughout them.

At the same time we have to acknowledge that praying for people with cancer is a battle, especially if they are suffering from a serious form of the illness. It is a battle that can be won, and which God wants us to win, but it usually takes a great deal of prayer. It is rather like praying for the North of Ireland. Down through the years there have been many crises. People have turned to God, in

large numbers, and He has seen us through, but it has taken a volume of prayer.

God is quite capable of working a miracle and, on occasions, He does, instantaneously healing people from the most serious illnesses. More often He heals gradually over a period of time. That is why it is important to persevere in prayer and not give up too quickly. If possible it should be the prayer of faith, believing that the Lord is responding. I am certain that He hears and responds to every request, so we should never underestimate how much good one of our prayers can do. Even little “arrow” prayers, which only take 5 seconds, can be very helpful. When we think of a sick person we simply need to say, wherever we are, *‘Lord, I lift Jimmy up to you and welcome you to touch him’*.

### **Intensive Prayer**

Some people call this soaking prayer. I prefer the name intensive prayer. It is simply praying for someone who is sick, in teams, for an hour or two hours or longer. One person prays for 15 minutes, and then is relieved by another for 15 minutes, and they alternate like this for the time allocated. Recently in Divine Healing Ministries we have been praying for a small number of people in this way twice each week, and they have received great benefit from this more intensive ministry.

As I understand it, unless the illness is in remission, cancer will be attacking the body 24 hours a day, 168 hours per week. If people are going to be helped or healed in a significant way they may need the longer periods of prayer that I have been describing.

## **Being Surrounded By Prayer Can Only Do Good**

I have no hesitation in saying that when people are suffering from cancer, or any other illness for that matter, it can only do good to be surrounded in prayer. Even when they do not receive the full physical healing that they are asking for, if they are supported by a great deal of prayer the Lord can touch their lives in so many ways. I know a lady who became ill with cancer, who was prayed for on a daily basis. Sometimes we went and prayed with her in teams for two hours at a time. She received great blessing from this ministry, but gradually over the course of a year her condition went down, and she died. Some may say that that was not much of an answer to prayer. But others could see the tremendous difference that it had made. Her own doctor said that he had never seen anyone so ill who was so much at peace, so free from pain, who had such a will to live right to the end, and who made such an impact on others. Her own husband, who was naturally distressed at the loss of the one whom he loved, said that he would never again be afraid of death when he saw the peace with which his wife passed away.

Even when people suffering from cancer, or other serious illness, die, being surrounded in prayer can transform the way in which they die.

## **Medical Treatment and Spiritual Treatment**

This is the most powerful combination of all, medical treatment and spiritual treatment going hand in hand. Someone said that when we are sick we ought to make two telephone calls, one to our doctor and one to our clergyman. Too many people only make one call, to their doctor, but if they fail to make the other call they may be missing out on an important dimension in the healing process.

One of the bonuses of spiritual treatment is that there are no unpleasant side effects. Medical treatment can do great good and bring much healing but is often accompanied by serious side effects. The only side effects of prayer are good ones.

## **Making Our Peace with God**

Even when a person to whom we have been ministering does die we can help them to make their peace with God. That is very helpful to them, and can also bring great comfort to the family. I remember ministering to one man who was seriously ill with cancer, but who was not at peace with himself. Although a faithful member of his church he felt that he had committed sin which had never been put right. I talked to him about God's forgiveness, and over two or three visits was able to help him to receive that forgiveness. That made an enormous difference both to him and to his family. It was bad enough seeing the one whom they loved gradually going downhill, but to see him agitated at the same time was very distressing for them. Even though he died a short time later I knew that, having made his peace with God, that would give comfort and strength to the family for the rest of their lives.

This is very important. When we die we are going to make the biggest journey any of us will ever make. It is vital that we be well prepared to make that journey. Indeed, that is even more important than physical healing. In our ministry we do pray for physical healing. We believe that in doing that we are praying within the will of God. But I still believe that, if we were given a stark choice between the two, being right with God is more important than physical healing because it affects where we are going to spend eternity.

## **Some Hints To Those Praying For People With Cancer, or Other Serious Illness**

### **We Bring People to Jesus**

The story in the Gospels which best describes what happens when we pray for sick people is the healing of the paralysed man (Mark 2:1-12). His friends took him up the side of the house, made a hole in the roof, lowered him down and released him to Jesus. That word release is important. When the friends let go of him, Jesus was able to work a miracle in the life of that man. I have no doubt that they stood up on the roof looking down, absolutely confident that Jesus would be able to heal their friend. But they had to release him first before Jesus was able to work so powerfully. When we pray for the sick we do exactly the same thing. We bring them to Jesus, release them to Him, surround them by faith and confidence in His willingness to heal and His power to heal, and then leave the rest to Him. I find that if I put too much of myself into the prayer it does not work so well. Much better to simply bring them to Jesus, release them to Him and welcome Him to let His healing Holy Spirit flow right through them.

### **Ask for God's Blessing On Medical Treatment and Staff**

The vast majority of people whom we pray for who are suffering from cancer are receiving medical treatment. I always pray for God's guidance for the medical staff in the treatment they prescribe and for His anointing upon that treatment. I have found that an ongoing ministry of prayer can quicken up the effects of medical treatment and, very important for cancer patients, can radically cut

down the side-effects which many of them suffer. One lady to whom we ministered was due to receive six courses of chemotherapy. The first two were so hard on her that she was adamant she was not going to take any more. I suggested that if she did agree to carry on with the treatment we would surround her in prayer *at the very time* it was taking place. She went and thought about it and came back and told me she would try it one more time. I contacted three prayer chains and asked some individuals to support us as well, *at the very time* the treatment was being received. The lady came through with flying colours, there was no sickness; she told me that she didn't even lose a hair and she was able to go on and complete the remaining courses, always surrounded in prayer.

I have made this recommendation to a number of patients since then and they have also found that the side-effects from the treatment have been greatly diminished or non-existent.

## **Prayer in The Home**

I have known some people suffering from cancer who have been able to receive prayer within the home on a daily basis, sometimes twice a day. This has made a significant difference. One lady whose husband was ill prayed with him before she went out to work in the morning, and then in the evening they always had at least half an hour of prayer together. When people are comfortable praying with one another this can be relatively easy. But where people may be shy I suggest that when they pray together they do it silently, inviting the peace, power and healing of God to come into the sick member of the family. The advantage of praying within the home is that it can be done on a daily basis.



Going to healing services or depending on people to come in from outside often means that prayer can only be received occasionally. But when families can lose their inhibitions and pray within the home this gives them a valuable contribution and can be a great blessing to the sick person. I simply suggest that each day as many family members as possible agree to meet and pray. The sick person sits in a chair or, if necessary, lies in bed. The family members gather round and pray either out loud or in silence, as appropriate. Remember that what we are doing is bringing the person to Jesus and asking Him to heal them, welcoming Him to release his peace, power and healing right throughout them. We can do this with confidence that Jesus hears and responds. I know one man whose family were all committed Christians. For the last month of his life there was never any time when there was not a member of the family with him, and often they were praying. That man had a marvellous peace, and even joy within him, which even the weakness of his body could not take away.

## **Taking Authority over Sickness**

Jesus did not pray long prayers with people. In fact He prayed very short prayers, but He did it with such authority that in an instant the most serious illnesses were healed. The centurion who came to Jesus on behalf of his servant recognised this. He said that the authority which he had to tell soldiers to do whatever he wanted them to do was the kind of authority that Jesus had over sickness. We expect this in Jesus. We know the miracles He performed. But we do not recognise so easily that when He sent His disciples out on a healing mission He gave them the same kind of authority, over every sickness and disease, and authority to cast out evil spirits.

They were often pleasantly surprised at the results when they went out and ministered in His name. We so often forget today that Jesus also gives us this

authority and it can be very effective when we are prepared to use it. A lady came to me one day suffering from a bad migraine headache. I prayed with her for about 10-15 minutes. Most of the time I was welcoming the Spirit to come and flow into her, but at one stage I felt guided to spend a few moments commanding the pain to go in the name of Jesus. When we had finished she smiled, and said '*it's gone. The pain has gone*'. I asked her if she could specify at what time during the prayer the pain disappeared. She said 'when you commanded it to go'.

On another occasion, after we had finished intensive prayer with a small group of people, I asked them what sort of prayer seemed to be the most effective for them - welcoming the spirit to come, taking authority over the sickness and commanding it to go, or praying for the specific area affected. Almost all of them said that they seemed to benefit most when we took authority over the sickness and commanded it to go.

In the deliverance ministry we always need to use the authority given to us by Jesus. But when we pray for those suffering from cancer we can also command pain and sickness to go, in the name of Jesus. One way to use this authority is simply to speak directly to the affected part and pray '*in the name of Jesus, be healed*'. This command can be repeated a number of times. We do not need to shout, but we do need to pray in such a way that we realise we are ministering with the authority given to us by Jesus.

## **The Prayer of Faith**

Praying in faith is simply praying in such a way that we believe God is responding. Ideally this is how we ought to pray all the time. In order to express this faith in God I believe that when we are praying in an ongoing way for someone who is ill we need to

move from asking to trusting that the Lord is responding. To keep on asking for the same request time after time could be a sign of an unconscious anxiety or lack of faith in God. Maybe we need to switch and pray something like this, *'Lord, I have brought Jimmy before you on many occasions. I know you are a God who answers prayer. I know you have heard every one of the prayers that has been prayed for Jimmy. Lord, I trust you to be responding and bringing the healing that Jimmy needs'*. That prayer can be said in whatever words we wish to use, but I suggest that it should express a faith and trust that the Lord has heard and is responding. This is especially important when praying for patients suffering from serious illness, such as cancer. We need to surround those people with an atmosphere of faith, and not one of doubt or even uncertainty that the patient is not going to recover. Very often that is exactly what happens. The medical prognosis is that the person has a specific length of time to live and many people react as if there is no possible alternative. We have to take seriously what the medical profession says. They are experts in sickness. But their judgments are made on the basis of human understanding. It may well be that God has other plans, especially if we really appeal to Him in prayer.

A few years ago William came to me, suffering from cancer. By the time it was discovered the illness was far advanced. Doctors had forecast that William had three months to live. I talked to him

about prayer and what was available through the ministry of divine healing. He and his wife agreed that they would come regularly to receive prayer and that they would encourage friends and family to pray in the background. William was well-known in many parts of the country, and so word about his illness, and the medical prognosis, soon got around. Everywhere I went I bumped into people who knew him, and their first comment always was *'it's a pity about William, isn't it?'* They were saying that because the medical prognosis was that William would only live three months, he would be dead and buried at the end of that time. William was surrounded not just by doubt, but by certainty that He was going to die. When praying we had to break through all of that doubt and unbelief. William did eventually die from cancer, but in response to prayer he was touched powerfully by God in many different ways. I have often wondered what effect it would have had if, in the wider community William had been surrounded by as much faith and trust as he was by doubt and unbelief. It may not have saved his life. When praying for serious forms of cancer, or other illness, we can never guarantee that. But at the very least it would have had a deeper beneficial effect on every part of his being.

When we surround people by the prayer of faith, and especially when we move from asking to trusting that the Lord is responding we create the atmosphere and conditions in which the power of God can be released.

## **The Quality of Our Prayer**

People sometimes say to me that they would like to be involved in the ministry of healing, to pray for the sick. What advice would I give to them? I always tell them to work on their relationship with

God. If we are close to Him He can use us powerfully when we pray. But if we are not close to Him, even if we have read every book that was ever written on divine healing, there will always be something missing in our ministry. We don't need to be perfect. That will never happen this side of heaven. But we do need to be working on our relationship with God.

I have already mentioned that there will be occasions when we have to spend considerable time praying with those who have cancer , or other serious illness. What is equally important is the quality of our prayer.

The best way to improve this is to come closer to Jesus.

He said “if you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it will be given unto you.”

## **How People Can Pray For Themselves Organise Prayer in The Background**

I have always found it helpful to organise prayer cover in the background for those suffering from serious illness. At the very least I would expect God's response to this prayer to bring peace and strength instead of anxiety and fear. Indeed I have experienced this myself. In September, 1967, just a few months after being ordained I had to go into hospital for a major surgical operation. Normally in those circumstances I would have expected to be nervous. But I can honestly say that throughout my time in hospital I was completely calm. That was not me. That calmness was because people were praying - the church where I worked, my friends, my family. And because of God's response I was completely calm at a time when I could so easily have been very anxious.

We can arrange prayer cover in the background in an anonymous way through our intercession service. You only need to ring (028 9031 1532), give the first name of the person, what they need prayer for, and we promise to pray every day for 30 days. If necessary the request can be renewed at the end of that time. If deeper prayer is required, such as at the time of an operation or when specific treatment is being received, you can ring our office 028 9031 1532 at any time, and leave a message if no-one answers, and we will organise that. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of this faithful prayer in the background in the whole healing process. Indeed, if the patient's condition should happen to deteriorate for any reason one important response can be to renew and deepen prayer cover.

## **Encouraging Friends and Family To Pray Each Day At The Same Time**

I have suggested to some families that they should organise people to pray in the background, wherever they happen to be, at the same time every night. 8.45pm or 9.45pm are possible times, not too late but avoiding national news times on television. The family can gather to pray quietly, even to lay hands on the sick person, confident in the knowledge that many others all over the place are joining in prayer at the same time. I even remember one occasion when I went to join a family in prayer and we left the telephone off the hook in the room so that a nephew in England could also pray with us.

## **Open To Receive What the Lord Wants to Give Us**

I have noticed in praying for sick people that some are very good at receiving what the Lord wants to give. There are people for whom I pray regularly who always receive something - a disappearance of pain, peace, strength, confidence, new hope, tangible physical healing, feeling better within themselves. Others do find it more difficult to receive. I think there are three keys - first of all, we must want to receive prayer. That desire is probably an indication of the confidence we have that God can touch us. Secondly, those who really believe that God is going to respond to this prayer seem to be open to what God wants to do. Many of these people would not necessarily consider themselves committed Christians, but they do have a trusting faith. Thirdly, I have noticed that loving people are good at receiving through prayer. I remember one lady who came to our Friday lunch-time service in St Anne's Cathedral. She was

waiting to go in for a hip replacement operation. She came for prayer eight

weeks in a row. When she went back to the hospital to make arrangements to go in for the operation they discovered that she had made so much progress that she no longer needed it. That lady was a very loving and joyful Christian, and those attitudes, I believe, helped her to be open to receive what God wanted to give her.

People can only come for prayer as they are. They cannot suddenly summon up a large amount of artificial faith. A modern song puts it well - '*Jesus, take me as I am, I can come no other way*'. That is absolutely right, we can only come as we are. But, at the same time, we would do well to be working on those attitudes which will help us to benefit in a deeper way - a real desire to come for prayer, faith and confidence that God will touch us, and a loving attitude which will help us to be open to receive what God wants to give.

## **Praying For Ourselves**

John Wimber, the American evangelist and healer, said that when he was converted in 1963 he found in Jesus a friend to whom he could talk about absolutely anything. Jesus wants to be that kind of friend for us as well. When we are anxious sharing the concern with Him helps to bring peace. When sick we can talk naturally to Him, just as we would to another person, and ask Him, with confidence, to give us healing. This kind of conversation with Jesus will always be the basis of our life of prayer. But in addition to that, there is another type of prayer through which we can welcome God to breathe the life of His Spirit into every part of us. It is probably best done in our own homes, and it does mean finding a quiet place



where we will not be disturbed. We can sit in a comfortable position, with our back straight, or we can lie down on top of the bed.

Take a few minutes to relax the body, eyes closed, one limb at a time - the right arm, left arm, hands, fingers, shoulders, chest, right leg, left leg, ankles, feet, hips - letting go in every muscle. Take a few minutes to do this.

When you feel relaxed you can move on to start focusing on God, still with your eyes closed. Do this in whatever way is helpful, through praise, thanksgiving, prayer, scriptural verses or saying the Lord's Prayer. Take a few minutes as well to thank God for His gift of the Holy Spirit. Think of the Spirit coming down at Pentecost, transforming the lives and ministries of those early Christians, taking away their fear. Give thanks for the promise of Jesus: *'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you'*.

Take a few minutes then to thank God that that same Holy Spirit who came down in power at Pentecost is still available to us today, available to you now.

Now invite the Holy Spirit to flow into every part of you. If you like, you can picture Jesus standing with his hands upon your head, releasing the power of the Spirit in your life; allowing it to flow into your legs, your feet, your arms, your hands, your body, your chest, your neck, your head, your mind, your emotions, your memory. Remember that He is the Spirit of love and joy and peace, the Spirit of Power and Healing who is flowing into every part of you. In your mind's eye picture the Holy Spirit moving especially into the area

of your body that is sick or injured. Give thanks that the Spirit is bringing healing.

Picture yourself well, as you want to be. Picture yourself doing something physical - running, walking briskly, swimming, digging - and give thanks that this is how God is making you.

Take a few minutes to hold this picture in your mind - and give thanks.

The whole prayer should last about 15-30 minutes. Try to pray in this way once or possibly twice each day.

## **A Prayer That We Can Say Ourselves**

May the healing and strengthening mercies of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who is present with me here now at this very moment and in the days to come, enter powerfully  
into every part of me,  
into my soul, into my mind, into my body,  
and heal me of anything that harms me and  
give me God's peace. Amen

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