



# Ramah's Voice

a ministry of Ramah International, Inc.

## Healing the Helper

By Dr. Henry J. Venter

Consider the following headlines from a prominent Christian publication:

- Prominent Evangelist Loses Temper – Overturns Tables and Pews in Church; Some Members Allegedly Attacked with a Whip.
- Keynote Conference Speaker Disappears Halfway Through Major Crusade – Whereabouts Unknown; Thousands of People Disappointed.
- Preacher Claiming to be the Son of God Crucified on Friday – Followers Nowhere to be Found.

## The Human Element of the People Helper

It is crucial for any person involved in “people ministry” to keep in mind that no matter how high the calling, no matter how noble or influential the ministry, the work is always performed in a human body among other humans. **The above headlines, taken from the New Testament, clearly indicate that this also applied to Jesus even though He was the Son of God.** During earthly ministry He dwelled in a human body with human feelings and behavior. This means that He also (just like us) experienced the whole array of human emotions as a people healer – typically reactions such as fatigue and hurt!

Jesus had to deal with the actions and reactions of people around him as well as His own inner emotions. Some sought to put him down while others believed in Him but thought He had endless energy to deal with

their problems and woes. The demand on Him physically and emotionally was of such a nature that He once could not even finish His own crusade. Negative comments had a profound affect upon Him also. He often cried for Israel to open their eyes, scolded the disciples for their unbelief in spite of the fact that they witnessed His miracles firsthand.

**One of the major problems among people helpers, however, is a tendency to not factor the experience of Jesus into our own lives.** People helpers often view fatigue as a sign of weakness and feelings of hurt as a spiritual flaw. This places enormous pressure upon them – to the extent that their human bodies simply cannot endure it.

When the human body signals that it cannot handle internal and external pressures it will simply go into a defense mode and begin to slow down to get us out of the danger zone. Many people helpers view this as an even clearer sign of weakness, resulting in the opposite of what their system needs – less work, less people. We begin to work harder, spend more time ministering and try harder to please everyone.

Eventually the person in this mode begins to dysfunction physically and emotionally and burnout is triggered. **Burnout is someone in a state of fatigue brought on by a devotion to a cause or way of life that failed to produce the expected rewards.** Ministry often produces less reward than anticipated which triggers frustration and discontent. The danger is that, in spite of negative circumstances, a person persists in increasing time and effort spent in ministry. This leads to a depletion of internal resource – exhaustion at a spiritual, emotional and physiological level.

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Certain human factors make “people helping” ministry highly susceptible to this condition:

- **The nature of ministry** – Ministry is very people oriented. People will disappoint you, often giving very little positive feedback while not hesitating to criticize.
- **Undefined boundaries** – No one in ministry is certain what amounts to success. We never know when we have done enough.
- **Lack of clear criteria for work performance** – We have a difficult time defining our job descriptions.
- **Spotlight Heat** – While people love to be negative (sometimes called constructive criticism), they love having people in the spotlight. In ministry we are often placed on a pedestal with role expectations ascribed to us.

Blaming our enemy, the devil, is a popular way to deal with the above crisis points. After all, Ephesians 6 clearly states that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against evil forces that want to destroy us. But the devil had little to do with our malfunction and crisis. If we choose to ignore our humanness and go beyond our limits, we will pay the price and suffer the consequences physically, emotionally and spiritually. **To be truly healed is to accept our limitations and shortcomings. We must realize that on our own, contained in this human body, there is a limit to our efforts and endurance.**

### The Spiritual Element of the People Helper

Does accepting our humanness mean that we are less spiritual? Shouldn't we be able to “overcome” no matter what? These are complex questions with a simple answer – NO! Our spirituality is not centered on our efforts and accomplishments. Our acts are merely a duty of our calling. **True spirituality comes as a gift from God – a gift of mercy and grace.**

The essence of the New Testament is summarized in II Corinthians 5:17, “*Therefore if any person is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come*” (Amplified). When we became a new creation through Christ, He deposited the rich blessings of His spirit into ours. Ephesians 1:3 says, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in first.*”

We are spiritual because He has created us as such — because Christ has blessed us with it. II Peter 1:2-3 says, “... *His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and Godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us.*” We cannot duplicate this true spirituality given by Christ through our own efforts and accomplishments. Whatever we do or accomplish in ministry is because He blessed and worked through us.

**It is our spiritual gift that allows us to do the work of healing, not our human dimension.** Christ Himself said in John 17:4, “*I glorified You (the Father) on earth having accomplished the work which You have given me to do.*” Christ had a God-given mission to fulfill on earth. He had to accomplish this in spite of His humanness. He experienced being alone, hungry, fatigued, and tempted by the devil. In the garden of Gethsemane He said He was in the greatest anguish of His life. On the way to the cross, He was deserted and betrayed by His closest and dearest friends. On the cross, He suffered inhuman physical pain while dying a terrible death, witnessed by His own family. **Yet, because He discovered that His true strength did not come from His human dimension, or from His own efforts, He triumphed and with His last breath and still forgave us.**

## Three Keys to Healing

Being in ministry necessitates that we understand these two concepts —We are fully human and divinely spiritual. Being human gives an excuse for being dysfunctional and being spiritual does not mean we can ignore the laws of nature. Nor does being spiritual safeguard me against my very human reactions. Understanding these concepts can lead someone to a place of being content and at peace, where we can function optimally as “people helpers” and even enjoy the work. Here are some things to understand about this process.

### 1. Make Sure of Your Own Healing

Many people are searching for healing when they get involved in the helping ministry. Healing can be something that many might want to avoid. It is easier to instead become involved in a noble cause, dedicating and sacrificing time to the healing of others. Although this is certainly commendable, it leaves very little room for our own healing and growth. A person under the more intense emotional workload may deteriorate significantly and revert to defenses to keep feelings of pain and hurt hidden. Over time this can lead to immense behavioral problems and severe mood swings.

#### a. Healing – a Process of Growth

Spiritual and emotional healing is not a one-time event. It is not a surgical procedure that instantly removes the pain. It entails a life-long process of growth and recovery where negative symptoms and emotions might occur intensely over a long period. If we do not approach the process correctly, we might merely develop more dysfunction over time.

#### b. Healing – A Decision

When Christ was approached by afflicted people during His earthly ministry He regularly asked them what they wanted Him to do. What a strange question to ask the blind man, Barthimeus. Isn't it obvious that he wanted to see? Christ was interested to hear what they decided about their healing. He wanted to see if they were ready to accept responsibility for the changes that were going to take place. After all, the lame man was going to be cut from disability pay and the blind man could no longer beg. They had to make a decision to take responsibility for their healing.

### 2. Accept Your Humanness

To accept our humanness is to recognize boundaries and limitations. As seen in the life of Jesus, fatigue, physical overload, and frustration was part of His daily life. To accept our humanness we will have to:

- **Accept ourselves** – Acknowledge our own shortcoming and mistakes
- **Accept failure** – Realize that every venture is not going to be successful and/or perfect
- **Accept the shortcomings and failures of others** – Understand we will be hurt, rejected and betrayed by other people
- **Accept that life is often imperfect** – Know that life won't fit together neatly in an ordered way

### 3. Make Sure of Your Motives

**If someone wants to change the world, overturn the way society thinks, redefine the morals of mankind, get the world saved or preach to the masses, s/he should not get involved in the healing ministry!** The healing ministry is about one individual at a time. It is a slow process of joining with someone and participating in their journey of healing for some time. Most of the time it is a lonely and private road with very few people aware of our efforts.

Often people are not ready to be healed. Remember the question of Jesus – “What do you want me to do?” Some are not sure what they want. “People helpers” often fall into the trap of becoming personally responsible for the healing of others. The fact is that their healing also involves a decision. They have to want it and must take responsibility for it to happen. Taking responsibility for one person is probably not a big load. However, before we realize it, we are involved in many lives and often that responsibility becomes too much.

What are your needs today? Do you need to see? Are you thirsty? Are you in need of healing? Christ is inviting you to receive complete healing and to be set free from shackles and burdens.

#### **WHAT DO YOU WANT HIM TO DO FOR YOU TODAY?**

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## Be Still

***“Be still, and know that I am God...” Psalm 46:10 (NIV)***

Between my duties as a wife, a home-schooling mother of three and running a full-time international ministry, quiet time is hard to find. While reading the Bible can be scheduled, having tranquil moments just to listen to the Lord is another matter.

When my children were younger, my “be still” times were in the bathtub. As ministry duties expanded, the Lord would find me during airplane flights. When I became overwhelmingly busy, God would resort to waking me up in the night to speak to my heart.

After all these years, I look back on my “be still” times as major events. The vision for our book, [Her Choice to Heal](#), was laid out on a long flight home. When God opened my eyes to starting Ramah International, it was in the middle of the night. ***I didn't listen immediately to that leading so He woke me up several times. Sometimes I have been obedient just in an effort to be able to sleep through the night!*** After all these years, God knows when to get my attention. I only wish that I would remember to surrender immediately so I could sleep more!

How often do you embrace the “be still” commandment to “know that I am God?” No matter how difficult it is to find time, seek out quiet places and clear your mind to hear from the Lord. He's waiting for your full and peaceful attention to pour out His love into your soul and to direct your future paths.

*Sydna A. Massé*

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### From the Word of God:

*“May the LORD answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. May He send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion. May He remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings. May He give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. We will shout for joy when you are victorious and will lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the LORD grant all your requests.”*

Psalms 20:1-5 (NIV)