

Serving God Through Illness

As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. **—Galatians 4:13**

I turn now to illness and the possibility of service. That means going to work and also doing something for God. After all, there are some people who are chronically ill and work forty hours a week. Others have problems far more serious; some are bedridden, and others are housebound but can still cope. Obviously Paul, who had an eye problem, kept going since it was because of that reason that he came to the Galatians. God can cause your illness to coalesce with an event, situation, or place wherein you would think, I am actually glad I had that illness, otherwise this wouldn't have happened!

Two of the greatest ministries—our deaf ministry and our prayer ministry—during our time at Westminster Chapel came into being as a result of Louise's physical problems. The deaf ministry would not have happened without Louise's ear problem. Our prayer ministry, through which we saw people healed and countless others blessed and refreshed, would not have happened but for Louise suffering severe depression for several years. It was because of chronic illness that she was open to letting others pray for her.

God may use you in His service because of an illness. He may turn you into one of the great intercessors of history. This, therefore, brings me to the subject of illness and spirituality. We are back to that word intimacy. God wants your company; He loves your company. "Me? I can't preach. I can't play a guitar. I can't compose hymns. He wants me?" Yes. The most insignificant person whom no one has time for, God wants. If this chronic illness is not going to go away, why don't you just say, "Lord, show me what You want"?

Excerpted from *The Thorn in the Flesh* (Charisma House, 2004).