

Why Inner Healing Is Relevant for Everyone

Like deliverance, inner healing is a rediscovery of an ancient ministry. *Inner healing* is actually a misnomer. It was first called the “healing of memories,” which was even more incorrect. What it truly is and should be called is “prayer and counsel for sanctification and transformation.”

It is not merely a way to restore hurting people, though it does that. It is a ministry within the body of Christ to enable believers to come to more effective and continual death on the cross, and resurrection into the fullness of life in Christ. Inner healing is a tool the Lord uses to mature His people. “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15).

Inner healing is actually the application of the crucified and resurrected life of Jesus Christ and His blood to those parts of my heart and yours that did not fully “get the message” when we first received Jesus as Savior. Paul wrote, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). Because some areas deep in our hearts have not believed and accepted the good news of our death and rebirth in Him, the fullness of His work has not yet happened for us. We are new creatures in Christ, but some of our old self-centered, selfish character continues to act in its ugly, old ways, as though we had not yet received the Lord.

Inner healing, then, is evangelism to the unbelieving hearts of believers. (We will explore this in much detail in chapter 3.)

Paul refused to regard any Christian from merely a human point of view. To him, every born-again believer has been recreated:

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ” (2 Cor. 5:17-18). But the same passage goes on to say, “We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (verse 20, NIV). He also called us to work out that salvation “with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). It is a “both-and” message. Positionally we have been made perfect, but we have to take hold of that salvation and make it effective in every area of our lives.

Inner healing is a tool of prayer and counseling to make salvation fully effective in all dimensions of our life and character.

When Abraham came through Canaan, God gave him the land. From that time on, therefore, positionally the Jews owned the land. But then the Lord told him that he and his people would have to go down to “a land that is not theirs,” Egypt, and be slaves there for 400 years (Gen. 15:13–16). Then they had to cross the Jordan, kill the giants and conquer the fenced and walled cities to possess what they already owned.

In like manner, when we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, positionally we possess the perfection of our souls. But we must yet cross our own inner Jordans, kill our own giants and conquer the fenced and walled areas of our own stony hearts to possess what we already own. Inner healing is a discipline of prayer and counsel to accomplish that task.

Inner healing practitioners look at character, therefore, to discover what practices in the old man we did not fully yield to the cross when we first received Jesus as Lord and Savior.

There exist at least two areas of conflict between inner healing and deliverance.

First, looking at character structures has seemed to many deliverance ministers too close to psychology, and thus

possibly hooked into the deceptions of the occult.

Second, inner healing ministers maintain that practices of the “old man” in our character serve as houses for demonic habitation. They have often been grieved, therefore, when some deliverance ministries have cast out demons as though they alone were the cause of trouble, and failed to dismantle their dwelling places on the cross of Christ. The result: Outcast demons have wandered around in waterless places and then come back, bringing seven others worse than themselves (Matt. 12:43–45).

All too often, Paula and I have had to “mop up” after immature deliverance ministries—just as deliverance people have had to mop up after certain inner healers’ efforts, casting away demonic presences they failed to see or deal with.

Inner healing has thus been besmirched and become unnecessarily controversial.

*Excerpted from Deliverance and Inner Healing by John Loren Sandford and Mark Sandford. **John Loren Sandford** is co-founder of Elijah House Ministries, an international ministry established in 1975 that teaches the principles of repentance and forgiveness while highlighting the power of Jesus’ death and resurrection. John is considered a pioneer in the prophetic and inner healing movements. His work in the kingdom has brought reconciliation and restoration of relationships to countless thousands, from individuals and families to denominations and people groups, ultimately for reconciliation to the Father.*

Mark Sandford, one of John’s children, has an M.Div. in counseling from Denver Theological Seminary and is spiritual director of Elijah House. He ministers to individuals and couples in all areas of inner healing and deliverance and teaches at Elijah House schools and seminars.