

## **Chapter 3**

### **Theological Foundations for Inner Healing in the African Context: A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective of Health and Wholeness**

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#### **I. Introduction**

During my childhood I had the privilege to meet and interact with my Afro Brazilian great grandmother. Her name is Gertrudes Abreu da Cruz, granddaughter of an African slave. In 1871, the princes Isabel of Portugal signed the Law of Free Birth, declaring that any child born to a slave woman after 28 September 1871 would be free, making my tataravó (Portuguese for great grandmother), a free woman.

One of the memories I have from her is the way she used to “heal” us by offering water with sugar when we were frightened or injured, and, spreading water with salt on our wounds, or just kissing the place where it was hurting. She knew exactly what herb or combination of herbs and leaves we should use for any type of health problems. She couldn’t read or write, but for us children she was an expert healer. Although she couldn’t cure my wounds, every time I got hurt while playing outside I would run to her arms for relief.

When health is lost and life is broken we want to be made whole again and we often seek a cure. To be cured is to eliminate a problem so that it no longer exists. Sometimes we can be cured, but if we cannot

be cured perhaps we can be healed like my afro-Brazilian *tataravó* did to me. Often, traditional healers are not able to cure but can certainly provide comfort by healing-as presented in the next session.

The purpose of this paper is to explore a biblical understanding of inner healing, it analyzes how the Bible and Christian writers define inner-healing, it examines the African understanding of health and wholeness, and concludes by presenting missiological bridges for a meaningful and effective Seventh-day Adventist mission approach which will improve health and wholeness in the mother continent.

## II. Inner Healing

Inner healing has to do with emotions and spirituality. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines emotion as “a mental state that arises spontaneously rather than through conscious effort and is often accompanied by physiological changes; a feeling: the emotions of joy, sorrow, reverence, hate, and love” (2018).

In her article, “What emotions do,” Muran states:

Emotions are the root cause of almost every injury and illness. Anger, fear, unworthiness and other emotions get “stuffed” into the body. Over time these limiting emotions weaken the physical body creating stiffness, aches, pain and general discomfort, which eventually can cause more serious conditions like tumors and cancer. (2013, para. 1)

Many people’s lives have completely fallen apart, they are full of anger and frustration and wish they could find relief. As Johnston (2000) states, there is a difference between curing and healing: “Healing is to be made whole, and it is fundamentally a psychological and spiritual process. Healing occurs when we accept the reality of what is and continue to live a full life anyway” (para. 4). This happens because a person has experienced a fundamental change in the personality and lifestyle and moved towards wholeness.

Curing and healing can indeed be used synonymously, but they are different. The main words used in the Greek New Testament for “healed” or “cured” are: *καθαίρω*, *σώζω*, *ἀπαλλάσσω*, *ἰάομαι*, and *θεραπεύω* (Teknia, 2018).

All these words can be used interchangeably, but with small differences of emphasis. Unfortunately, these five Greek words are often converted into two English words only: “healed” and “cured,”

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and sometimes, "made clean."

An example appears in Matthew 8. When Jesus healed a man's leprosy, He said, "Be clean! Immediately he was cured of his leprosy" (8:3, NIV). The word translated "clean" and the word translated "cured" both come from the same Greek word, καθαίρω, which means "to cleanse." So this man's "cure" was to be cleansed of an ailment that made him unclean.

When Peter and John (Acts 4) were questioned by the Jewish leaders about the miraculous healing of the crippled man at the temple gate, Peter used the word σέσωται from σώσω, to save, deliver, make whole, to describe the healing (v. 9). Then he said, "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead . . . this man stands before you healed" (v. 10). The term used is ὑγιής, meaning "healthy" or "well." The crippling condition this man had known since birth was not considered "unclean," as was the case with infectious leprosy.

In summary, the English words "healed" and "cured" are used interchangeably for a variety of Greek terms. However, in Greek, different words are used for different situations, especially when there is the intention to make a difference between a condition that makes a person clean or unclean, or when emphasizing the person who is doing the healing in contrast to the person who is receiving the healing (Coleman, 2011).

According to Kraft, "Inner healing is freeing people from the emotional and spiritual 'garbage' we accumulate as we go through life. It frees people to be what Jesus intended us to be, and it frees the Church to be what it is supposed to be as well" (2010, p. 14).

Emotions can be utterly good or extremely bad. They are intimately related to mental and physical health. There is a long list of psychosomatic diseases; they affect virtually every system, but most often the digestive, circulatory, respiratory, and nervous systems. Positive emotional states, such as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bring about a sense of well-being, a positive outlook and an optimal relationship with God and neighbor. (Melgosa, 2010, p. 11)

When the church becomes a center for emotional and spiritual healing the natural consequence is the mobilization of the healed members, now highly motivated to extend this inner healing to others and accomplish the church's mission as Jesus' disciples.

Many of us have wounded hearts as a consequence of traumas or

hurtful experiences in life. As a result, we resist to become disciples as we are spiritually and emotionally damaged. It is like having a solid wall in front of us that impedes us from fully understanding the truth about God, about ourselves, and about our mission in the church community. Consequently, we do not experience spiritual growth as promised in the Bible since we are unable to walk in the paths of life having a healthy self-esteem, expressing the love of God to our fellow believers and to the world. Recent studies in this area show that “the end result of discipleship is that we become a conduit of God’s love, one who edifies the Body of Christ and the world (Ephesians 4:12-16)” (Finding Home Institute, 2018, para 1).

Healing removes the “garbage” that may be hindering our spiritual and emotional growth. As our hearts are healed, we start living in accordance to the principles of the Word of God, becoming more and more capable and active disciples of Jesus Christ, and experiencing an abundant and fulfilling Christian life.

### **III. Theology of Inner Healing in the Bible**

Both the Old and New Testaments indicate clearly God’s deepest desire to heal his people and it was the heartbeat of Jesus’ ministry. The Bible does not state how many people Jesus healed. His healing is sometimes attributed to his words and at other times to his touch. Astonished people said of him: “Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands?” (Mk 6:2).

If our deepest conflicts are not resolved, our most painful hurts not healed, our inmost needs not met, we cannot be truly whole, or conquer our compulsions and love others as we should (Compelling Truth, 2014, para. 4). Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in Him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

God has performed marvelous miracles in the lives of individuals and people who were emotionally wounded. Warren (2002) reminds us that

Abraham was old, Jacob was insecure, Leah was unattractive, Joseph was abused, Moses stuttered, Gideon was poor, Samson was codependent, Rahab was immoral, David had an affair and all kinds of family problems, Elijah was suicidal, Jeremiah was depressed, Jonah was reluctant, Naomi was a widow, John the Baptist was eccentric to say the least, Peter was impulsive and hot-tempered, Martha worried a lot, the Samaritan woman had several

failed marriages, Zacchaeus was unpopular, Thomas had doubts, Paul had poor health, and Timothy was timid. (p. 233)

### **A. Inner Healing in the Old Testament**

Inner healing is a theological theme which runs throughout the Old Testament, especially in the book of Psalms and in the prophetic books. There are numerous biblical references about people who were brokenhearted at some point in their lives. They experienced feelings such as affliction, depression, anger, vengeance, disappointment, anguish, agony, despair, and yet, after accepting God's plans for their lives, they experienced an awesome intimacy with Him and became powerful instruments in His hands. Some examples are: Abraham (Gen 15), Moses (Num 11:11-15), Jonah (Jonah 4), Job (book of Job), Elijah (1 Kgs 19), King Saul (1 Sam 16:14-23), Jeremiah (book of Jeremiah), and David (Ps 6, 13, 18, 23, 25, 27, 31, 32, 34, 37-40, 42-43, 46, 51, 55, 62-63, 69, 71, 73, 77, 84, 86, 90-91, 94-95, 103-104, 107, 110, 116, 118, 121, 123-124, 130, 138, 139, 141-143, 146-147).

When the people of Israel was suffering in their distress as a consequence of their disobedience to God's law, they asked the prophet Jeremiah to intercede for them with prayers, and God answered: "But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds, declares the Lord" (Jer 30:17).

Wilkinson (1998) maintains that "healing in the Old Testament was expected through prayer, petition, and supplication to God. God would either heal directly, or in some cases through the prophets, such as when Elisha cured Naaman (2 Kgs 5:1-14) or Isaiah (Isa 38) cured Hezekiah" (p. 60).

### **B. Inner Healing in the New Testament**

Healing accounts in the New Testament are much more numerous and are always mediated by Jesus or one of His followers. A recent study found that "over twenty percent of the total content of the Gospels is devoted to healing with 41 distinct cases, and 72 duplications" (Kelsey, 1973, p. 58). The healings cover various mental and physical illnesses ranging from leprosy and hemorrhage to demonic possession. Kelsey says that the healings attributed to Jesus are very diverse, but there are five dominant themes that often occur:

First, Jesus emphasizes compassion for others, emulating the

Golden Rule of loving a brother or a sister as oneself. Second, Jesus performs healings to attest to the power of God's Kingdom, in these cases faith in God is important (Luke 17:11-19). Third, Jesus sees illness as something unnatural to the body, and tied to an evil power. In such cases Jesus acts as a liberator, freeing the person from evil's grasp (Mark 9:17-25). Fourth, sometimes Jesus' healing comes with moral repentance, suggesting that sin is at the root of some illnesses (Mark 2:5). Fifth, Jesus attempts to teach His disciples about healing hoping that His followers will perpetuate His healing ministry (Matt 10:8). (Kelsey, 1973, p. 67)

If anyone wants to receive healing from emotional wounds, pain, sorrows, grief, and anguish, it is vital to take advantage of what Christ has done for us, and learn to cast one's cares upon the Lord, not just some of them, but all of them, knowing that He cares for us and wants to take those things from us (1 Pet 5:7).

Jesus has already paid the price for the healing of our souls when He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18, NKJV). "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt 11:28-30). Jesus is telling us to come unto Him, accept His plans for our lives and surrender to Him our pain, sadness, losses, bitterness, and frustrations.

When He says that His burden is light, it means that once we accept His peace and rest in Him, allowing Him to wholly heal us, His yoke will be easy and His burden light. He is not speaking about a heavy physical burden, but a burden in a person's mind.

Abuse, trauma, hurt, and pain are all works of the devil. Paul declares, "For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (1 Tim 1:7). Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and restore His children to the fullness for which He created them. When Jesus was here on earth, He was doing the will of the Father, and this included healing all who were oppressed. Peter says that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38).

When Paul implored God three times in prayer to heal him, the answer was, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made

perfect in weakness.” Paul was asking to be cured but God said that He would not cure him because His grace was enough. Paul, as a faithful disciple of Jesus accepted God’s will by answering, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor 12:9).

Seamands says that “Paul applied this profound theology to a very practical area—the place where we live with our damaged emotions and hang-ups. ‘the Holy Spirit also helpeth our infirmities,’ in our weaknesses (Rom 8:26)” (1981, p. 133). Jesus Christ is our Wounded Healer and He fully understands us. When He was about to return to heaven, He promised that He would not abandon His friends but would continue with them through the Comforter, the *παράκλητος* (John 14:17-18).

In the context of the great controversy between God and Satan, God can always heal us by His grace and through the Comforter—the Holy Spirit. He will also cure us, but it may happen in three different ways, and He is the one who chooses: (a) through a miracle, (b) through health professionals to whom He gives intelligence and through whom he alleviates peoples’ physical and emotional pains, and (c) on the occasion of His return at the end of this great controversy. At that time “we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. . . . And the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:51-53).

Therefore, God may not cure us now, but surely he can heal our broken hearts and emotional wounds as Isaiah affirmed, “Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away” (Isa 35:10b).

### **C. Inner Healing in the Adventist Literature**

White wrote extensively about inner healing. She said that

when the Gospel is received in its purity and power, it is a cure for the maladies that originated in sin. The Sun of righteousness arises “with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2). Not all that this world bestows can heal a broken heart, or impart peace of mind, or remove care . . . the life of God in the soul is man’s only hope. (1952, p. 115)

Writing about mental depression she is very clear, declaring that “many of the diseases from which men [and women] suffer are the

perfect in weakness.” Paul was asking to be cured but God said that He would not cure him because His grace was enough. Paul, as a faithful disciple of Jesus accepted God’s will by answering, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor 12:9).

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Writing about mental depression she is very clear, declaring that “many of the diseases from which men [and women] suffer are the

result of mental depression. Grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, distrust—all tend to break down the life forces and invite decay and death” (1964, p. 147).

When a sinner meets Jesus Christ, love is diffused through the whole being as a vitalizing power and the natural result is the transformation from indifference to a commitment to serve God as a faithful disciple.

Every vital part—the brain, the heart, the nerves—it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are roused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. With it come serenity and composure. It implants in the soul, joy that nothing earthly can destroy—joy in the Holy Spirit—health-giving, life-giving joy. (White, 1952, p. 115)

According to White (1940), inner healing happens before physical restoration. When the paralytic was healed, Jesus wanted to teach that the burdens of a sinful life, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, “are the foundation of their maladies. They can find no relief until they come to the Healer of the soul. The peace which He alone can give would impart vigor to the mind, and health to the body” (p. 270).

The miracle happens when the healed becomes a healer. “Christ’s servants are the channel of His working, and through them He desires to exercise His healing power. It is our work to present the sick and suffering to God in the arms of our faith. We should teach them to believe in the Great Healer” (White, 1952, p. 226).

White recommends that we should spend a quiet moment with God in order to allow Him to speak to our hearts, not only our minds:

All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Ps. 46:10. This is the effectual preparation for all labor for God. Amidst the hurrying throng, and the strain of life’s intense activities, he who is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. He will receive a new endowment of both physical and mental strength. His life will breathe out a fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men’s hearts. (1952, p. 58)

Ultimately, being touched and healed by the Great Healer, means that “when we see human beings in distress, whether through affliction or through sin, we shall never say, this does not concern me” (White, 1940, p. 504).

In October 2011, a first conference on mental health and wellness held at Loma Linda University highlighted how Seventh-day Adventist health leaders are aiming to help people suffering emotional problems by removing the stigma of mental illness in the church.

Handysides, former director of the Adventist Church’s Health Ministries Department, said: “We need to remove the stigma that some people have attached to emotional and mental health issues and recognize the vulnerability we all have to these issues” (Ponder, 2011, para3).

Emotional problems are amongst the most challenging and pervasive difficulties faced by our world today. In the church, there is still progress to be made in understanding the role of emotional health and abolishing the stigma of emotional imbalance. Too often, God-fearing people tell those suffering from depression or other emotional difficulties that they just need to trust God, read the Bible more, exercise more and eat more healthfully. While these are very important and necessary for someone who has a major emotional challenge, there needs to be an approach where the grace of Jesus is reflected with an understanding of emotional health. It’s inappropriate and potentially dangerous to just tell people to throw their pills away or stop seeing a counselor when they really need the assistance. (Fayard, 2011, para. 3)

Studies in this area (Jong-Wook, 2003) have pointed out that worldwide, five out of the 10 leading causes of disability around the world are the result of major forms of emotional distress (p. 3).

According to Fayard, the “last few years have seen an explosion of educational programs to train professionals equipped to deliver mental health services” (2011, para. 6). More can be done to strengthen our ministry:

First, resource-scarce nations do not allocate enough funding to the prevention or treatment of emotional distress. Our church has embraced a “whole-person” approach, meaning that we are interested in the physical, spiritual and emotional well-being of those that come to our health institutions. We should see that we do so everywhere.

Second, we could apply biblical truths in a more systematic and integrated way in all our educational efforts to see that the “healing

ministry of Jesus” is fully realized. More help for those who suffer from emotional problems could come through the active ministry of the graduates of Adventist universities.

Third, we should work toward a “blended ministries” approach, in which educational, health and local church ministries team up to address the enormous challenges faced by the communities that surround us, and increasingly, those found within our own families. (para. 7-9)

In his thesis about emotional healing, Drumi wrote that “it is not enough for the church to be engaged in dialogue with the surrounding culture, however important this dialogue might be. A far more significant task is to be actively involved in a direct and immediate ministry of healing” (2008, p. 184).

Jesus, when preaching about healing, declared, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matt 25:35-36).

Based on this text, Paulsen (2009) said: “So what does it mean to live in connection with others? It means that your problems are not yours alone; they are also mine. It means having a sense of solidarity with humanity that makes me vulnerable, also, to its hurts and pain” (para. 13).

The General Conference Executive Committee voted that through its ministry of preaching, teaching, healing, and discipling the Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks to represent the mission of Jesus Christ. This is

(1) regarded globally as teaching a wholistic model of evidence based healthful living in primary health care, (2) seen at all times as a trusted, transparent ally of organizations with compatible goals and vision, in alleviating suffering and addressing basic health and well-being, (3) recognized for the unconditional scope of its embrace of all persons seeking this basic health and well-being, (4) involved not only administratively but also functionally at every level including each congregation and church member in this ministry of health and healing. (Kulakov, 2010, para. 2)

Kulakov, Director of Relationships Cluster, in the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, writes:

Many engagements in spiritual disciplines may not work spiritual maturity if we ignore the emotional component of discipleship in our lives. The real issue is this: is the church simply an institution in which people can come on a Sabbath to listen to what God says in the Bible and then go home? Is the church only concerned with the spiritual wellbeing of people? Can we develop and grow the emotional health of our people by sermons, Bible studies and other spiritual disciplines alone? (2013, para. 11)

The answer is no. First, many of the internal problems among members of a church do not exist because of spiritual reasons, but because of emotional sicknesses. Spiritual disciplines alone cannot solve all the church members' relational problems. Kulakof says, "While it is true that God's power can heal a person instantly, either physically or emotionally, we need to be more intentional in our approach in dealing with people's emotions just the same way we deal with physical illnesses" (2013, para. 12).

Second, the church is not only a hospital for the emotionally or spiritually sick. It may sound redundant, but it is necessary to remind all members that the Great Commission is the mission of the church. On the one hand, the church cannot function successfully without a team of professionals who will be dealing with each other's emotional deficiencies. But on the other hand, members must also be empowered and free to reach the lost in the community as modern disciples of Jesus.

However, this will happen only after experiencing the abundant grace of God or, what Dybdahl (2008) describes as the "double longing": "we have a longing—a deep hunger for God and a sense of his presence. As we begin to pursue that intense desire, we encounter a second even stronger longing. God's heart desperately longs for us" (p. 10).

#### **IV. Traditional African Worldviews About Healing**

Health and wholeness in the African context is always holistic and related to spiritual matters. Kamwaria and Katola (2012) in reporting about their research findings post-war in Southern Sudan say the following about the Dinka people's understanding about healing:

When an individual is healed, she/he is 'at peace'. Healing also encompasses the idea of 'wholeness', which the Dinka value as a state of balanced and harmonious relationship between people,

God, ancestors, and nature. Health is a state of complete well-being based on a way of living, conduct, and behavior in relation to the others. It gives due respect to the dignity of the person and brings about a link of the person with god, ancestors, community, and environment (p. 52).

Everything is connected, and for healing to be considered to have taken place there has to be a sense of homeostasis. Therefore, healing has more of a relational aspect to it than just the eradication of a disease or illness. It does not mean that physical healing is not important to the African people, rather, in the processes of eliminating the ailment or illness, one has to consider the relational aspects of the healing activities.

Mucherrera and Lartey(2017) quote Bujowoye to explain traditional African worldview of disease not only as evidence of microbiological infection, but also as a disorder in the physical, social and spiritual mechanisms of the individual and community.

Disease is more a social construction, with the focus on the person-environment relationship, thus stressing the significance of interrelationship in healing. Disease is no just a physical fact but is associated with other aspects of life including intellectual, emotional, social familial, occupational and spiritual dimensions...(p. 63)

Another author, Mligo (2013), says the following about healing in African context:

God works in various ways to maintain wholeness among African people . . . in the approach to healing of the whole person in the community (physically, mentally, and spiritually) including the healing of relationships between people and their departed relatives and nature environment surrounding people, traditional healers are regarded as 'community workers' who serve the purposes of their community in various health matters (p. 52).

These researches expand the understanding of healing to more than a physical cure. Healing has to involve both the seen and the unseen (the materialistic and the spiritual), when a pandemic breaks out it throws everything out of balance, both the material and spiritual.

## **V. Missiological Implications of Inner Healing**

Before a church can start ministering in the area of health and wholeness in the African context, leaders should ask themselves questions like: Has the church been given authority to deal with our inner life? Can people be healed from their painful traumas, depression, and loneliness? Can we expect that God will heal people who live in bitterness and anger? Can someone have his life damaged because of curses? Is it possible that a witch is powerful enough to change someone's course of life? Can involvement in occult activities destroy someone's spiritual and emotional life or are they are just harmless past-times?

I believe the Bible's answer is "yes" to all these questions and that in Christ Jesus we can find solutions for emotional wounds that health professionals only dream of but to which we have open access.

The church in Africa can initiate a program for inner healing and discipleship based on an inner healing-discipleship cycle. This is a biblical model that is designed to promote healing from emotional and spiritual sicknesses leading to a stable discipling environment.

Participants work through the following steps: grace, safety, hope, vulnerability, belonging, truth, ownership, repentance, confession, forgiveness, commitment to mission and, finally leading back to grace—the gracious touch of God!

The cycle is designed for people to move from denying to accepting their own powerlessness and helping them come to understand that God will restore them to wholeness—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is based on five convictions: (a) people are hurting, (b) people are looking for healing, (c) healing is possible, (d) the Bible is the most important resource for healing, and (e) sharing honestly and openly with other hurting people in a caring community makes change happen.



Figure 1. Inner healing-discipleship cycle.

### A. Grace

Grace is the beginning of the spiritual journey that brings inner healing for discipleship as represented in Figure 1. It points to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and to the fact that forgiveness and sanctification are available for all human beings. Grace is not something one learns but something one experiences in one's heart and mind. It is foundational to the experience of Christian spirituality as the Bible teaches that God gives us grace no matter where we are in the process of healing. We are first saved by grace (Eph 2:8).

It is through grace that God heals us from brokenness and enables us to stand in relationship with Him (Rom 5:2). The apostle Peter affirms that an important aspect of our spiritual growth is learning to live in grace (2 Pet 3:18).

For the apostle Paul, grace was the spark to ignite a transforming journey with God (Rom 12:2). Many people in the African continent experience a high amount of shame and guilt making the situation more painful. It is then difficult for them to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with other church members. Grace is the jumpstart for the healing process.

Hook and Hook (2010) say that "leaders should work to develop

the skills of understanding their own experiences of brokenness, grace, and healing before leading” (p. 309). Church leaders can even share parts of their stories of brokenness to show we are all working together toward healing.

### **B. Safety**

Once you understand God’s grace, you start having a sense of safety because now you know the direction to walk. Safety solves the problem of depression, discouragement, and fear. David experienced it when he said “in peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety” (Ps 4:8).

The apostle Paul experienced this safety when he wrote: “we were brought into God’s presence, and we are holy and blameless as we stand before Him without a single fault” (Col 1:22-23).

As members begin experiencing grace in the context of the group, they will begin to feel safe in both their relationships with church leaders and with other church members. People will not share their feelings in a setting in which they fear criticism. It is important that church leaders take proactive steps to help group members feel safe so that they may have hope. The apostle John wrote that there is no fear in love, but that perfect love drives out fear (1 John 4:18).

Warren wrote: “Real community happens when people know it is safe enough to share their doubts and fears without being judged. Only in the safe environment of warm acceptance and trusted confidentiality will people open up and share their deepest hurts, needs, and mistakes” (2002, pp. 149-150). “Do not judge, or you too will be judged” (Matt 7:1). There must be confidentiality, no judgments or criticism, no authoritarianism, and there must be humility

### **C. Hope**

Hope grows roots in the hard soil of a brokenhearted people when safety is assured. Job had this experience when he said, “And you will be safe because there is hope; after looking round, you will take your rest in quiet” (Job 11:18). Safety awakens the feeling of connectivity with self, with others, and with God, which light up the fire of hope.

The goal in this phase of the cycle is to motivate the person to move from victim thinking to survivor thinking, which leads to empowerment and gives courage to make choices and persuade them to become actively involved in their own healing process as they search for a renewed sense of safety and hope.

Paul reminds us that “our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage our hearts and strengthen us in every good deed and word” (2 Thess 2:16-17).

#### **D. Vulnerability**

When members begin to experience grace, feel safe and have hope, they will gradually become willing to be open and demonstrate vulnerability by sharing their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. As they share in greater depth, they are able to explore their problems and receive feedback from the others. Just as Jesus formed communities, churches must create and maintain small groups in order to facilitate this phase in the inner healing-discipleship cycle.

The House of Bishops (2009) in the church of England declares:

In supporting a vulnerable person we must do so with compassion and in a way that maintains dignity. Some of the factors that increase vulnerability include: (a) a sensory or physical disability or impairment, (b) a learning disability, (c) a physical illness, (d) mental ill health (including dementia), chronic or acute, (e) an addiction to alcohol or drugs, (f) the failing faculties in old age, (g) a permanent or temporary reduction in physical, mental or emotional capacity brought about by life events, for example bereavement or previous abuse or trauma. (p. 2)

In this phase members feel helpless and need to receive the healing love of God through other members who act as a bridge, helping them to rebuild relationships with others or rebuild themselves wherein, illness, disability, or abuse may have destroyed.

#### **E. Belonging**

When you know that you belong to a group, you feel as if you were part of a family where everybody shares everything.

Generally, when someone says they feel like they don't belong, they are referring to something external, such as their family, their neighborhood, or a peer group at work or school. The feeling of not belonging, no matter where it comes from, is a very painful feeling. It can be debilitating. The latest scientific research shows that the feeling of not belonging and isolation is one of the biggest

causes of stress in the body. We all need to feel like we belong. The feeling of belonging is an essential part of experiencing a full life. (Swisher, 2008, para. 1)

People have been abused or traumatized have a longing for release from the past and are desperately looking for a sense of belonging and security, of having a role.

Peter wrote that we have everything we need to live a fully satisfying life. James told us that despite the terrible things that happen to us it is really possible to live in joy. According to Paul, we have every spiritual blessing in Christ, and we can know real peace which transcends all understanding (John 10:10; 8:32; 14:12; 2 Pet 1:3; Jas 1:2; Eph 1:3; Phlm 4:7).

### **F. Truth and Ownership**

While members share their experiences, thoughts, and feelings in a context of grace, safety, hope, authenticity, and belonging, they will discover truth about themselves. They will also be able to hear truth from others who will play the role of being a “mirror” to show clearly the truth and their need to be healed and transformed.

This process requires time. Members need to be willing to be honest with themselves and allow God to examine their heart and being willing to see what needs to be changed (Ps 139:23-24; Matt 7:5).

Jesus taught that His followers would know the truth, and that the truth would set them free (John 8:32). This is what happens in this phase of the cycle. People begin to understand that they are not exactly what they thought they were.

In this phase, “accurate and helpful feedback is an important aspect of helping people heal from emotional problems” (Hook and Hook, 2010, p. 313). The apostle Paul taught that we should speak the truth to one another in love (Eph 4:15).

People may have heard truth spoken to them from family members, friends, or pastors in thoughtless ways. But many have never experienced or will never experience the truth spoken to them with an attitude of love. When truth is spoken too soon and without love, it reduces the sense of safety and hope, leading to an increased feeling of hurt which will obstruct the inner healing-discipleship cycle. “While it is much easier to remain silent when others around us are harming themselves or others with a sinful pattern, it is not the loving thing to

do" (Warren, 2002, p. 146).

In this phase one deals with the demonic, which is the invisible battle mentioned by Paul in Eph 6. According to Dybdahl, "Not everybody has this challenge, but a lot of people living in western countries are not willing to deal with this problem. One of the ways to deal with it is to deliver people from the demonic instruments. Fifteen percent of teenagers in United States are devil worshippers through Harry Potter, films, video games, and Internet" (J. L. Dybdahl, personal communication, June 18, 2012).

After accepting the truth about themselves, members will take ownership for it. Another study found that "ownership occurs when group members take responsibility for their truth and acknowledge their contribution to the cause or maintenance of their problems" (Hook & Hook, 2010, p. 314).

Healing may be more about accepting truth than about forgiving a person or a group. However, if the hurt was caused by a specific action, forgiveness will need to take place not only in one's heart but also through biblical conflict resolution as Jesus taught, "if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established . . ." (Matt 18:15-20).

After King David sinned with Bathsheba and was rebuked by the prophet Nathan, David's response was to take ownership of this truth (2 Sam 12:13; Ps 32:5).

This phase of the cycle is most difficult to experience because members must be able to take ownership of their part in their hurts and understand their own problems in order to experience changes. "People cannot change what they do not own" (Hook & Hook, 2010, p. 314).

Taking ownership of personal truth is scary. It is much easier to make excuses or blame others and God Himself for our faults acquired during the vicissitudes of life or inherited from parents, just as Eve did in Eden. "Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'what is this you have done?' And the woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate'" (Gen 3:13). Accepting ourselves and others are important steps in overcoming the pain of guilty and insecurity.

## **G. Repentance**

After members have taken ownership of acquired or inherited imperfections, traumas or addictions, repenting and confessing is an important next step in the healing process. People can only repent after

they feel God's love in contrast to their transgression and sin. Repentance brings freedom and solves the problem of guilt and dishonesty.

In the Bible, Noah invited people to repent before the world was destroyed (Gen 7). The prophets also preached about repentance and using the word "turn" in the Old Testament (2 Chr 7:14). "If you turn . . . I will heal" (see also Isa 31:3; 59:20). John the Baptist preached repentance (Mark 1:4), Jesus preached repentance (v. 25), the apostles preached repentance (6:12), and the early church also preached repentance (Acts 3:17-20). Paul said, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

Repentance is honesty, humility, and openness. If we hide and cover up the past it is like a cancer. We need to express our faults and God's healing will happen naturally. Secrets may kill us and destroy from the inside. This is the reason for the members to keep strict confidentiality during the inner healing-discipleship cycle.

Expressing feelings can make a huge difference in the repentance process. It is not only critical, it is crucial. When you confess, it allows the Holy Spirit to abide in you and transform your thoughts, words, and actions.

Different circumstances of life such as betrayal, abuse, false accusation, or failure to respond to others' expectations can cause deep emotional wounds. We need to recognize our own failings and follow the example of the repented prodigal son (Luke 15:11) and the converted Peter (Matt 26:75).

## **H. Confession**

After repenting we "confess and are justified by faith and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). "Confession is the process of verbally acknowledging one's ownership of their problem" (Hook & Hook, 2010, p. 315). After David took ownership of his sin against Bathsheba, he immediately confessed his sin to God and was forgiven (Ps 32:5b).

It is equally important to confess to other people. Confession to other people is helpful because it makes both guilt and forgiveness concrete. James wrote, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (Jas 5:16).

Confession is the method that God uses to convert us and change our worldview.

Conversion to Christ must encompass all three levels: behavior and rituals, beliefs and worldview. Christians should live differently because they are Christians. However, if their behavior is based primarily on tradition and not Christian beliefs, it becomes dead ritual. Conversion must involve a transformation of beliefs, but if it is only a change of beliefs, it is false faith (James 2). Conversion may include a change in beliefs and behavior, but if the worldview is not transformed, in the long run the Gospel is subverted and the result is a syncretistic Christo-paganism which has the form of Christianity, but not the essence. (Hiebert, 2002, vol.10, p. 10)

### **I. Forgiveness**

When members accept God's forgiveness and feel accepted and forgiven by others, they will commit their lives to serve as disciples in their community. It is also indispensable to forgive oneself so that guilt is taken away. The apostle Paul teaches us by saying: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phlm 3:13-14).

Unforgiveness will hinder or block the healing power of the Holy Spirit. Consider these passages in the Bible concerning the deadliness of unforgiveness and bitterness in our lives: "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions" (Mark 11:25-26).

### **J. A Healed Healer**

After we are forgiven, our desire is to see other people whom we love also being forgiven and receive the assurance of salvation. Forgiven people will go into the entire world and be an instrument for healing others by proclaiming the good news that Jesus died for their sins, and that He will soon return to take His people home.

Only someone who is healed can become a healer as we cannot teach what we have not experienced. The Great Commission is given to all disciples of Jesus Christ who have experienced His healing touch.

In Matthew we find the scope of operations, which is all the world, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt 28:19). Looking at the Great Commission primarily as “going to preach” has caused most people to ignore the mandate, because they think they cannot go to all the world, so they do nothing. We must not think that we all should leave the place we live now and move to another place for the purpose of spreading the Gospel.

The focus of this text is the two verbs found in the first part of the verse: the participle πορευθέντες “going out” and the imperative μαθητεύσατε “make disciples!” The Greek word “go” in this text is Πορευθέντες and it is a participle and should be translated as “going or as you go” (Teknia, 2017). It does not tell us to go somewhere else, but just as we go, tell the good news and make disciples.

“Constructed from μαθητής, μαθητεύσατε means intrans. ‘to be’ or to become a pupil, i.e., ‘to make disciples’. Behind this peculiar NT use there possibly stands the insight that one can become a disciple of Jesus—only on the basis of a call which leads to discipleship” (Verlag, 1967, p. 461).

Hagner (1995) clarifies the task of a disciple:

The commission itself is given by means of one main imperative verb, μαθητεύσατε, “make disciples”, together with three syntactically subordinate participles that take on an imperatival force because of the main verb. The first of these, Πορευθέντες precedes the main verb. The disciples are to “go” and “make disciples.” Since the main verb has for its object πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, “all nations,” it is implied that the disciples are to go into all the world. (p. 886)

Therefore, we are invited to intentionally make disciples as we go on with our daily secular activities, by sharing, touching and interceding in prayer for those who desperately need the gracious touch of Jesus.

### **K. Gracious Touch**

At the end of the cycle is when the miracle happens in an awesome way. One will experience the gracious touch of God and your heart will be strangely warmed! Serving the Lord will bring a joy without precedent and one will be willing to be like Jesus, without reservations. One will say like Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”

(Gal 2:20).

Gallagher said that “before the disciples arrive in Emmaus and finally recognize their mentor Jesus, they have already found their hearts ‘strangely warmed,’ not from the authority of the personal presence of Jesus but because of the truth and right of the evidence presented” (2001, para. 19).

John Wesley was a missionary in the United States and had not yet experienced conversion and the gracious touch of God. But one day, while he was listening to a reading from Martin Luther on justification by faith, a warm feeling flooded him, and he said: “‘My heart was strangely warmed.’ From that time on, the Methodist movement became people with warm hearts who were on a mission to make a difference in individual lives and in the whole world” and as consequence, England experienced a national spiritual renewal (Moffet & Leypoldt, 2012, p. 2).

Once we are touched by Jesus’ amazing grace we will start ministering God’s gracious touch to others—Christians and non-Christians, just as He has touched us.

Metzger (2010) says that “grace and truth go hand in hand and bring healing as God reaches out to touch us with his love: just as he touched Adam all by Himself in the garden, just as He touched John, just as he touches orphan babies and emotionally wounded people, like you and me” (pp. 36-37).

There can be people who were not healed during all the phases of the inner healing-discipleship cycle. When the cycle does not bring results, we need to continue praying with people for healing is a never-ending process in our sinful world.

We should not refuse to have a healing session in our churches because Pentecostals do it, but do it because Jesus did it. Some people are nervous about this as they are not sure if God will heal the people. So, if God does not heal they are worried about themselves. When healing prayer is offered, we must remember that our job is to put the person in God’s hands. We do not know what God’s answer will be. It is Jesus who heals, not us. God is a healing God. Jesus was sent to heal emotionally, physically, and spirituality. We are all in the process of being healed and we can become powerful healed healers in the hands of God.

## **VI. Recommendations**

Pastors, counsellors, psychologists, social workers, and other professionals in Africa can deliberately assist people in their spiritual

and emotional needs through seminars and sermons based on the inner healing cycle. Members should be encouraged to be actively involved in healing ministries in their communities.

The Seventh-day Adventist church is dynamically involved in all aspects of the communities in the large and complex continent of Africa. However, its services through hospitals, NGOs, schools, universities and church ministries is not enough to face all challenges in the areas of health and wholeness, and merits further reflection and discussion for a contextualized and effective ministry of healing.

## VII. Conclusion

A few year ago, I was participating in a Ministerial council at a West African country. I drove all the way from Niger, was tired and suffering from a severe diarrhea. I sat on my bed early in the morning when I felt that my legs and arms were asleep, a sensation of pins and needles which is known as paresthesia. This sensation became a cramp on my limbs and finally it spread throughout my entire body. I asked my wife to call someone to take me to the hospital. She woke up some colleagues in the next door and as they entered the room and saw me, instead of taking me to the hospital, they started exorcising me: "in the name of Jesus get out from him spirit of the devil," and so on. I could not talk and I thought I was going to die. I surrendered my life to God and after a few minutes the cramp disappeared. A medical doctor explained to me later that I had lost vital minerals because of the diarrhea and I should be fine after compensating the loss. But the rumors for the rest of the council was that a man from Latin America was possessed by demons and some brethren had to exorcise him. This may sound comical but demonstrates a worldview affirming the biblical understanding of the human being as a whole.

Within the Adventist Church in Africa many struggle with the consequences of emotional pain, fear, failure, anxiety, stress, inadequate parenting, rejection, and damaged and abusive relationships. Many try to cope with the ongoing results of involvement in the occult or other false religions. The effects of physical illness, accidents, and trauma continue to impact people's lives.

As we live in a fallen and sinful world, we all are in need of emotional healing.

We all suffer from some form of emotional dysfunction that can prevent us from living the happy, healthy, and holy life God

intended for us when he created us. In essence unresolved emotional baggage can cripple and eventually kill us. Emotional abuse is considered by many victims the worst form of abuse because of a lingering internal fear that robs them of their self-worth, self-motivation, and dignity. It gnaws at the core of their being: who they are, what they think or feel and what they do. They exist believing that they are not good enough. (Dunbar, 2012, para. 1)

It is God's desire that we prosper and be in good health (3 John 2) because He created us in His image. "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Therefore, if we are to reflect His image we must begin a process of healing for our damaged emotions. He has promised that we can be delivered from our emotional and spiritual wounds, and experience the joy of serving Him. Paul affirms that "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim 1:7).

This is the "whole" life God wants for His children as revealed in the Bible! However, only a few Christians feel they are fulfilling their potential in or for Christ Jesus. Many desire to experience this fullness of life in Christ, and to care, counsel and pray for others, but they feel ill-equipped to do so. Spiritual and emotional healing provides a deep sense of meaning and purpose for Christians because it makes them an extension of God's healing hands for the salvation of the lost, the last and the lest..

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