



In Control

You know how events happen in groups of three, don't you? It happened to me just last week. Well, two things anyway. That's almost three. I learned that some dear friends had traveled multiple thousands of miles to visit an alternative healing center. As I understand it, their ills will be diagnosed by special sound waves. Then they will undergo a three-week healing regimen, including more therapeutic sound waves. This is obviously not conventional medical science, but they are convinced it will be helpful.

Then the very next day, as I was pondering this, I got an email from someone decrying the lack of physical healings. He said he hadn't heard of any healings (by his standards) in years, so he was setting aside a day to avoid food and drink to help convince God to heal more people—and he urged all to whom he sent his email to join with him.

I have no argument with alternative medicine or spiritual disciplines as such. People can engage in these things if they wish. Some alternative medical practices may have a basis in fact, although more valid research is often needed as to how or whether or in what context they work.

Faith healings, prayer and fasting are different matters, outside the purview of science. I just can't agree with the writer's assumption that there haven't been any "healings" lately. Healings are happening all the time—millions of them!

A close friend, after being given five weeks to live, was recently pronounced cancer-free after several months of rigorous conventional medical treatments. Did we pray? Of course we did, and we thanked God for his healing.

We have also prayed for many other friends and relatives who eventually died of cancer and other causes—including old age. If we believe they have eternal life, we also must believe that these people are healed in a time and context of God's choosing.

Sitting in our living room, my wife commented that some of our friends have

arrived at that place in life where they feel out of options—and that they take hope and comfort from alternative treatments and/or rituals. While that is certainly true, I suspect some folks may be looking for dramatic, spectacular, jaw-dropping "first-century" healings. But I see no indication in the New Testament that arcane medicine or collective avoidance of food will make any of that happen.

When we are confronted with life's big problems, we naturally seek solutions. Happily, sometimes the solutions are quick, easy and obvious. We take the right steps and boom! It's all under control.

When we're at the end of our rope— what if we just fall back on simple faith in God?

But other issues are stickier—especially health-related issues. As we exhaust ordinary solutions, we begin to feel our sense of control slipping away.

The problems are *out of our control*. At that point, we grasp at whatever is available, including unproven remedies, panaceas and magic bullets. Beyond that, we become open to various rituals, practices and protocols that we think might give us some leverage with God. Even though our problems may remain unsolved, we're *doing something*, darn it, and we feel like we're back in control again.

Here's a thought (about which I have to keep reminding myself). What if, when we are faced with situations beyond our control—when we're out of options and there's nothing left for us to do—when we're at the end of our rope—what if we just fall back on simple faith in God?

He's not a stickler for ritualistic protocols and procedures. We can sincerely and intently ask for his help—and then sit back and accept the fact that this is one of those times that we are not in control—but He is. □

—Monte Wolverton