



Emotional Healing, Spiritual Opposition, and Physical Manifestations

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Before discussing our observations from client sessions I would like to briefly summarize my own experience with respect to emotional healing, spiritual opposition, and physical manifestations.¹ For the first 35+ years of my Christian life I did not experience any observable physical manifestations during worship or during times of receiving prayer ministry, but afterwards I would observe deepening in my relationship with the Lord, personal spiritual growth, and lasting life changes. During the many years I struggled with disappointment regarding the absence of more tangible evidence of the Lord's presence, a number of wise and balanced church leaders reminded me that the subtle-but-lasting blessings I did receive were more important. They reminded me that the physical manifestations, *in and of themselves*, are much less important and should not be the focus of my attention. I know and believe (in my head) these wise comments about what is more important, but it is still so easy to feel "Wow, the Lord is really moving" when people are shaking and falling, and to feel "What's the matter with me/this service? Nothing's happening" when we don't see the more tangible, physical manifestations.

I have also often struggled with the feeling that I was not special, "chosen," important, or as loved by God because I did not experience any physical manifestations. This has been so painful at times that I wouldn't want to participate in charismatic services or receive prayer ministry because of it. There were times when all I could think about as I received prayer was how painfully disappointed I would be when/if "nothing" happened. As I have worked on this as a target for emotional healing I have gone to memories of my father being called away from family time on a regular basis. There always seemed to be somebody in crisis who required his care. I have a vivid and prototypical memory of our family sitting together on our couch in our living room reading a story. Someone opened the door, crying and upset, asking if she could talk to Dad immediately. Dad gets up and leaves. We finish the story and go to bed without him. Thoughts come spontaneously with these memories: "Everybody else is more important. I'm not important/special enough for him to stay with me – to give me the care that I need."

These trauma-anchored lies fueled an unbalanced focus on the physical manifestations I have seen in my practice. I agreed cognitively with what the balanced, mature church leaders had said, but *emotionally* I sometimes felt like running around yelling, "Look! Look! See all these physical manifestations! God has finally answered my prayers – He isn't too busy for me or ignoring me any more! He really does love me, I am special, He really is blessing our work," etc. Both Charlotte and I have been able to perceive a steady reduction of this unbalanced focus on physical manifestations as the Lord has been freeing me from these "I'm not special/important" lies.

¹ For additional discussion of my personal experience with respect to physical manifestations, see "Deceiving Spirits and Counterfeit Manifestations: How Wounds, Lies, Internal Parts, Repression, and Denial Can Give Them a Place," available as free download from www.immanuelapproach.com.

My experience illustrates how physical manifestations during prayer ministry and/or charismatic worship can carry profound emotional meaning for the people experiencing them (or not experiencing them). My observation is that physical manifestations activate core lies and trigger intense emotional reactions in many people. For example, they can trigger lies and emotions such as, “This situation is out of control, I am not safe” with associated fear for those who don’t understand them or want them, and they can trigger, “I’m not special, God doesn’t want/love me” with associated shame and disappointment for those who want them but don’t experience them. As described above, they can also trigger intense positive thoughts and emotions for those who want them and do receive them (in my case, “He isn’t too busy for me or ignoring me any more! He really does love me, I am special” accompanied by happiness and excitement).² I think these triggered thoughts and emotions (both positive and negative), sometimes coming forward with a lot of intensity, contribute to the conflict and confusion surrounding physical manifestations.

Along these same lines, I have made a number of interesting observations about physical manifestations and demonic interference in the context of using the Immanuel approach and/or Theophostic-based emotional healing.

I have had a number of patients who display physical phenomena/manifestations during their emotional healing work, and several of them have commented spontaneously “These are the same manifestations I get when I get prayer at Vineyard or Toronto.” Initially the recipients and I were encouraged, feeling that these manifestations were an indication that the Spirit was working and that something was happening. I continued working with these people for a number of months, usually seeing these phenomena/manifestations begin shortly after we would begin certain specific kinds of emotional healing work.³

During a session with one of these people, the patient and I were feeling stuck and decided to use the prayers and commands to expose and bind demonic interference.⁴ We did this, discerning several spirits opposing the Lord’s healing work and then binding them. Up to this point in the session, the person had been displaying the physical phenomena/manifestations that were usually present whenever we used EMDR and/or Theophostic-based⁵ emotional healing tools. (This was also one of the people who had the same phenomena at Vineyard and Toronto – a certain

² Our experience is that anything in the present that temporarily counteracts an underlying wound and lie will produce triggered positive thoughts and emotions. The thoughts will be the opposite of the underlying lie and the emotions will be the opposite of the emotions associated with the lie. The intensity of the thoughts and emotions will feel strange because it will match the importance of the underlying wound and lie as opposed to being appropriate to the current situation. The triggered positive thoughts and emotions will also often feel young/childlike. For additional discussion see the essay “Triggered ‘Positive’ Thoughts and Emotions,” available as free download from www.immanuelapproach.com.

³ Physical manifestations have been especially common with EMDR, Theophostic-based emotional healing, and the Immanuel Approach. See “EMDR, Traumatic Memories, and Physical Phenomena” for additional discussion and comments.

⁴ See the essay, “Dealing With Demonic Interference/Opposition During the Session, Prayers and Commands to Neutralize Demonic Interference,” available as a free download from the “Kclehman Website Archives” section of the Resources page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

⁵ We use the term “Theophostic-based” to refer to emotional healing ministries that are built around a core of Theophostic principles and techniques, but that are not identical to Theophostic Prayer Ministry as taught by Dr. Ed Smith. Our own ministry between 1998 and 2003 would be a good example – it was built around a core of Theophostic principles and techniques, but it sometimes also included material that was not a part of what we understand Dr. Smith to define as Theophostic Prayer Ministry (such as our material on dealing with curses, spiritual strongholds, generational problems, and suicide-related phenomena, and our material on journaling, spiritual disciplines, and medical psychiatry).

combination of jerking, twitching, and grunting). The manifestations all stopped immediately after we finished binding demonic interference. The connection seemed so dramatic that we both noticed it and wondered what it might mean. The patient also commented “I can still feel the internal subjective sensation that usually comes just before the physical phenomena. Now the internal feeling is continuing but the physical stuff doesn’t come.”

We continued working together and the physical phenomena eventually returned. I decided to test a possibility that was occurring to me and repeated the prayers and commands to bind the spirits identified earlier. The physical phenomena again stopped immediately. This cycle repeated maybe eight to ten times during the remainder of the session, with the exact same results each time. Finally this person commented, “I have always thought those manifestations were proof that the Holy Spirit was working. At first they were really encouraging, but I was starting to get discouraged because nothing was really changing. *I noticed today that each time that feeling would come inside, it would feel like my heart was opening and the Holy Spirit was healing something. Then the physical stuff would come and the feeling inside would stop. When we prayed the binding prayers, the feeling that something was healing continued. I could feel the place where the physical stuff would usually come and stop it, but it didn’t happen whenever we had just prayed the binding prayer.*”

It then occurred to me, “I have ten to fifteen other patients who display similar physical phenomena when I work with them. I wonder if something similar is happening with them?” Over the next several weeks I tried the same experiment with each of these others, and observed similar results with many of them.

The conclusion that seems to make the most sense is that the Holy Spirit was present, but that the physical phenomena in these cases were indications of demonic opposition to the Holy Spirit’s healing work. It seems significant to note that the therapy/ministry techniques that consistently prompted the physical phenomena were not direct spiritual warfare or deliverance. Furthermore, after binding demonic interference and observing the physical phenomena/manifestations to stop, these recipients did *not* describe, “I can feel that something evil is gone now,” but rather described feeling that healing was no longer being blocked.

To summarize this very clearly: In many situations where physical phenomena/manifestations were occurring during emotional healing work, prayers and commands to expose and bind demonic interference seemed to clear the way for the Holy Spirit to heal more easily and effectively.

I have heard many mature charismatic leaders comment that some manifestations at charismatic worship and/or prayer meetings are caused by evil spirits reacting to the Holy Spirit’s presence. I have just never heard anybody describe what I have been doing and observing in quite this way. I have been at charismatic services where I saw many people displaying the kind of physical phenomena I am talking about here, and people would often continue to receive prayer and continue to display the physical phenomena for long periods of time. But I never heard anybody talk about including exposure and binding in the way I am describing here. And I know that at least some of these people (my patients) mistook these physical phenomena/manifestations for evidence that the Holy Spirit was healing, instead of an indication that demonic spirits were blocking the healing work. Finally, I know that these same people (my patients) did not experience healing and change until binding demonic interference cleared the way for healing to occur.

I realize that ministry teams with strong gifts of discernment of spirits may discern and deal with this kind of interference without being so systematic. My hope is that this more detailed and explicit discussion will be especially helpful for beginning ministry teams and/or for teams that do not have strong gifts of discernment of spirits.

Demonic manifestations can occur later in the session in spite of initial binding prayers & commands: It is important to note that prayers and commands to bind demonic spirits at the beginning of the session do not necessarily prevent demonic manifestation later in the session. I start every session with prayer (addressed to God) and the laying down of parameters (addressed to the demonic), including binding any spirits that might try to interfere with the Lord's work during the session. However, I still often see physical manifestations later in the session. I stop at the point the manifestations occur, command any interfering demonic spirits to be bound and to reveal exactly what Jesus requires, and then specifically deal with whatever is revealed. The manifestations then usually⁶ stop and healing proceeds as I have described above. This observation is important since others might be open to the questions our observations raise, try binding demonic spirits at the beginning of the session, still get the physical manifestations, and then conclude that the physical manifestations are not related to spiritual opposition.

If these physical manifestations really are demonic interference, then why doesn't binding demonic spirits at the beginning of the session prevent them? I asked this question myself, and predict that many others will have this same question. Several quick thoughts:

1. Many who have studied and practiced intercessory prayer report that general prayers are good ("Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"), but that it is also necessary to offer specific, focused prayers in certain situations ("Lord, please free my daughter from these seizures"). Even Jesus seems to demonstrate this principle. He taught us to pray "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (about as general an intercessory prayer as one could find), but then also offered specific, focused prayers in different situations (for example, detailed, specific intercession for His disciples before the crucifixion). My experience is similar, in that general prayers and commands at the beginning of ministry sessions are often not sufficient to neutralize demonic strongholds anchored in specific emotional wounds.

The behavior of children provides an analogy. You can call out to a whole room full of children, asking them to be quiet. This will usually bring some order to the situation. However, if there is one child who is having special difficulty it is necessary to walk up to his desk, look him in the eyes, and ask him to sit quietly so that you can talk to the class. Physical injury provides another good analogy. When somebody is in an accident, antibiotics by mouth (systemic) can help prevent local infections from spreading, but systemic antibiotics will *not* remove the dirt and bacteria in the wounds that are scattered over the person's body. The dirt and bacteria need to be removed from each wound at the site of the wound. Demonic infection of psychological wounds seems to be another⁷ example in which a problem can be addressed generally from a distance, but then must also be addressed again in

⁶ Physical manifestations occasionally do not stop with this intervention. In my experience, the most common reason is that internal parts are causing the physical manifestations, or are shielding the demonic spirits and giving them permission to continue causing manifestations in spite of our prayers and commands. Also, I sometimes encounter physical manifestations that do not stop with interventions to deal with demonic interference, but also do not seem to block the healing process. My perception is that these manifestations are physical "side effects" of what the Holy Spirit is doing as opposed to interference manifestations from the enemy.

⁷ See "General Introductory Comments Regarding Ministry Aids" for discussion of "local" and "systemic" patterns of demonic infection.

a more focused way when you are closer to the problem. Systemic demonic “antibiotics⁸” are good, but my experience is that it is also necessary to clean the demonic “dirt and bacteria” from each cluster of related traumatic memories when you get to the specific memories.

2. The opening prayers and parameter-setting at the beginning of the session may be ineffective in neutralizing certain demonic spirits because the person’s free-will choices are shielding the resistant spirits from the authority of the prayers and commands. For example, demonic spirits can hide behind vows or in dissociated memories. Demonic spirits are especially resistant to our prayers and commands if an internal dissociated part is giving them permission to interfere. These demonic spirits can continue to interfere with the healing work, in spite of the initial prayers and commands, until their “shields” are removed.
3. The Lord may be requiring demonic spirits to manifest during the session in order to provide information. Our initial command is, “You must manifest only as Jesus allows and requires” not, “We forbid you from manifesting in any way.” It has occurred to me that the Lord may allow some demonic manifestation during the session (in accordance with our initial parameters) because the demonic manifestation is a part of His best plan to provide information and lead us more quickly to the work He wants us to do.

Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water with respect to charismatic renewal: I want to state clearly that Charlotte and I have been blessed by charismatic renewal. We have been greatly blessed by John Wimber’s books and teaching on healing prayer, as well as by those of Francis and Judith MacNutt and others. We have visited the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship several times, and we have observed lasting and significant spiritual growth in our lives in the weeks and months following each visit.

We do believe that the physical manifestations/phenomena associated with charismatic prayer and/or worship can sometimes be indications of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power (and the battles going on in the spiritual realm). We also realize that physical phenomena (*e.g.*, laughing, crying, being slain in the Spirit, even appearing intoxicated like the Apostles in Acts 2) may be manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s work unrelated to any demonic opposition. We have just been so struck by the repeated connections I observed in my office, and our assessment that healing proceeded more effectively in some cases when demonic interference was bound and physical manifestations stopped.

As mentioned above, in my own personal experience I have not been upset by physical manifestations but rather have wanted them. I have mostly struggled with worrying that nothing was happening and having to learn to walk in faith (during the actual prayer time), and then waiting for fruit to appear afterwards. Both Charlotte and I have almost no tangible, subjective manifestations of anything happening when we are at charismatic prayer services, but consistently experience lasting and significant spiritual growth in the weeks and months following times when we receive prayer.

⁸ For example, thorough opening prayer at the beginning of the session or prayer and/or commands to address overarching patterns of demonic oppression in the person’s life and family.