

by Whitney Kemp



Faith, Healing and The Power of Prayer

“Devine” Intervention

Deanna Devine-Silvestre was a typical young, attractive, 27-year-old wife and mother of two of young children only one short year ago. With her husband in college, Deanna worked full time as an assistant childcare director for a local church - as she tried to support her family. From the outside, things seemed fine, yet things are rarely as perfect as they appear.

“I was getting frustrated with our money situation; it seemed like everyone else drove expensive cars and had nice things. Here we were crammed in this tiny apartment, in a bad neighborhood,” Devine continued, “It just didn’t seem fair.”

Her discontent continued to worsen each day. She could not seem to catch a break: her children were sick, she fell and injured herself twice, and her first attempt to purchase a home fell through.

Despite the discontent she felt in other aspects of her life, Devine did enjoy her job at Highland Park Presbyterian Church. She found the people with whom she worked to be wonderful, and she was able to be with her children while she worked. These were significant fac-

tors to her.

Yet, Devine knew something was missing. Though she enjoyed her work for the church, she knew this was not all that God had planned for her. Deanna Devine-Silvestre had a passion and a flare for photography, and with each passing day, her unhappiness with her job, and in turn, her life - grew.

“I felt my spirit had been broken. I just kept praying to God to give me a sign and tell me what I was supposed to do,” Devine said.

Devine had fear in her heart. Fear that her passion for photography would not make ends meet as her current job had. She feared she would fail; but mostly, she feared she did not have enough faith in herself. After much deliberation with her husband and lots of private worrying, Devine made a courageous decision and left her safe position in hopes of making a name for herself as a professional photographer.

“That was when things all came to a blow,” Devine remembered.

Only one week after leaving her job, Devine awoke with an overwhelming weakness in her arms and legs.

“I felt as though my body weighed 1000 lbs,” Devine said.

The next morning her condition had worsened. Devine was not able to walk without assistance. Her rapid deterioration led her to believe it was all in her head. Devine was stubborn; she was in denial and refused to go to the hospital.

“...one morning, my legs gave out on me, and I fell on top of my five-year-old son. I saw how much it upset him. I had no choice but to call the hospital,” Devine said.

On her way to the hospital, a paramedic told Devine her condition was in her head. Devine was confused and scared. Was he right? Was she crazy? And if it was not “all in her head,” what was happening to her body and why?

Three days and many tests later, while lying in a hospital bed, unable to move her limbs, Devine was finally given a diagnosis. She had Guillaume Barre. A possibly life threatening disease, Guillaume Barre allows the body’s immune system to attack the nervous system and can lead to permanent paralysis. Until this point, Devine had fallen into a comfortable routine of

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the universe seemed to open up for me.”

– Deanna Devine

by Judy McKinney

The Facts of Faith

International, interdisciplinary studies prove time and again that the higher a person’s education level, the less likely he or she will have faith in miracles, prayer or God.

One delightful exception to this “rule” was spotlighted in a holiday season survey in December of 2004. HDC Research and the Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies conducted a national poll of 1,100 physicians.

Over half (55%) of these doctors believe that medical practice should be guided by religious teaching. A whopping 87% believe in the truth of Biblical miracles, either literally (37%) or metaphorically (50%). How could such well-educated, scientifically minded people believe in *miracles*? Most of us must accept a belief in miracles as an act of faith, but doctors, who deal with matters of life and death, sometimes get a closer view. A majority (55%) of the doctors in this survey said that they have had treatment results in their patients that they would call miracles.

It should be no surprise to find doctors using prayer, given the number of Bible verses that link prayer and healing. “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick...” (*James 5:15*) Prayer is important to these doctors. Nearly half (46%) believe that prayer is important in their own lives. Physicians pray for their patients – both as a group (51%) and for individual patients (59%). Even more doctors also encourage their patients to pray (67%).

The survey listed two reasons that doctors encourage their patients to pray. First, a few simply wanted God to answer their prayers. Many of the doctors expected psychological benefits from prayer. Most of these doctors, however, cited both the possibility of divine intervention and the patients’ positive emotional response as their reasons for using prayer in their medical practice.

Nearly eight hundred (72%) of these eleven hundred American doctors believe that religion provides a reliable and necessary guide to life. In an Internet press release through Business Wire, Dr. Alan Mittleman, Director of the Finklestein Institute, stated “The picture that emerges is one where doctors, although presumably more highly educated than their average patient, are not necessarily more secular or radically different in religious outlook than the public.”

sleeping and crying. When the diagnosis finally came, Devine found she had reached her physical and mental breaking point.

“That night I actually felt my spirit begin to leave my body. I knew if I didn’t do something, I would die,” Devine continued, “...that’s when I accepted the seriousness of my state, and began to fight.”

Devine sensed the answer was coming. Miraculously, with the aid of her newly positive frame of mind, as well as lots of family support, Devine began the recovery process. Slowly, with the aid of a walker, Devine began to walk. She also began to see the hospital psychologist, in an effort to improve her mental state.

“...The (therapist’s) words came straight from God. He spoke of how I had lost my spirituality...how I was refusing to allow myself to be happy with what I had,” Devine said.

For the first time, Devine took in his words and allowed someone else to show her how truly blessed she was. After all, she had a loving husband, two beautiful children, health insurance, vehicles and a home. During physical therapy, she began to see how rich she truly was. Finally, Deanna Devine felt the hand of “Divine” intervention. With God’s help (and a nudge from an intuitive psychologist), she learned she would never be genuinely happy until she was able to accept and love what she had.

“As soon as I was able to too embrace His words, the universe seemed to open up for me,” Devine said.

Her physical state continued to improve, and after only 10 days, she was released from the hospital. Devine returned to her home, where she discovered that all their bills - bills which had been mounting at an

alarming pace - had been paid.

“To this day I still have no idea how we managed to pay all those bills without help. It was a miracle in itself,” Devine said.

Devine’s mental state also continued to make progress. She realized that life would be okay, that it was fine if her children went to public school. The apartment that she once saw as cramped and old? Well, it was really quite lovely.

God had set life in motion for Devine. Before she knew it, her new photography business had gotten off the ground. Through word of mouth, Devine had suddenly booked clients through the fall and into the holidays. Then one month later, she was offered an opportunity to shoot the cover for an established Dallas magazine.

“It was so rewarding. Once I was able to let go and trust in God, things began to happen as I felt they should,” Devine said.

Now, less than a year after the Guillaume Barre disease left her virtually paralyzed, Devine is 100 percent recuperated. Her business is thriving, her family is blessed, and she is happy for the first time in ages.

Devine remembers a lyric that carried her through her darkest hours and buoyed her faith in God and herself. This quote, from a popular Sheryl Crow song, lingered in Deanna Devine’s mind throughout her experience: “*It’s not having what you want; it’s wanting what you’ve got.*”

“I have learned a lot from this experience,” Devine continued thoughtfully, “...learned to thank God for every little thing he has done for me. From my career, to the smiles my husband and children give me on a daily basis... I thank him.”