

I kept replaying the movie in my mind

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A child being hugged. A young woman silently weeping. A group of men cheering for their sports team. Every day we're presented with a variety of images. Some of these images delight. Some disturb. We need to watch how we let any of them affect us, including the ones that catch us off guard by shocking us. This is a lesson that began for me one rainy Saturday and later resulted in the healing of an injured arm.

On that particular wet afternoon, while I was flicking the television from channel to channel, a well-known actor appeared on the screen. The character he was portraying in the movie was being physically tortured. The scene was so unexpected and so vividly depicted that I could not forget it. In the days that followed, this graphic slice of cinematography kept replaying in my mind with such tenacity that I wondered if I would ever be rid of it.

I eventually found freedom from this disturbing image when I realized that I hadn't stopped to differentiate between what is real and what isn't. I'd been so caught up in what I'd seen, that I hadn't acknowledged the sheer illusion of this piece of movie-making. The actor *wasn't* being tortured by his captors. He *wasn't* in pain. I had overlooked this fundamental point. When I finally recognized the unreality of it all and stopped identifying with the image of suffering, I ceased to be adversely affected by it, and I regained my peace of mind.

This lesson helped me later while on a business trip. As I was leaving an aircraft, I slipped and tumbled down the stairs. It certainly wasn't the most gracious exit I've ever made! On reaching my hotel room I found that one arm was badly discoloured. Thoughts of conducting a six-hour workshop the next day in a short-sleeved blouse distressed me. The more I stared at the discoloration, the more upset I became by the bruising.

It then dawned on me that as with the rainy day movie, I was being confronted with an image of suffering. Although I wasn't an actor, and this picture of discoloured flesh was not devised by a Hollywood makeup artist, I realized that I needed to distinguish the real from the unreal in this situation, and be healed.

I immediately reached out to God in prayer. What *was* real in this situation? From a material viewpoint, the accident and injury were actual. Yet I knew that this view of things was neither reliable nor accurate, because it was based on the notion that man's being is corporeal and subject to chance. Such a concept is not true.

Man is the image of God, of infinite Spirit, according to the Bible. This means that man is actually spiritual, not material. The perfect man of God's creating is therefore not subject to accident or injury. Our Father is always with us. He keeps us safe. As His dear children we are never out of His tender care. His love constantly enfolds and upholds us. As His likeness, we can't fall and be injured any more than He can. Pain and suffering are no part of God, so they can be no part of our experience.

This spiritual view of reality is based on God's law. Christ Jesus demonstrated this divine law of perfection when he healed a withered hand, restored lost sight, cured lameness, and raised the dead. He proved man's genuine selfhood to be spiritual, perfect, immortal, and eternal. That's why images of disease and deformity neither deceived nor adversely affected Jesus.

In thinking about the spiritual nature of reality, I recalled this marginal heading I'd seen in *Science and Health*: "Remedy for accidents." In looking it up I found this paragraph: "You cause bodily sufferings and increase them by admitting their reality and continuance, as directly as you enhance your joys by believing them to be real and continuous. When an accident happens, you think or exclaim, 'I am hurt!' Your thought is more powerful than your words, more powerful than the accident itself, to make the injury real" (p. 397).

I continued reading and found the book explaining to me the method for freedom from pain and suffering: "Now reverse the process. Declare that you are not hurt and understand the reason why, and you will find the ensuing good effects to be in exact proportion to your disbelief in physics, and your fidelity to divine metaphysics, confidence in God as All, which the Scriptures declare Him to be."

As I followed these instructions and continued to pray along these lines, I became calm, the discomfort ceased, and by the next morning the bruising had faded significantly. The day went well, and no one even mentioned my arm. This healing proved to me that by turning to God we perceive what is real in every situation and gain the true picture of ourselves and others. This spiritual discernment of the truth enables us to conquer adversity, and to demonstrate our God-given health and harmony.