

The Story of My Healing from Multiple Sclerosis

by Vonna Wala

It was May of 1999. After years of study and hard work, I had received my Masters in Counseling, and had finally fulfilled the requirements to become a Licensed Associate Marriage and Family Therapist with the state of Minnesota. I was beginning to see my dream fulfilled, as I operated my own Christian counseling practice out of my professional office in Waseca.

The first indication that something was wrong was when I woke up one day with a feeling of numbness on my left side, from my face down to my feet. Having had two back surgeries in the past, I told myself that it was probably a pinched nerve, and would eventually go away. However, when it continued to worsen, and began to affect my ability to walk, I made an appointment to see a doctor.

Because I have a genetic condition known as polycystic kidney disease, the first concern was the potential for a brain aneurysm that is sometimes associated with that disease. As I often joke, "they did a brain scan, but couldn't find anything". So it was on to the Mayo Clinic for more tests: MRIs, nerve response tests, and the dreaded spinal tap. The doctors at Mayo began to suspect possible multiple sclerosis, but said the diagnosis would not be certain unless there was a second episode.

After a family vacation in Orlando in December 1999, in which I had to stay and rest at the hotel while the rest of the family was out enjoying Sea World, the second episode occurred. Severe eye pain and twitching, resulting from an attack on the optic nerve, became the conclusive evidence that I did, indeed, have MS.

The diagnosis, at first, was "relapsing-remitting" MS, which is marked by occasional flare-ups, with mainly symptom-free periods in between. Soon, however, the MS began an unrelenting attack on my body as the symptoms progressed rapidly over the next three and a half years. The numbness persisted and worsened. Even the tongue became numb, making talking and swallowing difficult. My left leg suffered "toe drop", as the muscles failed to respond, causing my left foot to drag as I walked. I began using a cane, then a leg brace, and eventually a wheelchair. Fatigue became debilitating; I slept 16 or more hours per day. Some days I was unable to make myself get up, and others had difficulty waking me. I became extremely sensitive to heat, and would wear a T-shirt and shorts outdoors in 20° weather. The weakness spread to my arms and hands, and I found it difficult to hold on to objects. The disease was also affecting my memory and ability to concentrate; cashiers had to repeat the amount for me three times as I attempted to write a check. Some days were worse than others, but there were no remissions -- the disease had become "secondary progressive", and showed no signs of letting go.

My doctor at the Noran Clinic in Minneapolis started me on weekly, and then daily injections of medication, along with at least ten different oral medications to try to combat the symptoms. Intravenous steroid treatments were tried, but helped for only a short time, and caused severe side effects. Finally, running out of options, my neurologist approved me as one of the first patients to try a new chemotherapy treatment. The chemo made me ill with side effects for about a week, gave me about one week of improvement, then back to the worsening symptoms until the next treatment three months later. At that point, my doctor said he began to dread seeing my name on the appointment list, because I was one of the five patients he worried about the most, and he had no more answers for me.

By May 2002, three years after the first symptoms, I made the difficult decision to close my counseling practice. It was the loss of a dream, but there was no way I could physically continue, and have any energy at all left over for my husband and two teenage children. Shortly thereafter, I was certified as having a "permanent disability," and was approved for and received an electric wheelchair. We were forced to put our recently remodeled split-level home up for sale, and to begin looking for a single level house that could be made handicapped accessible. We found such a house, and moved in October 2002.

The following June, my home church at the time, Waseca Christian Assembly, hosted a series of special meetings with Dr. David Nichols of Heart of the Father Ministries. On the evening of Sunday, June 8, Dr. Nichols spoke of attitudes that could block God's ability to bring healing to our lives. I felt that God had healed me of some deep-seated feelings of resentment over the years, but I asked him to take away any remaining resentment of which I was unaware -- including resentment about not being physically healed. During the service, I somewhat hesitantly went forward to ask God one more time for a healing touch, and allowed Dr. Nichols to pray for me. I felt God's presence and peace, but no change physically. I went home and went to bed.

As I lay in bed that evening around ten o'clock, I was startled by a strange sensation. MS has done many unusual things to my body, but this was unlike anything I had experienced as part of the MS. I felt heat enter

the left side of my body from the head down to the feet. It was so unusual, that I told my husband, "I think God is healing me!" His admitted skepticism was reflected in his subdued reaction. After about five minutes, the heat subsided, and I fell asleep.

When I got up the next morning, I was stunned to realize that my left leg, which I had been dragging for four years, was suddenly working again. It was so unexpected, that it took me a while to relearn how to walk with a left leg that worked the way it was supposed to. Over the next day or two, I came to realize that other symptoms had disappeared as well. The pain, numbness, weakness, fatigue – in fact all the symptoms of my MS – weren't just improved; they were, for the first time in over three years, completely nonexistent.

Later that week, I left on a planned vacation to visit my mother and other relatives in the Seattle area. Not wanting to be presumptuous, I took my wheelchair with me as usual, just in case. The wheelchair, however, sat unused while I began taking long walks, and visiting until the early hours of the morning without fatigue. After spending two hours kayaking with my sister, I began to realize the completeness of the healing.

On July 23 I returned to see my neurologist. His reaction was one of stunned disbelief as, for the first time in the three and a half years he had been seeing me, he saw me walk without a limp. He repeatedly tested my reflexes, arm and hand strength, and examined my eyes for evidence of the usual optic nerve inflammation, – looking hard for any evidence of MS, and was able to find none. At one point, he even questioned whether I was a twin sister playing a joke on him. His jaw dropped as he kept asking me to walk around the room one more time, saying over and over "I can't believe this. I've never seen anything like this before. This is incredible. It's a miracle." Confirming that medical treatment played no role in this healing, he saw no reason why I needed to take one more dose of any of my many MS medications.

Since then, I have seen others strengthened in their faith as they see me doing things I hadn't been able to do for four years. A few weeks after being in a wheelchair, I was playing volleyball with the church youth group! More than nine years have now passed, and not the slightest trace of any MS symptom has ever returned. I have a gym membership and work out regularly.

After being healed, I was able to resume my counseling practice, and in June 2008, I was approved by the State of Minnesota as a fully licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. We have since moved to the Twin Cities area, where I work as a full-time therapist in a Christian counseling center.

People around the world are now being encouraged by my story, which appears as Chapter 7 in the book *Miracles Are For Real: What Happens When Heaven Touches Earth* by James Garlow and Keith Wall, focusing on the questions and doubts that went through our minds as these events transpired. My husband, Phil, also discusses my healing from the perspective of a healthily skeptical scientist/engineer, in his blog at faithforthinkers.com.

Why was I healed? Certainly not because of anything I have done or because of any great faith on my part.



Vonna Wala poses on her wheelchair ramp, with the wheelchairs, leg brace, walker and canes that she no longer needs since the Lord miraculously healed her on June 8, 2003.

All the credit and glory goes to God alone, who as allowed me to be living evidence that He is real and that He still exercises His miracle working power in the lives of His children.

As I walk with God, I have learned that He is always interested in bringing healing to our lives. He has patiently taken many years to bring emotional healing to my spirit. The healing from MS occurred overnight. I still wait for healing from the polycystic kidney disease. All I know is that God's agenda is not the same as ours, and that it's always best to trust Him.

God wants to bring healing into your life as well. It may be physical healing, or it may be healing of your mind, spirit and emotions. Perhaps it's your relationship with Him that He's most interested in healing. I pray that my story will encourage you to ask Him where He wants to begin bringing healing to your life, and allow Him to begin there.

In God's Love,

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