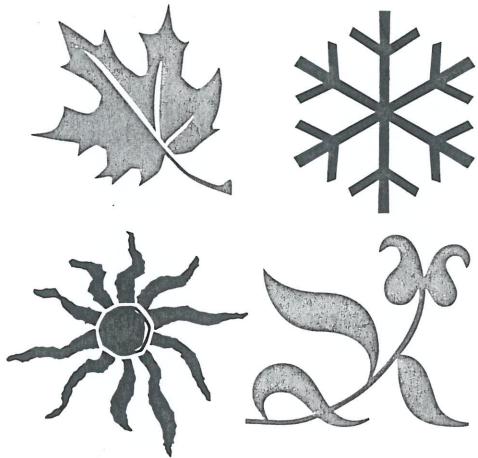


Heads Up!

A Zillion Ways to Survive Negativity in Your Life



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X Surrounding Yourself with Faith

Do not forget to watch out for good times. To retreat into yourself, frequently meditate on how good God is to you. We often only see what we do not have, or what our children, parents, or spouse do not have. That is so easy to do, especially in winter, when the gray sky contributes to your gray mood. Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are lovely, and dwell on the good things in others. That is sometimes a challenge. Thankfulness will bring joy to your heavy heart. To surround yourself with positive people and those who have survived the emotional roller coaster of life will fortify you with faith that you will get through the winter of life. Faith to me is like a warm bowl of Cream of Wheat and a cup of hot chocolate on a windy, cold day. It is always great to know that you are not alone. You have angels sent by the Almighty to warm you. Open your heart and develop faith to keep the fires going even during the tough winter months, no matter how long or short they are.

Have you ever heard the saying, the stronger the wind, the stronger the tree? The experiences of life can either knock us over for a long time or we can be more resilient and snap back. Just how can we withstand the winds of life? With faith, faith, and more faith. A growing number of people are examining their faith and the connection of faith, inner peace, and wellness. *Time* magazine ran a nine-page article in the June 24, 1996, issue targeting the results of studies of faith and healing. Many people are experiencing the positive results from the power of prayer. The documentation simply cannot be denied. Twenty years ago, no self-respecting M.D. dared to relate that the cures of blood disease, heart disease, or cancer could have come from faith and prayer. Modern medicine, combined with the power of prayer, results in spiritual and physical miracles. The spiritual healings are the most important; physical recovery closely follows.

Winter

According to a 1995 study at Dartmouth, one of the strongest predictors of survival after open-heart surgery is the degree to which patients say they were able to draw strength and comfort from religion.

A survey of thirty years of research on blood pressure shows that churchgoers have lower blood pressure than non-churchgoers.

Other studies have shown that men and women who attend church regularly have half the risk of dying from coronary-artery disease as those who rarely go to church.

Could this mean that prayer and religion have a direct influence on physiology and health? Harvard's Herbert Benson is probably the most persuasive proponent of this view. Benson won international fame in 1975 with the best-selling book *The Relaxation Response*. In it, he showed how patients can successfully win the battle of stress-related ills by practicing a simple form of meditation and prayer.

My personal encounter with the miracles of healing came about two years ago. I want to share the experience because if it happened to me it can happen to anyone. My background is in the Catholic church, and my family practices the faith everyday. That means we live the teachings of the church and realize that the expectations are always a moral challenge to us. But the graces from rising to the challenges are worth the constant work.

My experience with the miracle of healing through the power of God came in October 1995. I attended a special healing mass, encouraged by two faithful girlfriends from my church. I went in pretty blind in many ways, but I came out a much different person.

Father Peter Mary Rookey, a Servite priest with the order of the Servites of Mary, was visiting our area and conducted the mass.

Winter

He had just returned from a trip to Africa, one of his many trips all over the world conducting the powerful healing masses. As I walked into the church, I saw Father Rookey kneeling in front of the Altar of Mary, totally concentrating in his prayer. I could have shot off a gun, and it would not have broken his concentration. I could feel the sincerity and love from this special person even before I knew about him.

The healing portion of the mass began, and I approached the altar. I watched as my friends slumped into the waiting arms of the assigned helpers. They all looked like they had taken a good sniff of ether. When Father came to me and blessed me with the holy oil and gently touched my head, a rush of warmth and peace went into me. I too rested in the spirit.

Faith and special healings from the Almighty occur daily, but so many of us are caught up in the day-to-day rush and do not hear anything but the bad news. My life will never be the same as it was before I was touched by the power. Father Rookey is an 80-year-old living saint as far as I am concerned, and he is loved by people worldwide. He moves about the altar with the energy of a 20-year-old. I hear he does up to 400 push-ups every morning.

If we could put his positive Faith and devotion in a bottle, we could all feel that good all the time. But the lesson from it all is that Faith is there for all to touch, and we all come in our own time. I am so ashamed of myself that I did not embrace this earlier in my life, but we cannot go back and change all the happenings. We need to look at what we can do today. This type of Faith makes people get out of wheelchairs and want to live. The peace is what we all are looking for, and yet the hardest thing to obtain. We cannot buy it in the mail, and we cannot take it from others. We can only encourage it in ourselves.