

A matter of belief

Two teenagers tell a young reporter how faith healing has changed their lives - and try to justify their experiences.

A matter of belief?



When two of her contemporaries were 'spiritually healed' from life threatening diseases, Nalina Eggert was forced for the first time to consider the issue. 'Faith healing' is unfair. There are literally thousands of sick children in Northern Ireland – how can one person recover through a 'miracle' while other young people go on suffering?

Both Paul Gibson (18) and Paula Carson (16) were suffering from Chronic Fatigue System (CFS), when they were 'miraculously' cured of their illness through spiritual healing. CFS has no known cure and there is little doctors can do for people diagnosed with the disease. People will always say it's a load of rubbish, but I'm still standing here, not lying on a sofa.

The stress of living with CFS made life almost unbearable for Paul and his family: "I slept about sixteen hours a day, then got up and sat in an armchair; that was about it. I became quite antisocial and I couldn't play football anymore."

"People dealt with it in different ways. My sister, I think, dealt with it the worst, she was angry, she'd shout at me and then I'd start to cry," he said. "My mother would go into every chemist in the country, looking, asking, "what's your cure for ME?" They (the chemist) would swear by something or by something else, it was just a load of rubbish."

Unlike Paula, Paul didn't have a faith and didn't believe in any kind of God. While his mother was searching for every possible cure, word came of a healing ministry in Southampton. At the time Paul was nonplussed about the idea. "I got bribed (to go). I was flown out to Southampton to see these people and I wasn't too happy about going. I got healed in about a month of being sick.

"I was on my feet and I was walking around and was in school the next September - only a few months later. It changed my life a lot. I used to be a very quiet reserved person and if you had a picture of me now you probably wouldn't think that," he said.

Paula sits beside Paul smiling. She's a healthy girl with plenty to say but her battle with CFS ended just two months ago. Around this time last year Paula was completely housebound and had already missed most of her school year. It wasn't until she went to a Christian conference in Belfast that her life changed dramatically.

"I went to this conference that was held in Avoneil Leisure Centre, John and Carol Arnott from Toronto. "It wasn't actually like a call for healing but I just went up anyway. My pastor's wife started praying for me because she knew that I was sick and then she must have called the other guys over and then they started praying for me.

"It took about three quarters of an hour to pray, until all of my pain was gone and then I stood up and I was walking around," she said.

Now she has started back to fifth year, and although many of her friends are still in the year above, Paula's life has been disrupted enormously. "During my eight months of suffering Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, my friends were all busy with GCSEs so I got very lonely.

"Everybody was telling me to take it easy this year because it could be so easy to get stressed out and I don't want a relapse," she said.

Paula has given up extra-curricular activities and some of her GCSEs. A relapse is still a worrying problem given how recently she was cured. Unsurprisingly since their healing Paul and Paula view the traditional medical profession in a completely different light,

"My doctor just felt so helpless because you go into that sort of profession to help people, but he couldn't help me," said Paula. "He asked me to come at least once, once a month, so he could see how I was doing and every time he'd say, 'I'm really sorry, I just can't do anything'".

I pushed them on the issue of belief, Paul had been cured yet hadn't any faith at the time, Paula comes from a Christian family who had prayed constantly for her, how can that be right? Might it all have been in their heads?

"If it was a psychological illness I wouldn't have been sick in the first place." said Paul. "If you saw what I was like and you saw me lying on a sofa not being able to walk up the stairs and everything, you'd believe that it would be nothing but a miracle that happened," he said.

"You know, people may say, 'oh how could that be possible?' and all, but the thing with ME is that there is no medication that makes it go away," he said.

Paul is refreshingly down to earth about the whole experience. He only believes in the notion of spiritual healing because it has actually happened to him. "You can criticise it all you like," said Paul, "but the truth is that we were both sick and we got healed. People will always say it's a load of rubbish, but I'm still standing here, not lying on a sofa."

About the team

This story was produced by Nalina Eggert, 16. It was published on Sky TV's [Reach for the Sky](#) website..

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