

# Uncertainty and Healing

*Anne Lazenby*

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Two things have been on my mind recently. They have provoked a lot of thought and research. Over the past months, I have spent hours on the internet perusing medical studies, Church websites, and countless blogs, looking for answers. At first glance, the two seem to be entirely unrelated topics, but as they've occupied so much of my thoughts, I've come to notice some similarities.

The first topic is more tangible. Since June 2011, I've been experiencing symptoms of inflammatory arthritis. This is not like the osteoarthritis that sometimes comes with aging as joints deteriorate. Instead, it is an autoimmune disorder; the immune system becomes an "overachiever" and starts attacking healthy joints. I don't want to bore you with all the details but I think a few points are relevant. First, it is a systemic problem, so in addition to painful joints, it can cause loss of appetite, fatigue, and a general "unwell" feeling. Second, it is not straightforward to diagnose. And this mysteriousness has been a cause of major frustration for me. It was months until my first appointment with a rheumatologist. And that appointment turned into a three-hour hospital visit with all kinds of blood tests that I'd already had twice before and were, once again, negative. It also involved twenty X-rays that showed nothing useful.

In January 2012, I finally got some answers. My rheumatologist believes I have something called Minocycline-Induced Autoimmunity. Basically, this that means a prescription medication I was taking last year, minocycline, triggered my immune system to overreact and attack my joints. Knowing *something*, anything, about what was going on relieved a lot of my stress. I finally

had something to call my symptoms and, best of all, a helpful medication to take.

But I still experience a lot of uncertainty about my condition. I searched everywhere and found only one study on twenty-seven patients with this condition, and the prognosis is extremely unclear. It could (and hopefully will) go away in the next few months or it could become chronic and either turn into, or at least mimic, rheumatoid arthritis, a progressive disease. It is manageable with the right drugs but it is not curable. Though I now know I have this potentially scary disorder, knowing is somehow so much less scary than before when I knew nothing at all. I have a cousin with this disease. She has learned how to live with her condition and now has a darling one-year-old daughter. (How much is hereditary is part of the mystery.) If I need support, I know I will have it from her, as well as many others.

Now, the second topic I've had on my mind is questions I have about things in this Church. I have some questions about policies, leadership, and women's roles in the Church, but the specific details of my questions aren't really relevant. What I will say is that there are several parts of this Church that I don't understand. And there are parts that I, perhaps, just don't agree with. My experience with this questioning has been surprisingly similar to my experience with arthritis. For both, a big source of my frustration has been my lack of knowledge. Sometimes, this inability to understand can be almost painful. And they are both systemic; my arthritis affects more than my joints, and specific questions can cause a cascade of more questions. I don't think my questions will just go away with a prescription, as could potentially happen with my arthritis. I'm quite positive that they are destined to become "chronic," but I'm also quite hopeful they will be manageable.

One thing I would like to make clear, though, is that I don't think this similarity between questioning and a chronic disease extends to the idea that questioning is like a disease that needs to be cured. Questioning is, I think, natural and even healthy. This leads me to possibly one of my favorite stories from Christ's ministry, when Christ is in the Americas:

Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these

words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them: Behold, my time is at hand.

I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time.

Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.

But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.

And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.

Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy.

For I perceive that ye desire that I should show unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem, for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you. (3 Ne. 17:1-8)

This story doesn't clear up any questions, but it is a source of comfort. I love that Christ knew some things He said wouldn't be easily understood and gave the people time to ponder and prepare for the next day of his teaching. I also love this story because it is a beautiful example of Christ's compassion. He has some kind of schedule and other people He needs to visit, but He sees these people's tears and stays with them.

Today, Christ doesn't minister directly to us, but we have God's prophets on the earth. Maybe, then, it's even more important now to question and find out for ourselves what we believe. My favorite quotation on the subject is from Brigham Young. He said:

I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by him. I am fearful that they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands

of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give their leaders did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way. Let every man and woman know, by the whisperings of the Spirit of God to themselves, whether their leaders are walking in the path the Lord dictates, or not.<sup>1</sup>

My doctor happened to be one of the doctors on the only study about my condition. There are probably few other places I could have gone and been properly diagnosed. And I know I have people to support me whatever happens. So I actually feel quite lucky.

Similarly, I am extremely grateful that I grew up in this ward, with so many great examples. I am especially grateful for the people who have openly shared their own questions with me, who have allowed me to see their struggles and resolutions. They have allowed me to see how I can both be a part of this Church and have questions, and I hope we all remember to continue to allow for questions. I really hope we never settle for “a state of blind self-security.” For while I know Christ suffered for me and I believe and love the scriptures, there are some questions I just don’t have answers for. I can reconcile myself to this, though, because I know God is real. I know He loves me and you. And I know that eventually we will be able to go back to Him.

#### Note

1. John A. Widtsoe, ed., *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 135.