



## **Doing Theophostic on Yourself**

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Dr. Smith makes the following comment about doing Theophostic on yourself:

I am often asked if a person can administer Theophostic Ministry on oneself. The truth is I practice Theophostic on myself nearly every day. I encourage you to try but only after you fulfill several conditions. First, read through all the principles and concepts in this book and attend the basic seminar. Second, administer Theophostic Ministry with others until you are very familiar with the principles. Third, it is imperative that you receive personal ministry from others for the primary woundedness you may have sustained through life. This third condition is absolute. Do not attempt to deal with the deeply traumatic memories on your own. I do not believe that you will have much success working in memories which are traumatically charged....But once the primary trauma is removed, the smaller “splinters” very well may be dealt with without the help of others.<sup>1</sup>

One of the reasons for number three has to do with psychological defenses and “blind spots.” Not only do our minds have psychological defenses (like dissociation) that protect us from the most painful wounds in our lives, but our minds also place subtle “blind spots” in front of these defenses.<sup>2</sup> If you want to hide something you don’t bury it and then leave the freshly turned earth as a clue. The first person walking by will ask “I wonder what is buried here?” Any first grader can tell you that you need to pack the dirt back down and scatter leaves over it! These defenses and blind spots are amazingly effective in hiding our deep wounds from us – we don’t even see or feel that we are hiding/avoiding/running away from something. We don’t see the elephant in the middle of the living room and we don’t even notice that we always walk around the edge of the room looking only at the wall. I am sure that most of you have clients, family members, and friends with defenses and blind spots that keep them from dealing with the real issues in their lives.

My own experience provides a good example. Kindergarten and first grade were very painful, so my mind simply cut these files out of my “normal” memory and put them into a conveniently invisible dissociative defense system. This was a very effective way of dealing with the pain. I came home from school looking and acting fairly normal. My parents noticed that I would never talk about anything that happened in school, but I didn’t appear to be in any distress. They had no idea how miserable I was. One might ask “How on earth could you fail to notice such a big hole?” Part of the answer is that my mind placed a simple but effective blind spot in front of the hole: “I just never happened to look that way.” If I would start wandering too close “something would just happen to steer me in some other direction.” Another part of the answer is “It’s easy to fool somebody when he wants to be fooled.” At some level my mind said to itself “I know you’re hiding something, but I don’t want to know about it. I’ll just look the other way and pretend I never met you.” The effectiveness of this simple system still amazes me: I didn’t discover

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<sup>1</sup> Edward M. Smith, *Beyond Tolerable Recovery*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. (Campbellsville, Kentucky: Family Care Publishing, 2000) p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> The enemy is also happy to contribute spiritual blind spots to help hide this whole process.

that kindergarten and first grade were “missing” until I was 39 years old. Looking back I now realize that I have always had a (very) subtle and vague awareness that something “wasn’t quite right” about my grade school memories; “the pieces didn’t quite fit together.” But like I said, I was gently steered in some other direction if I started to wonder what this might be about. This aspect of the blind spot was even more subtle – I was totally unaware of being steered away from the hole until I stumbled into it November of 1999 and then began trying to figure out what had happened (see “Dissociation, Repression, Denial, and Avoidance: ‘Where did kindergarten and first grade go?’” on the Case Studies page of [www.kclehman.com](http://www.kclehman.com)).

The psychological and spiritual “blind spots” that hide our defenses are (by definition) invisible to us. We will miss them every time we go around, no matter how many times we circle the problem. In light of all this, it makes sense that it is very difficult to find the memories and emotions from the deeply traumatic events in our own lives. We need someone else to help us get past our blind spots. A Theophostic facilitator can help us to get past our blind spots so that we can “see” and release the defenses that guard the deep wounds in our lives.

A significant risk with trying self-Theophostic on our deep wounds is that we will get poor results because our internal defenses block the way. If we then decide Theophostic doesn’t work we might walk away from the Lord’s plan to bring healing and freedom in our lives. Please do not judge the effectiveness of Theophostic ministry on the results you get when working with yourself. I have facilitated thousands of hours of Theophostic ministry and I have also received many hours of Theophostic ministry for my own healing. I still find it difficult to do Theophostic ministry on myself. Occasionally I can get through the whole Theophostic process and experience full resolution. My usual experience is that I can get some of the pieces but do not get to full resolution. I take notes on the pieces that do come together and then I work with someone else to finish the process.

Another reason to get help with our most important wounds and lies is that it is easy to get stuck in major traumatic memories. It is necessary, for Theophostic to work, to connect intensely with the traumatic memories that are carrying the core lies. This usually includes reconnecting intensely with the thoughts and feelings that were present in the original trauma. If one goes to a memory of being assaulted, for example, one might re-experience the terror, powerlessness, confusion, and disorientation that are often present when someone is overwhelmed by a situation in which one is violated and unable to defend him or herself. It is very difficult to facilitate Theophostic when one is in this kind of ego state. If the core lies come forward spontaneously it might be possible to recognize them, focus on them, and cry out “Lord Jesus, please come with Your truth.” If there is any clutter in the way it will be extremely difficult to think clearly or to listen for the Lord’s guidance in order to troubleshoot. The lies (e.g., “I am helpless,” “I am worthless,” “Even God has abandoned me”) and the emotions (e.g., fear, powerlessness, shame, confusion) experienced in the middle of traumatic events will especially impair discernment and spiritual authority in dealing with any demonic opposition we might encounter.

A final concern is that we are more susceptible to deception when working alone – working in community with others provides the protection of additional discernment. This is a tested and proven principle of Christian discipleship for all situations, and seems especially appropriate for self Theophostic. As mentioned above, discernment is impaired by the lies and emotions experienced in the middle of traumatic events. This makes us more susceptible to deception from the enemy. Several of our clients have had frightening experiences of confusion and deception while trying to work on major wounds with self Theophostic. We URGE you to work in community

with others<sup>3</sup> if you are addressing any significant targets with self Theophostic, and we strongly encourage working in community with others even if you are “just” working on splinters.

These problems are even more significant if the core lies are attached to major childhood trauma. Our defenses will be stronger and will often include some degree of dissociation. If we are able to find and connect with the traumatic childhood events, it is even easier to get stuck and/or confused and deceived. Connecting with traumatic childhood memories often includes reconnecting very deeply with a child ego state (this is especially true if there is any dissociation involved). In the child ego state our adult resources are not available. Our psychological resources are those of the child in the memory, not only at that age, but also impaired by being in the middle of a traumatic event. If the traumatic event is early and intense it will be difficult even to hold on to the most basic Theophostic process. It will be almost impossible for the frightened, traumatized child ego state to troubleshoot regarding the clutter that might be in the way. Demonic infection is usually present in major childhood wounds, and our effectiveness in dealing with this interference will again be severely impaired by the lies and emotions carried in the traumatic memory. In addition to impairment from the lies and emotions carried in the traumatic memory, discernment is further impaired by being in the child ego state, making it even easier for the enemy to deceive.

When I try self Theophostic on even moderately intense early memories I usually get stuck in some loop. I can eventually withdraw from the painful memories and emotions, most of the time feeling terrible and with little accomplished (after circling for an hour or two...or three). Not my idea of a good time, and Charlotte often has to help clean up the mess. I haven't had much trouble with deception, but this may be because I usually get stuck before the place where one would ask the Lord to come with truth.

If you are wanting to try Theophostic on yourself, I very much encourage you to heed Dr. Smith's directives summarized above and then to re-read the chapter “Theophostic Ministry on Your Own” (*Beyond Tolerable Recovery*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2000, pages 270-275).

Note regarding Dr. Smith's third point: E-mails we have received indicate that many people have understood Dr. Smith's third point to mean that they shouldn't do self-Theophostic until they have resolved *all* the major issues/primary traumatic memories in their lives. This is an unfortunate misunderstanding. “It is imperative that you allow someone else to facilitate Theophostic ministry for the primary wounds in your life” does *not* mean that you cannot do self Theophostic until you have dealt with all of your major issues. When Dr. Smith comments “once the primary trauma is removed, the smaller ‘splinters’ very well may be dealt with without the help of others,”<sup>4</sup> he is referring to the *specific, particular major issue in question*. He is not saying “You can only do self Theophostic on ‘splinters’ after all the primary issues in your life have been resolved,” but rather that you should not do self Theophostic on a *particular major*

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<sup>3</sup> Any persons doing self Theophostic should have someone(s) with whom they can “test”/check what they are experiencing in their Theophostic work. A mature Christian friend, a pastor who understands Theophostic, or a Theophostic study/practice group where you can share about your experience with self Theophostic can all provide the additional discernment of community. Theophostic sessions with a facilitator who is a mature Christian, in combination with self Theophostic, is another way to obtain the additional discernment of community.

<sup>4</sup> Edward M. Smith, *Beyond Tolerable Recovery*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. (Campbellsville, Kentucky: Family Care Publishing, 2000) p. 270.

*issue/traumatic memory* in your life until after working with someone else to resolve the most intense negative emotions associated with *that particular major issue/traumatic memory*.

One reason it is very important to understand this point is that many of us start with the smaller, more easily accessible issues in our lives. This has certainly been true for Charlotte and I. The more important, more painful, “major” issues/traumatic memories were more deeply buried and more heavily defended. We have been able to get to these deeper, “major” issues only after our unconscious minds and/or internal dissociated parts gained more *experiential* confidence in the Theophostic process, and after many months of persistently engaging in “Theophostic spiritual disciplines”<sup>5</sup> in order to dismantle the habits of self protection (psychological defenses) that had been blocking access to these deeper and more painful “major” issues. We are still working on “major” issues and “primary” traumatic memories, but have also already received great benefit from self Theophostic. If we had waited to do self Theophostic until all of our major/primary issues were resolved, we would still be waiting, and would have missed significant benefit.

Journaling “whatever comes into my mind” as a simple way to augment self Theophostic: I write this addendum after a couple more years of experience with Theophostic ministry, and specifically with self Theophostic. As I have gotten more healing through others ministering to me, especially addressing lies regarding the character of God, I have been experiencing increasingly better results with self Theophostic. However, there are still two problems that I often encounter when doing self Theophostic: 1) I don’t recognize the importance and/or meaning of thoughts/emotions/images/memories/etc. when they are only inside my head, and 2) My mind often wanders/gets distracted.

I have found that writing down the thoughts/emotions/images/etc. that come into my mind can function in much the same way as speaking them out loud, as I would do in a session where someone is ministering to me. Just as with getting thoughts/emotions/images/etc. “into the light” by speaking them out loud, somehow it is easier to recognize the importance and/or meaning of my mental content when I get it out of my head and into the light by writing it down. This simple step of writing things down has also been very helpful in preventing mental wandering/distracted.

My experience is that journaling with self Theophostic is about “half way” between self Theophostic and having someone else minister Theophostic to me. It’s not as effective as having another person to help deal with blind spots and to help resolve clutter, but it’s better than self Theophostic alone.

It obviously takes time to journal in this way, so the flow of your self TP will go faster if you don’t need to journal. However, if you are having trouble getting stuck, distracted, ... etc., I would recommend trying this journaling technique as a simple way to augment your self Theophostic.

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<sup>5</sup>“Theophostic spiritual disciplines” include things like the discipline of honesty (as opposed to the defenses of denial and avoidance) – the practice of watching for the places in our lives where we “look away” from something that we’re feeling or thinking or experiencing, and then choosing, instead, to look directly at those things. See the essay “Spiritual Disciplines and Theophostic Ministry: Choosing Healing” (forthcoming) on the Articles FAQs page of [www.kclehman.com](http://www.kclehman.com) for additional comments.