

*The Healing  
Connection*



# *The Healing Connection*

The Story of a Physician's Search for  
the Link between Faith and Science

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*with Gregg Lewis*

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*To my wife, Charmin,*

*my closest friend*



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## *Introduction*

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Can a person's Christian faith really have a positive effect on his or her mental and physical health?

What does modern scientific research have to teach us about the healing power of faith?

How might the healing connection play a crucial role in the coming worldwide healthcare crisis?

This book will attempt to answer these questions. But it will do so by first telling the personal story of a man many consider to be one of the world's leading experts on the cutting-edge research now documenting and detailing faith's healing connection. As founder and director of Duke University's Center for the Study of Religion/Spirituality and Health, Dr. Harold Koenig has published twenty-five books and more than 200 professional journal articles (by 2004) detailing the results of his groundbreaking work in medical science and religious faith. He has often shared his expertise in the media with repeated appearances on everything from network morning shows to national evening newscasts.

Despite his professional track record as an effective communi-

cator and a prolific author, *The Healing Connection* marks some very important firsts for Harold Koenig. Though widely known among his professional colleagues for his personal faith, this book is the first place Harold has shared his extraordinary Christian testimony in print. And it's the first time he's drawn from his research to challenge Christian readers and the Christian church as a whole.

Part 1 of this book offers readers an honest, page-turning portrayal of Harold's life pilgrimage, including

- His growing up on a California vineyard
- His college days of experimentation during the tumultuous 1970s
- His adventures conducting research in Africa with Jane Goodall
- His close call during a climb of Mount Kilimanjaro
- A personal crisis which resulted in an emotional breakdown
- Getting kicked out of medical school for disruptive behavior
- Battling mental illness as a street person in San Francisco
- Fighting back toward normality and becoming a doctor
- The breakup of his first marriage
- The spiritual rebirth which brought him back from the emotional brink

- God's clear call and Harold's life mission
- Professional opposition and success
- Harold's current ongoing battle with a chronic and debilitating physical disease

Part 2 of *The Healing Connection* summarizes some of Harold Koenig's most interesting and important findings concerning the impact of Christian faith on mental and physical health. Unlike earlier writings where he spoke only as a scientist objectively presenting his findings, here Harold shares personal examples as he comments and interprets the results of his research in such a way as to help fellow Christians understand their personal, spiritual, and even biblical implications.

Finally, in the book's third section, Harold assumes a more instructive role as a Christian thinker, when he challenges individual believers and the American church to begin considering the implications his research has for ministry in the twenty-first century where

- The fastest growing segment of the American population is over age eighty-five
- The number of people over sixty-five will increase from 35 to about 70 million in thirty years
- The Medicare budget is projected to increase from 259 billion per year in 2002 to an estimated 450 billion per year by 2011 (even *before* the dramatic rise coming in our elderly population with the aging of the baby boomers)

The *Healing Connection* will ask some tough questions:

- If our healthcare system is currently experiencing pressure, what will it be like in thirty years?
- Who will care for the many chronically ill older adults in America who fall through the ever-widening cracks in an overwhelmed healthcare system?
- How is all this going to affect 70 million baby boomers and, especially, their children?

Despite the sobering, even grim, picture projected by current trends, Harold Koenig sees hope enough to end this book on a positive, if challenging, note. Both his personal Christian experience and his findings as a professional researcher convince him that this coming crisis in healthcare could be considered an exciting and unprecedented ministry opportunity for the church, if we begin to understand *The Healing Connection* to be found in faith.