

These notes have been extracted from a Holroyd Ministry Development College Unit. They are an attempt to provide both a biblical basis and practical guidelines for the regular practice of praying for healing of the sick in local churches. They are **not** the basis for a healing campaign, but an attempt to integrate healing ministry into the normal ongoing life of the Christian community - practised by ordinary, faith-filled followers of Jesus who want to see Him continue through His Body, to "do good" to those suffering sickness.

1. A PROPER BASIS FOR HEALING

Some parts of the Body of Christ rarely pray for healing without adding, "if it be Your will, O Lord"... And I have never seen a single person healed (without medical help) on this platform. Why not? We must be more certain of our grounds to approach God for a gift of healing than that! Let's look at some of the underlying elements that are essential for proper healing ministry to function in an ongoing way....

Some extreme Faith Movement groups teach you can and should be healed **every time** from **everything**. They look into the coming Kingdom, where perfect health will exist and declare, if you only believe, **all** of the coming Kingdom's reality can be yours right now. Technically, this is called "over-realised eschatology". [To hold to this, they state that such NT passages as **2 Tim 4:19-21** and **Phil 2:25-27** are evidence of Paul's shortcomings as a faith man - but, note also the rarity of similar passages; Paul was a realist, but not a fatalist!].

The Faith Movement's extreme approach to health issues could be seen as an over-reaction to the traditional churches' rank unbelief in appropriating the promises of healing Jesus and the apostles gave the church. Technically, this is "under-realised eschatology" - ie. we have to wait for the Kingdom to fully come before the benefits of Christ's redemptive ministry can touch our need for healing by the power of God.

One extreme has led at times to the stance that to call for medical help is sinful and unbelief, while the other has looked to medical developments as virtually the **only** way God heals today (besides health / lifestyle choices). Somewhere, between these two extremes, we are people who live in the "now but not yet" (as Fee describes the period between the 1st and 2nd Coming).

A Biblical Perspective

4982. *sozo*, from a *prim. sos* ("safe"); to save, i.e. deliver or protect (lit. or fig.):--heal, preserve, save (self), do well, be (make) whole. This Greek idea was used as a continuation of Israel's notion that God came down to deliver His people from their enemies, to bring them corporately into a land of Promise where good things would be theirs. These promises included flocks being well, people being well, work, families, life going well. Health and prosperity.

Jesus went forth in ministry with precisely this in mind! He didn't teach dry principles / concepts to people who were desperate with health, demonic, and economic problems. But His heart was moved with compassion for their need and His faith was stirred to do something about their practical situations. So, He healed their bodies, set them free from satanic enslavement (including some sicknesses at times), healed their relationships, and at times blessed their economic situations.

Key Scripture: Mat 8:16-17 Isa 53:4 *When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took [1] up our infirmities [2] and carried [3] our diseases [4]."*

Context - laying a hold of infirmities is related to **deliverance**; removal of diseases to **healing the sick**. The reference here is **not** to Calvary, but to His earthly ministry. **1 "TOOK"**: lit = *laid a hold of*; **2 "INFIRMITIES"**: Heb = from verb *pain* - grief, sorrow; Gk = 769. *astheneia*, feebleness (of body or mind); by implication, *malady*; morally, *frailty*:--disease, infirmity, sickness, weakness. **3 "CARRIED"**: idea of *removal*. **4 "diseases"**: 3554. *nosos*, a malady (rarely fig. of moral disability):--disease, infirmity, sickness.

Matthew is quite clear that in praying for the sick and delivering the demonized, Jesus was fulfilling the mandate of Messiah to act as a Good Shepherd, and protect His people from harm and distress.

It has been said that salvation touches the whole man (saved - soul; healed - body; delivered - spirit). All these will be perfectly complete at the Resurrection at His second coming. And in the meantime, we can use our **faith** to reach into that sure coming **hope** and expect God to bring elements of it forward into this fractured age "between the times".

A Practical Perspective

A major mistake that limits the extent of healing ministry is - taking too much on board as the one ministering, and allowing the afflicted person to become passive in expectation. We saw this in Africa,

among the women especially. If we are going to develop a corporate anointing in our churches that increases the incidence of healings (including in the widest sense of the word), we must be careful to activate **FAITH** in all concerned! Those ministering, those afflicted, and those around about. Take Jesus 'failure' seriously. He was careful to create an environment of **faith!** [Mark 5:38 - 6:6].

Discuss practical ways we too can do this... Body language, involvement of others in ministry, the degree **we** pray and **they** pray, applying the "calling on the name of the Lord" principle (as in **Rom 10:13**).

Be convinced in your own mind and understanding of the Word that it **IS** God's will to heal! And where there are exceptions - like where believers are practising secret sin, or physical suffering is working something out in their lives they aren't going to learn any other way (as in **Psa 6 Psa 41 James 5:14-16 1 Cor 11:29-31**), God can identify these exceptions (by the word of knowledge, etc), the person can repent, and then the healing process can continue! Note, these references all have a connotation of improvement! Not leaving a believer permanently ill. Even Job got healed eventually!

2. THE BODY OF CHRIST - GOD'S AGENCY FOR HEALING - DEFINING THE HEALING GIFTS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST - FOR BENEFITING BOTH THE SAVED AND THE UNSAVED.

The nature of a Good Shepherd is to care for, feed, and maintain the health of His sheep. Jesus has set pastors and teachers in the Body to cover the first two, and He has saturated the Body of Christ with healing agencies to cover the last one (refer to the last session's comments). Something broader than just physical healing is in view here - **wholeness!** - but it **does** include physical healing! He wants His people (sheep) safe and free from harm and distress!

Discuss the significance of how Peter interprets **Isa 53:5** in **1 Peter 2:24-25....**

Let's refresh our understanding that the **1 Cor 12:7-11** manifestations of the Holy Spirit are to equip **every** member to fulfill their God-given calling (as summarised in **Rom 12:3-8**). Look at how many varieties of calling must involve an element of healing ministry. Then.... notice in **1 Cor 12:9** they are **gifts** of healing = charisma, from G5483; a (divine) gratuity... (free) gift. The Greek word for *healing* (*iama*) is specifically related to physical curing. Similarly, **12:28**.

But, there is an additional element - which shows up in **Rev 22:1-3** (*healing* = 2324. therapon, a menial attendant (as if cherishing):-- a servant. (someone who attends voluntarily to assist recovery) >>> 2322. therapeia, attendance (spec. medical, i.e. cure); fig. and collec. domestics:--healing, household. **This is God's view of what the Church is!!!** A people who act as channels for the River of Life, for its waters to bring healing to all the peoples (*ethne*) of the Earth! Jesus prayed for non-covenant people to be healed, and they were as they called on Him. In this way, healing is a sign to unbelievers of the goodness of God.¹

Unlike the healing of believers, this area seems to be more unconditional. Whereas, with believers, God many times is allowing other issues to work out while recovering their health.

Practical tips:

Don't go witch-hunting for reasons **why** someone is sick. Minister in faith on face value, and if God knows something you don't, He may reveal it to you or the person themselves². Christians often use this line of approach as a cop-out for not exercising their faith to heal; it puts (sometimes) unnecessary pressure on a person already afflicted. Remember Job's predicament! His suffering (including his boils) was **not** because of any sin, but the result of a satanic onslaught against him and his righteousness.

We too need to be aware of the need to deal with demonic influence in healing ministry (eg. **Mat 4:24 17:15**). This example highlights the need yet again for a **strong prayer base!** **Mat 17:19-20 Mark 9:29**. The context is **prayer builds up faith levels!**

¹ In our own church in the late 1980s, a non-Christian nurse attended for the first time. A testimony of healing was given by a lady of how God had healed her from lumps in her lymph glands just behind her breast. The visitor stood up and asked would Jesus do the same for her, as she was going for a biopsy for several lumps in her breast. She was instantly healed. The doctor could find no lumps to test on the Monday! She was saved through this "good shepherd of the Gentiles" act of mercy, and has followed Christ steadfastly for over 20 years since that wonderful day.

² Many years ago I was not healed of a gum disease, despite repeated prayer. Then the Spirit spoke to me and said, "your mouth (=words) has disease in it; clean it up!" I had not been listening to His refining direction. And I didn't get healed! Even after I repented! It cost a lot of money to get a periodontist to clean out the infection.... to my shame.

We must all continually work towards seeing our churches being built up in the area of being agencies for healing; this covers physical healing, deliverance, lifestyle changes, and changes in habit patterns (eating, sleeping, exercise, etc). Be increasingly aware of the opportunities that already exist for us to be agents of God's healing grace!

In Session #1, we looked at the Biblical basis for healing ministry and saw that quite plainly, Jesus healed out of a heart of compassion. Barry Chant points out in *Walking with a Limp* that all effective power ministry gifting works out on a basis of **love**. The person must want to see good come to the recipient. Otherwise the agent of blessing may go off the rails.

On this basis, we can talk about the use of authority. Jesus' name is the authority to those in submitted relationship to Him. We can use His authority if we are acting in a Biblical area of delegated authority. And ministering to sick people is!

3. WHO IS CALLED TO HEAL, AND WHERE?

- We see again in **Luke 9:1** >> **Luke 10:1,9** >> **Mark 16:17-18** the progression from the commission to the 12, to the 72, to **EVERY BELIEVER**. Note that despite what Cessationists say, plainly, there is **no time limitation** on this commission to heal.
- In **Acts 4:29-31** prayer is made by **all** the believers for boldness to speak and for wonders and healings to be seen in Jesus' name. The context is primarily of "outside" **witness** - which the religious leaders were trying to shut down. And the context is **not** about the apostolic witness only.
- Then, what about the gifts of healing in **1 Cor 12:9 (and v28)**? They are manifestations of the Holy Spirit given "for the common good". Literally = shinningly apparent public demonstrations of God's presence. This manifestation works by **faith** as long as the need exists - as long as sickness is present on the earth - right up until the Second Coming!

The Greek emphasis is to do with the context of a particular meeting, the idea the gifts are permanently given is not in view here. from verb *iaomai* - to cure (lit. or fig.):--heal, make whole. **James 5:16** **1 Peter 2:24** **Acts 10:38** **28:8** **Heb 12:13** and many instances in Jesus' ministry. These **ALL** are associated with physical healing. >>> 2386. *iama*, a cure (the effect):--healing.

- "to another" = *heteros*, other or different:--altered, else, next (day), one, (an-) other, some, strange. It's an interesting word for choice emphasising the differences between the gifted (persons). Do we make room for people with a different faith emphasis from ourselves, so the corporate anointing can more fully reveal Christ?

So, we seem to have two different contexts in the NT for healing ministry;

1. In relation to outreach, a powerful witness before a watching, sick, sin-diseased world. The commission in this context is that **every believer** is called to exercise faith to act in healing (and this particularly applies to physical healing here).
2. In church life, where the ministry is more ongoing, God sovereignly gifts some people with a faith anointing to believe for healing recovery of other believers. This extends to elders (as in **James 5:16**), and may involve the use of medical processes as well as "pure faith".

What about "pure healing" and using medical resources?

In **Mark 6:5** Jesus healed in His home town a few people who had "lingering, longstanding" sicknesses [use of *arostoi* here for sick indicates a lingering ailment]. **That's** why He marvelled at the townsfolk's unbelief. It's the difference between a longstanding sickness (ie. one everyone knows about) and a recently occurring illness.

Similarly, in **Mark 6:13**, Jesus commissioned the 12 apostles and they went out "and anointed (*aleipho*) many sick (*arostoi* again) people with oil and healed them". [**WSD note:** the same verb *aleipho* is used in **James 5:14** which refers to the application of the then-existing and acceptable medicinal means of treatment, rubbing with oil (or fat, *lipos*), and simultaneously exercising the apostolic power of healing].

Discuss the application of this today in the so-called "faith" argument - that to use "normal" means of treating sickness undercuts our application of faith.... (similarly, note Isaiah's use of a poultice to see Hezekiah healed **2 Kings 20:7-11**). Note though the judgment that fell on Uzziah, because in his stubbornness he put his faith in doctors ahead of his faith in God (and died) **2 Chron 16:12**.

Discuss why Paul didn't force Luke to change his profession from being a doctor (**Col 4:14**)?

TO FINISH

When the perfect comes (and there is no more sickness), the "fragment" of the gifts of healing will disappear because there will be no more need. Praise God! In the meantime, we are all called to believe God and act in faith; in the same way as "we see in part, we prophesy in part", so we continue to pray for healing continuously, even though there are occasions when we don't see healing take place.

4. DEVELOPING A WIDE HEALING TEAM OF MINISTRY - INCORPORATING HEALING INTO OUR NORMAL CHURCH LIFE AT EVERY LEVEL OF MINISTRY PRACTICAL STUFF ON THE HOW-TO... BUILDING A BIBLICAL AND EXPERIENTIAL ENVIRONMENT OF FAITH FOR HEALING.

We are primarily called to **go**, not to call people to **come** for healing. It was part of the Great Commission to stretch the early church beyond their own comfort zones (of class, race, and (religious) culture)! We live and serve in the historical stream of that commission, which remains active until Christ returns and all sickness is eliminated (**Rev 21:1-4 22:1-3**). Then, the curse will be eliminated, including sickness, fractured relationships, inner-woundedness, etc, etc. What a day we have to look forward to!

Mat 15:21-28 summarises this driving compassion of God. The 'children's bread' refers here to healing (involving deliverance), which a foreigner to God's covenant promises received because of her persistent faith!

So, our point in this series of studies is that our churches must incorporate a widespread and effective healing ministry into their existence and structure. We have looked at a variety of healing areas - physical, inner, relational, spiritual, etc. **Every believer**, with our diversity of grace gifting, **can** and **should** add to the capacity of our churches to see them become "porches of healing" (see **John 5:1-9**) for people who have refused to lie down and resign themselves to their ailments.

Steps of ministry

- Activate the **faith** of the person (regardless of the particular kind of illness, etc, they have suffered from).
- Use the Word of God to strengthen their expectation to receive from a God who is kind and generous towards all who reach out to Him for help (**Mat 7:7-11** and its later development in Luke's account **Luke 11:1-12³**). Note too the move from asking for **self** to asking for **others**. It seems like God is more likely to back us up when we have the needs of others as our motive for ministry.
- Take time, don't rush. Ask questions as you feel led by the Holy Spirit. Jesus did. And be open to the Spirit's prompting regarding causes (lifestyle habits, areas of addictions, touching curses, wrong mindsets, etc.). All these need reshaping so the person can continue, after healing ministry, to walk in the freedom of holistic health.
- Don't take the responsibility off the person for their own health and future. Don't try to work Christian magic! Assist them to be accountable before God direct (we covered some of this in Session #2).
- Identify like-minded people who you can minister with (especially if and when you go into someone else's house, etc). Keep Christians who have unbelief out of it; their presence won't help.
- Come to corporate gatherings prayed up, awake and alert in your spirit, consciously open to God for words of knowledge about illness, healing needs, etc.
- When out in the community, be alert to opportune moments to share about God's kindness and His desire for fullness of health in people.

Finally, don't be a glory-chaser! It's too dangerous. Rejoice your name is in the Book of Life! **Luke 10:17-21 Prov 27:2, 21**. You want to be a healer for many years to come, not a shipwreck. Be faithful, be full of faith!

³ the original language (Q-source) of this was "good things" **Mat 7:11** But here Luke contemporarises it in the light of post-Pentecost. Contemporarising the text was a common principle of midrash peshar - showing its fulfilment in the author's own time. We learn here from Luke that the disciples can petition the Father for the gift of the Spirit. This perspective is unique to Luke and no doubt reflects the post-Pentecost reality of the gift of the Spirit - Stronstad p46-47.