

Guidelines to Healing

"If we deny God's active healing power, we soon lack evidence of His personal love for us. If we doubt whether God really loves us, does it make any difference whether we believe Him or not? In the end we may wonder if, indeed, God actually exists at all."

Francis MacNutt

1. Introduction

Here we examine some practical aspects to healing and ask the question:

"Are there any guidelines to healing?"

At the outset we acknowledge that God moves in mysterious ways. Kathryn Kuhlman once said:

*"I've never written a book on the how and why of divine healing
– simply because I don't know the how and the why."*

But we can identify some basic guidelines, including what *not* to do.

2. The Reality of Healing Today

God has healed many people during David Hathaway's campaigns in E. Europe and Russia:



- A:** Scoliosis and lump on his neck – completely healed first night!
- B:** Sight damage in car accident 5 years ago – now he can see clearly!
- C:** Broken arm – now he can lift his arm and wiggle his fingers – pain gone!
- D:** Cancer on breast and lungs - couldn't move her upper body – all symptoms gone!
- E:** Thyroid tumour on right side of neck – completely gone!
- F:** Inflammation in whole body – unable to lift her children – totally healed!

2.1 More Local Testimonies

Closer to home, we know how God worked many miracles of healing through Smith Wigglesworth, and how God has healed people in our own fellowships. Here are some testimonies from *Healing on the Streets* in the UK in 2009:

Mr I had suffered a bleed in the brain, resulting in blurred vision, some memory loss and pain at a level 6 out of 10. When we prayed for Mr I he felt warmth at the back of his eyes. After prayer the pain left him, the blurred vision dropped to level 1 and he kept looking round to find it. Mr I had been for prayer before. He has seen God move on a number of occasions; gangrene in a leg was healed, a kidney problem was healed, and Mr I received 2 job offers in one day following prayer. (Bath Nov, 2009)

Mr A came for prayer in the Abbey Square. He suffered from very bad psoriasis with pain at level 4 out of 10. During prayer Mr A felt the presence of the Holy Spirit on him. After prayer the colour of the scabs and skin changed from dark red to light pink, and the pain went. (Bath, Nov, 2009)

A little girl received prayer for an illness by proxy. A couple of days after having prayer, she travelled down to Southampton hospital for a kidney operation. After a scan the consultant told her Mum and uncle that the girl's kidney was within the normal range of size and therefore the blockage must have cleared itself and she no longer needed an operation! (Winchester, Nov, 2009)

A team prayed for a man suffering from diabetes and in particular had painful feet. We prayed for the diabetes and for his feet. After a while we asked him how his feet were feeling - he said they felt numb. We prayed again and asked - He said they weren't numb and they weren't painful. "They feel normal?" we prompted. "Yes" he said, "How did that happen?!" He was genuinely bemused. (Rugby, Nov, 2009)

2.2 Medical Testimonies

The following testimonies are from Christian medical doctors:

"It was not until I had personally witnessed the healing power of God in the name of Jesus Christ, that my former preconceived clinical opinions were rocked. I was able to examine many lepers before and after prayer for healing and in every case noted that hands or fingers previously insensitive to touch received an immediate return of sensation after prayer. The instant return of sensation in my opinion was a miracle."

Dr Richard S. Williams, M.B.B.S, Geelong, Victoria, Australia

"Not only have I witnessed the healing power of God time after time, but the reality of the miraculous has now nestled into my consciousness. Probability and chance lost their power of deception when the seventh cancer sufferer crossed my path and was declared totally fit."

Dr Mario Balestrieri, M.B.B.S., 20 Alton Terrace, The Gap, Brisbane, Australia

3. Who is the Healer?

Let's be clear on this. There are false healers in the world, often associated with New Age concepts. In order to distinguish God's healing from other forms of 'healing', it is vital to acknowledge that Jesus is the healer at all times (Isa 53.4)(Mat 8.17). True, God-given healing is always in the name of Jesus (Acts 3.6) and it is Christ's power (Lk 8.46) through us. Man is simply His instrument through whom healing is sometimes administered.

So beware of all forms of 'divine healing' that do not honour Jesus as the healer. Jesus is the only *true* healer. He healed 2000 years ago (Lk 7.20-23) and gave His disciples authority (Mat 10.1)(Mk 3.15) and power (Lk 24.49)(Acts 1.5) to heal in His name (Acts 3.6) as a sign of the Kingdom of God. This same Jesus rose from the dead and lives today. He lives to give authority and power to modern-day disciples. He lives to answer prayers for healing even when we do not have the ministry of healing (the gift of healing).

4. Understanding Isa 53.4,5

By faith we believe Christ forgives our sins and reconciles us to God (Isa 53.5)(Jn 3.18).

By faith we believe Christ has borne (carried away) our sicknesses and pains (Isa 53.4)(Mat 8.17)

By faith we readily accept forgiveness, but how do we deal with the implied promise of physical and mental healing in the light of the practical evidence around us? And if we can't believe in healing, how can we believe in the forgiveness of sin?

4.1 But some still get sick!

In Isa 53.4,5 the two concepts of forgiveness and freedom from sickness appear to go hand in hand to make man a 'whole' being – whole in body, mind and spirit. So when we sin we have our great high priest, Jesus, to forgive us (1 Jn 1.9). And when we get sick we have our great physician, Jesus, to heal us; 'He has borne our sicknesses', 'He (has) carried our pains', and 'by His stripes we are healed'. Both sin and sickness were dealt with on the cross, in the past!

So why do believers still get sick? If we accept by faith the dual promises of Isa 53.4,5 (sin and sickness have been 'dealt with' through Christ), then ...

... there must be a reason for the sickness or disease. Christians do not operate in a world of chance!

Remember that we live in a fallen world which is under God's curse (Gen 3) and the 'whole creation (including ourselves) is groaning' (Rom 8.18-23). We are freed from sin – but we still sin; we are freed from sickness – but we still get sick. Our sickness may be our own fault e.g. lung cancer through smoking, or it may be environmental and beyond our control e.g. Chernobyl radiation, or it may be physical disablement from an accident, or it may be spiritual attack.

Whatever the cause, the good news is that Christ *has* redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3.13) and so we can come to Him for healing. Apart from Paul's case, there is no record of Jesus saying "sorry, you must suffer a little longer with this illness". And given the diagnosis of a potential illness, we can claim Isa 53.4,5 and believe in faith that it has *already* been dealt with by Christ's sacrifice, just like our past and future sin. Unless God tells us otherwise (see 4.2 and 6.2), we can simply claim 'Christ has borne away this disease' and we could recite the following statement of faith:

"I stand on the word of God. I confess Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord of my life. I believe His sacrifice on the cross reconciled me to God my Father and also freed me from the power of sin and sickness. I am freed from the power of the curse over mankind and from the power of all principalities and powers. In the name of Jesus and by His authority I command all attacks on my health to flee and never return. Through His work on the cross I am made whole in body, soul and spirit. Christ offers me both salvation and healing. So I confess all known sin in my life and ask Jesus to forgive me and to heal my body. I believe that this is the normal will of God for me.

4.2 But some are not healed!

Despite the prayer of faith, the fact remains that some are *not* healed. We all know people, Christians included, who have not been healed despite obedience, repentance, authority, power, faith, prayer, and compassion. Does this negate the promises of Isa 53.4,5? Not at all! Paul had a physical problem – possibly an eye problem (Gal 4.13-15) – and he was not healed despite his petitioning the Lord three times (2 Cor 12.8). We are given several reasons why he wasn't healed. His physical problem enabled him to evangelise the Galatians (Gal 4.13). But Paul highlights another reason. Jesus gave him a powerful healing ministry, and to keep him from boasting he was given a form of weakness (2 Cor 12.7). It was to keep him humble and to remember his human weakness. Jesus told him:

"My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor 12.9)

C.S. Lewis recognised this too. He argued that *there must be some reason* for physical 'tortures':

"Tortures occur. If they are unnecessary, then there is no God or a bad one."

Put another way, it is normally God's will for us to be healed; it is part and parcel of making us 'whole' in body mind and spirit. So *there must be a reason* why healing does not take place (at least in the short-term). Events in the Christian life don't follow laws of randomness and chance (Rom 8.28). Healing does not always happen because of God's sovereign wisdom and understanding of the situation. Human lives are complex. In Paul's case God revealed it, but often we never know why.

5. What about Faith?

5.1 What or who's faith is needed?

From the biblical records it seems people usually had to *ask* for healing – they had to exercise *faith* in Jesus (Mk 1.40-42)(Mk 5.25-34)(Mat 9.27,28). Having said that, there are no hard and fast rules. Kathryn Kuhlman sites cases when God has healed people who have had no faith whatsoever! Apparently a sick person does not *necessarily* need faith to receive healing. We cannot insist that healing has not occurred because of their lack of faith! On the other hand we are told that it is impossible to please God *without* faith (Heb 11.6).

So it seems that at least those ministering healing should have faith. They need:

- Faith in the written word as absolute truth
- Faith in God alone and not in our own determination and will
- Faith in God's faithfulness and not in *our* faith
- Faith in God's wisdom and understanding of the situation
- Faith in God's power to heal *any* sickness (Lk 7.20-23)
- Faith in God's goodness, love and compassion (Jn 16.27)
- Faith in God's desire to heal in His way and His time

So when we pray for healing in Jesus’ name we have confidence in the power and wisdom and compassion and faithfulness and love of God, coupled with the knowledge that we are human and often lack wisdom and knowledge about the situation. Exceptions occur when we are given a ‘word of knowledge’ about the situation, or when we are blessed with a healing ministry – in such cases we can pray with absolute confidence that God will heal at a particular time or place.

5.2 The effect of a lack of faith and prayer

Jesus *expected* His disciples to ask God for the healing of people and He got frustrated when their faith fell short (Mat 17.14-21)(Mk 9.14-29). Apparently they lacked faith in certain situations and because of this no healing took place. Like the disciples we often lack confidence in praying for the sick and that cannot please Jesus.

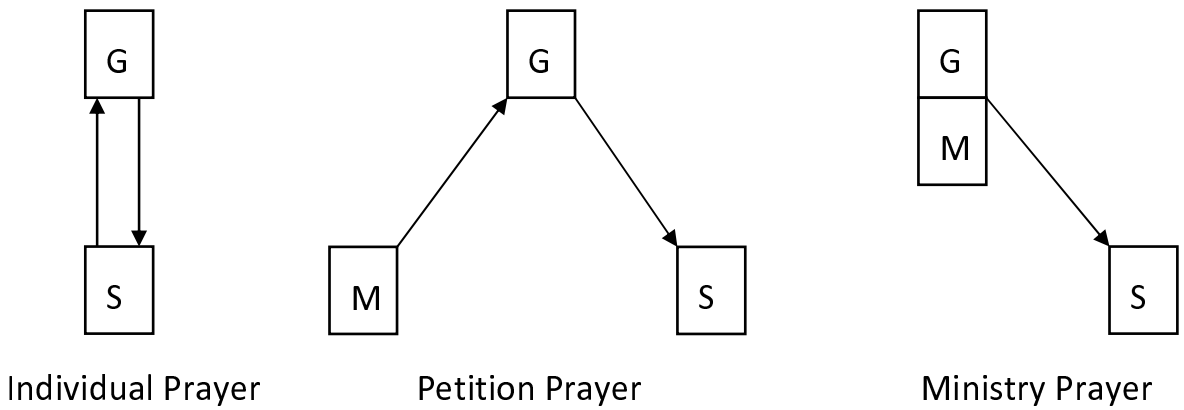
Also, it is not helpful to have unbelief around us even when we *have* the confidence to pray for healing. Even Jesus himself could not heal much when people around Him disbelieved (Mat 13.58)MK 6.1-6).

6. How do we pray for Healing?

6.1 Prayer models

It is helpful to have several prayer models in mind when praying for healing. Clearly, the sick person can pray to God themselves, but what about praying for the sick? As discussed in 4.2, most of us lack real understanding of the situation and are really *petitioning* God to heal the person. We cannot be sure how, when or where God will heal, but we do pray with confidence in the power and wisdom and compassion and faithfulness and love of God. So it is very reasonable to pray like this because we know that it is normally God’s will to heal. When people ask for prayer for healing it is the duty of the church to pray for them (Ja 5.14,15) even though such prayer may be more of a petition prayer than a *ministry* prayer.

A few are given a *healing ministry* through the gifts of healing (1 Cor 12.8-11) and the Holy Spirit gives them more understanding and discernment of the situation. It is as though they have the mind of Christ and know His will at that time. They are told that Jesus is going to heal there and then and can pray with confidence “Be healed in Jesus name”. Like Peter they can command in Jesus’ name “rise up and walk” (Acts 3.6). They confidently stand in the authority Jesus gave his disciples (Mat 10.1) and rebuke the sickness in His name.



So we must acknowledge where we are in praying for the sick. *If we do not have gifts of healing or a special revelation from God about the situation then our prayers are more like petition prayers.* Great damage can be done by pretending otherwise since this can lead to hurt and destruction of faith.

But even if we do not have a healing ministry, we are sometimes moved by the Spirit in anger against the sickness (as an enemy) and we are led to rebuke the sickness in Jesus' name. These are times when we stand upon the authority Christ gave His church over sickness (Lk 9.1, 10.19) (Mk 3.15).

6.2 Some guidelines for 'petition' prayers

- Be encouraged – your prayers can be very effective (Ja 5.16)
- Remember that healing is God's normal will, even in old age (Exod 23.25,26)(Ps 103.5)(Job 5.26).
- Sometimes there is an obstacle to healing, which needs dealing with first. If we feel this is the case, it may not be wise to tell God *what* to heal, since there may be another problem we have not seen.
- Remember that healing glorifies God, and God alone (Jn 9.3).
- Have faith in God alone, and not in 'methods' of healing. Turn our minds to the Father, or to Jesus.
- When Jesus healed the sick He also had *compassion* for them (Mat 9.35,36)(Mat 14.14)(Mk 1.41). He was concerned and cared for them. Likewise, our prayer must be 'heartfelt' – full of the compassion and love of Jesus for that person.
- Often it helps to be 'specific' in prayer. Don't just pray for a release of the pain, but petition God for complete healing.
- Always be 'positive' in prayer, not emphasising the present sickness, but see the person as whole and well, as God normally wants them to be.
- The time factor: during a petition prayer, ask God for healing but do not try to tell Him *how* or *when* to heal. Remember there is sometimes a time interval over which healing occurs ("process healing"). Sometimes the sick person needs time to work back to the source of the problem. Suffering can persist until, at some point, God is there to heal (deliberate delay – Jn 11.6) (many years - Jn 9.1-3) (12 years – Mat 9.20-22) (18 years - Lk 13.11). In the Bible, when the time was right, God healed instantaneously and was glorified.
- Although we may be praying a petition prayer (we do not have divine revelation or the gift of healing), we can still pray in *confidence*. We can be confident in the faithfulness of God. We can still have faith that God in some way will hear and answer our prayer. To end a petition prayer in "if it be Your will" acknowledges that we may well not know what God's will is in the situation, but it weakens our confidence in prayer. Underneath we start to believe that nothing really is going to happen! In contrast, Jesus said

"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them." (Mk 11.24).
