

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



B



C



D



E



F

- 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* (HOTS) 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. Essential Theology

Before we consider how we might pray for healing, we need to summarise Biblical teaching on healing. The main point is that sin and sickness are inextricably linked and *both were dealt with by Christ's death on the cross*:

"(The Lord) Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases." (Ps 103.3)

"Our grief's He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried ... He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities ... and by His scourging we are healed." (Isa 53.4,5)

His death freed man from the 'the curse of the law' (Gal 3.13). What does this law mean? It was a law which required a completely perfect life to impress God, and also a law which caused all creation to 'groan' (Rom 8.18-23). It was a law that resulted in a death penalty for sin, and also a fallen creation - which includes sickness. The victory of Christ's death over this curse (He took the curse for us) is underscored by two redemptive names of God:

JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU meaning "The Lord our Righteousness"

JEHOVAH-RAPHA meaning "The Lord our Physician"

Our Sin: The 'curse of the law' meant that our sin before God had a penalty – death. But by faith we accept the forgiveness of sin that Christ offers as He took that curse. We believe we are 'saved' from God's judgement of our sin and that we are reconciled to God through Christ (Isa 53.5)(Jn 3.18). So believers should consider themselves 'dead to sin' (Rom 6.11) in the sense that they no longer wilfully sin. The fact that they still fall into sin is acknowledged in the Bible, and there is an antidote (1 Jn 1.9).

Our Health: The 'curse of the law' also brought a fallen world (Gen 3.14-19), a world of accidents and disasters, a world of human imperfection, a world of sick people (Rom 8.18-23). But Christ's death on the cross also took our sickness, disease and pains. Like our sin, they were carried 'carried away' (Mat 8.17). But, like on-going sin, we often get sick! The good news is that, just like on-going sin has an antidote, there is an antidote to on-going health problems. This is the subject of our study on healing.

The Key Point: Why did Jesus link healing with the preaching of the gospel (Mat 4.23, 9.35, 10.7,8, Lk 9.2, 10.9)? Because both redemption from sin and healing were to be dealt with through His work on the cross! If we can't believe in the healing of our minds and bodies, how can we believe in the forgiveness of sin? Those who trust in Christ are offered 'wholeness' in body, soul and spirit; it is God's will that we are saved and it is normally God's will that we are healed.

5. But we still get sick, and some are not healed

We still get sick: Remember that we live in a fallen world which is under God's curse (Gen 3) and the whole creation, including ourselves, is groaning and imperfect (Rom 8.18-23). We are freed from sin - but we still sin, and we are freed from sickness – but we still get sick! There must be a reason for the sickness or disease. It may be our own fault e.g. lung cancer through smoking, or environmental and beyond our control (industrial pollution or nuclear radiation), or physical disablement from a car accident, or a birth defect, or 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 Section 7.3), 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.

Some are not healed: Despite the prayer of faith, the fact remains that some are *not* healed. Paul had to leave his friend Trophimus in Miletus because he was sick (2 Tim 4.20). Maybe Paul had prayed but clearly Trophimus hadn't been healed at that time. And Paul encouraged his young Pastor friend Timothy at Ephesus to 'use a little wine for his frequent ailments' (1 Tim 5.23).

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? No! 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 on-going physical 'tortures':

"The tortures occur. If they are unnecessary, then there is no God or a bad one. If there is a good God, then these tortures are necessary."

As in Paul's case, Lewis argues there must be a reason for an on-going 'torture' or sickness. Put another way, since it is normally God's will for us to be healed, *there must be a reason* why healing does not take place. Events in the Christian life don't follow laws of randomness and chance (Rom 8.28). Healing may 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.

6. What about Faith?

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. In practice, this faith may simply be evidenced in our *obedience* of praying for healing. 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 (visibly strong faith) that God will heal at a particular time or place (see Section 7).

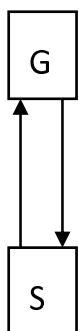
6.1 The effect of a lack of faith and prayer

Jesus *expected* His disciples to ask God for the healing of people, or to simply ‘heal the sick’ as instructed (Mat 10.8), 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.

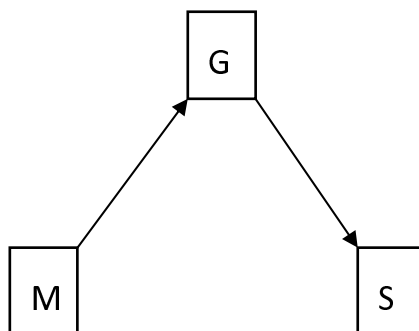
Also, it is not helpful to have unbelief around us even when we *have* the confidence to pray for healing. Even Jesus himself could not heal much when people around Him disbelieved (Mat 13.58)(Mk 6.1-6).

7. Healing Scenarios

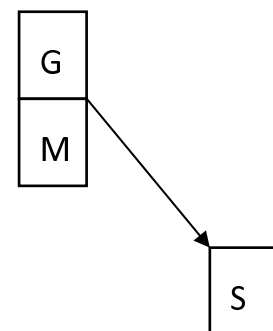
In scripture we can identify several scenarios in which healing is sought. Clearly, the sick person can pray to God themselves, or others can intercede in prayer for them, or they can receive prayer ministry:



Individual Prayer



Petition (intercessory) Prayer



Ministry (command) Prayer

7.1 Healing through Individual Prayer

If we are obviously sick in some way, we have several choices in prayer. We can ask God to heal us in the form of a 'petition' prayer. We can simply ask Him to take the problem away, expecting Him to do so (Mk 11.24), and thanking Him in anticipation (Phil 4.6).

If we do not receive healing, even after some time, we can plead, beg and implore Him like Paul did with his apparent physical problem. But then there were reasons why Paul was not healed and this might be our problem too. Are we right with God or with others? Is there is a problem that needs dealing with first?

The sickness could be from spiritual attack. If we feel the latter, we can stand on scripture and pray the statement of faith under Section 5. If we perceive such attack, we can command all such attacks to go in the name of Jesus.

Lastly, our problem might be deep rooted and need prayer ministry. It may need the spiritual insight and wisdom of others with a healing ministry, and the healing process may take some time. If we sense this, we should seek ministry.

7.2 Healing through Petition (Intercessory) Prayer

What about praying for the sick? Some claim that we should not *pray* for the sick, rather, we should *heal* the sick. This is not scriptural and there is a strong case for healing prayers. Jesus said that sometimes prayer is essential in order to deliver (heal) people from demonic spirits (Mk 9.29), Paul prayed for the father of Publius before laying his hands on him and healing him (Acts 28.8), the disciple John prayed that his friend Gaius would be in 'good health' (3 Jn 2), and James, a leader in the Jerusalem church, instructed the church elders to pray for the sick. But it helps if the sick person first *asks* for prayer. Jesus usually healed only when He was *asked* to heal. Likewise, a church should respond when asked:

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick ..." (Ja 5.14,15).

But how do they pray? Often those called to pray like this have no real understanding of the medical situation. And usually such prayer will not be 'healing ministry' (which normally involves spiritual gifts and which could be deep and lengthy). In such cases we are really *petitioning* God (pleading with Him) to heal the person, whatever that problem might be. We cannot be sure how, when or where God will heal, or even if He will heal, but we do pray with confidence in the power, wisdom, compassion, 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.

Other important points: firstly, the prayer is offered *in faith* by the elders (as discussed, the sick person does not need faith). It seems God often waits for such prayers of faith before healing takes place. Secondly, these petition prayers may be accompanied with the anointing of oil, depending upon how the Spirit leads (see also Mk 6.13). In Jesus' time oil was a rudimentary medicine (Lk 10.34), but many believe that oil that has been blessed also brings a spiritual dimension – bringing the presence of God closer to the sick person. The blessing of any medicines being taken by the person can also mitigate side effects of medicine.

Lastly, sometimes there is an obstacle to healing which needs dealing with first. There may be another problem we have not seen. If we feel this is the case, it may not be wise to tell God *what* to heal, or even to proceed. We might suggest that the person needs some form of 'healing ministry'.

Guidelines for ‘petition’ prayers

- 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.
- 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).
- It helps to be ‘specific’ in prayer. Don’t just pray for a release of the pain. If we know there is a whiplash injury from a car accident, then pray for healing of the neck! But be aware that God may heal a completely different complaint!
- 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 the love of Jesus for that person.
- Always be ‘positive’ in prayer, not emphasising the 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).

7.3 Healing through Ministry and Command

Apart from the raising of Lazarus from the dead, there is no instance in the gospels where Jesus prays directly for the healing of the sick. Rather, He acted firmly with authority and power towards sickness. He commanded and healing happened, totally and quickly. Does this apply today?

Consider the following common scenario:

Someone asks the church (church in the broadest sense) for prayer for healing. They have an obvious medical problem, such as loss of eyesight, loss of hearing, severe back pain, a spreading skin rash, or a lump. How does the church respond?

Many would engage in petition or intercessory prayer. It is the ‘safest’ and most common response, since to act as Jesus did might not work! The problem might not go away. But others might step out in faith and attempt to deal with the situation firmly, in Jesus’ name, basing their actions on the authority and power Jesus gave His church. This may or may not be the right approach. Great damage can result if it is not appropriate at this time.

Spirit-filled Ministry: This is where we must recognise the importance of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12.4-11). They are essential when ‘ministering’ over sickness in the way Jesus did. Such ministry may involve the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, discernment, faith and healing. The gifts may be ‘transient’ - for the immediate situation (1 Cor 12.11) - or someone may be present with a healing ministry, for example. These gifts may give a special revelation from God about the situation and reveal hidden problems that need dealing with before healing can take place. They may give instruction as to how to pray and what to pray for. This type of healing ministry will certainly involve people who are ‘filled with the Spirit’ (Eph 5.18, Acts 6.3, 7.55, 11.24, 13.52), prayerful people who are aware of an on-going, sustained influence of the Spirit.

So before embarking upon this assertive type of healing ministry we must ask ourselves if Spirit-filled people with gifts like these are present. Do we discern the presence of the Spirit? Are we waiting for Him and listening to Him? If not we should perhaps refrain from declaring healing to avoid harming the sick (imposing guilt upon them) and harming the faith of those praying. But if we discern that such gifts are present and that the Spirit is moving, then the church can humbly embark upon such ministry. It will be as though they have the mind of Christ and know His will at that time. They may be assured by the Spirit 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 can confidently stand on the authority and power Jesus gave his disciples and heal the sick* (Mat 10.1, Mk 3.15, Lk 9.1, 10.19).

But even if those praying are not operating in this way, 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 (Lk 4.39). Again, these are times when we stand upon the authority Christ gave His church over sickness.

So we must acknowledge where we are in praying for the sick. *If we are not operating in the spiritual gifts Christ gives His church, if the gifts are not present amongst us at that time, if we do not perceive the Spirit moving or receive a special revelation from God about the situation, then our prayers are more like petition prayers.* Great damage can be done by pretending otherwise. We should be aware of our limitations at any point in time!
