

Africa team 2012

Teaching session 3

How healing works

Having dealt with the “why”, now let’s look together at the “how.”

As we begin, we need to hold on to one basic truth. God did not design us to be sick. How can he claim to be a loving God if he did that. So sickness is outside the divinely created order of things. Sickness came in when sin came in.

Jesus dealt with our sicknesses at Calvary - breaking sin and do breaking sickness.

When we pray for healing, we are praying for the restoration of God’s divinely created order.

1. Healing is done through human involvement.

Here are 2 stories of Jesus. In the first, he touched the man, but there is no mention of touch in the second story.

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

“ Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.” (Mark 1: 40-42)

“That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.³³ The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.” (Mark 1: 32-34)

We must not insist on any particular “method”, but generally we adopt the laying on of hands for healing. This makes it clear that something specific is

happening, and allows the one praying and the one who is sick to establish a relationship in which God can act.

There is also an authority's command. For the sick man it was "Be clean!"

2. Jesus healed everyone who came to Him for healing.

* It was His will and His desire to heal everyone who came for healing, because He had compassion on them. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), and He still has compassion on us and He still heals by the laying-on of hands. The only difference is that now He lives in us and He uses our hands for healing the sick.

* All our concepts of healing flow from the healing ministry of Jesus, and his promise that we would do the same and more!

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12)

** We really need to take hold of this, because otherwise we are going to be disappointed. Jesus heals - and he heals everyone. So what about those who don't appear to be healed?

1. We don't know that they haven't been healed - that is God's business. Nor do we know what he has healed them from. It might not be the thing they came to us for.

2. God may be healing, but the manifestation of that healing is still to come.

3. Jesus often stressed that faith is essential in healing.

"Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, "Don't be afraid; just believe." (Mark 5:36)

* There has to be a grain of faith in the person who wants healing. It appears that without it, little can be done:-

“And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.” (Matt 13:58)

To underline this, many times Jesus told people that their faith had healed them.

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." (Mark 5:34)

Sometimes the faith is in the one healed – **“Daughter your faith has saved you.”** “Faith” in the New Testament means “faith in someone or something.” This woman had faith in Jesus, and that was enough to allow the healing to happen.

Sometimes the faith is in others:- **“A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”** (Mark 2:1-5)

How much faith needs to be involved? Jesus fed 5000 with a few loaves and a few fish. (Mark 6:30-44) We take the tiny grain of faith we have, and put it into

4. Many times the healings did not happen until the person mixed action with his or her faith.

Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. (Matt 12:13)

* The man with the shrivelled hand had to stretch out his hand before it was healed (Matthew 12:9-13). Another man had to go and wash some mud off of his face before his eyesight was restored (John 9:1-7). Naaman had to dip in the river seven times.

"Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." (2 Kings 5:120)

* These people put their faith into action, and then they were healed.

This is not as simple as it looks. I often encourage people to go away believing for their healing. Sometimes I ask them to exercise the damaged arm or leg, so we can see them take their healing. But I do not find this easy.

I do encourage people to come back to the church and testify to what God has done for them. Sometimes they do.

5. In a number of cases, people were healed by having demons cast out of them.

* Sometimes simply casting out a demon brings about the physical healing, just like the woman in Luke 13:10-13 who straightened up for the first time in 18 years after Jesus cast a spirit out of her.

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

* Other times the physical healing will not happen until a spirit is cast out, and then the body can be commanded to be healed.

When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked. A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

“O unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.” So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered. “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” “If you can't?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He's dead.”

²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn't we drive it out?” He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.” (Mark 9:14-29)

* This is a very interesting healing story. Let's note the following:-

The demon had to be cast out before the healing could take place.(*epitimaō* is the Greek word, and the same one Jesus uses in Mark 4:39. It means “rebuke.” That is followed by the Greek word *exerchomai* which means “to come out.”)

Faith had to be exercised by someone. If the boy could not express faith, then it became the responsibility of the father.

Prayer is essential in healing, as in all ministry. The healing work is the work of the Spirit through us, and that is a divine intervention. In other words Father does the healing! But prayer prepares our hearts, and prepares the ground for the Spirit to work. Why is this so important? It prevents us becoming mere automatons - all we have to do is lay on hands, and the “magic” will happen. That's how so called “faith healers” work. Christian healing is part of the Kingdom work, exercised from the base of the Christian family, acting in an atmosphere of prayer, faith and belief. In the healing ministry we are all in it together - us, those needing healing and the Spirit.

Many people, especially those from the West find this a difficult area. It is covered in detail in a later session.

6. When laying hands on people, Jesus sometimes placed His hands as close to the physical affliction as possible.

* He put His fingers in deaf people's ears, and he touched His finger to mute people's tongues:

Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.

After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means, "Be opened!") At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. (*Mark 7:31-35*)

* The disciples followed the same pattern:-

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer— at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. (*Acts 3:1-9*)

*** This principle holds true today as well.** When we minister healing, it is often best to place our hands as close to the problem area as possible (without being insensitive to a person's dignity) so that the power of the Holy Spirit can be applied directly to the affliction. It's good to have male and female involved in healing, to overcome possible dignity issues!

7. Notice that not everybody was instantly healed by Jesus.

* This is a problem area in healing. Those exercising the healing are sometimes held back by this issue, while some, perhaps many, disregard the healing ministry because of it. Even as we examine the ministry of Jesus, let's get some things clear in our minds:-

1. Jesus died to set us free from illness. (Isa 53:4)

2. Over 50% of the first ten chapters of Mark's Gospel focus on healing, so it had a very high priority in the mind of Jesus and his followers.

3. He offers this gift to us. If it were defective, we would not have it.

* Not all of the healings of Jesus were immediate:- The Ten with a serious skin condition received their healing as they were on their way to see the Priests in obedience to Jesus' command (Luke 17:11-14). On another occasion, Jesus laid hands on a person a second time before the healing was complete. (Mark 8:22-25). This is true today as well. If someone is not instantly healed when we lay hands on them, then we need to be persistent. If their healing never manifests itself while we are laying hands, then we need to have faith that the power of the Holy Spirit has gone into them and that within a day or two their healing will manifest itself.

* Many people have argued with me on this matter, but I'm not interested in their debate. Having some lay hands on for healing of sickness is so much more positive than refusing the ministry for some semantic reason. Let's heal, and leave the consequences to the Lord!

8. Jesus did not always heal everyone around Him, nor did He go out in search of people to heal.

* Jesus healed all those who came to Him or those whom God placed in His path. For example, Jesus healed a lame man at the pool of Bethesda, but apparently he did not heal any of the great number of disabled people who were also there (John 5:2-9). Another man, crippled from birth, was brought to the temple gate every day to beg, and he was healed by Peter and John (Acts 3:2-8). Jesus probably passed by this man many times as he went in and out of the temple gate, yet Jesus never healed him. There are a number of passages which say that Jesus healed all the sick, but these were people who came to him or who were brought to him, these were not people whom Jesus sought out to heal.

* Is this a negative comment? Not at all - once people know that the power of the Lord is present to heal the sick, they will seek Jesus out, or in this current dispensation, they will seek us out. Once they are in front of us, we can get on with the job:- **“One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.”** (Luke 5:17)

We must also remember the story of the rich young man:-

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.’”

“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. (Mark 10:17-22)

The point of this story for us is in verse 22b! I know there isn't one! But if there was it would say "Jesus let him go, did not follow him, or plead with him, h=give him a book, a DVD or an address!" Jesus just let the man go. Sometimes we are too pushy. If people do not want to be healed, then we cannot force healing on them. They remain sick, which is very sad but their right.

9. Questions

*Occasionally we are told that Jesus asked people some questions to determine the type of healing that they needed and to determine if the healing was complete after He laid hands on them.

"Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" (Mark 9:21)

"They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village.(Mark 8:22-26)

* When we heal, it is necessary to ask questions - especially before we pray. But Jesus also asked questions as he went along. We sometimes hesitate to do this, thinking that perhaps we will hinder the flow of the Spirit. But sometimes we need to know what is happening.

10. Much prayer. (Again!)

The disciples were unable to cast a particular demon out of a little boy, and they asked Jesus why:-

“After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn't we drive it out?” He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.” (Mark 9:28-29)

I don't think Jesus is telling us that the work of the spirit is limited by our lack of prayer. God can do anything. But God has chosen to work through his people, and as a consequence prayer is needed - to prepare us, to break down the barriers that hinder healing and to open the heart of the people being prayer for.

11. No right way.

Neither Jesus nor the disciples followed a strict formula when doing healing or deliverance. They occasionally did unusual things. Look at the miracle in John 9, where Jesus spit and made some mud and put it on the man's eyes. (John 9:1-7). God is sovereign, and when we are ministering healing or deliverance we must always be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

12. By faith

Since healing only operates by faith, if people are present who are full of doubt and unbelief then they can actually prevent the healing from happening. It is sometimes best to take the sick person out of an atmosphere of doubt and unbelief so that he or she can be healed.

Even Jesus and the apostles did this on several occasions (see Mark 5:38-42, 7:32-35, 8:22-25, and Acts 9:36-40, for example).

13. Believing and proclaiming

In the book of Acts, notice that the apostles declared that people were healed in the Name of Jesus.

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.” (Acts 4: 8-11)

Those who are healed need to testify to their healing, and the Church needs to speak and confirm it. This enfolds the whole healing process into the Church, and makes it a testimony to Jesus, not to the ones who exercised the healing ministry.