DIVINE HEALING
LIFE, DEATH, ILLNESS & HEALING

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I dedicate this book to my mother whose miraculous healing gave me confidence that God is a Healer now as He has always been. Such confidence helped me trust and experience God’s supernatural healing for others and for myself.
Good health and a long life is the hope of virtually everyone. Paul quotes from the fourth commandment (Ex. 20:12; Dt. 5:16) and makes a general application of this promise to Israel in praying for the Christians at the region of Ephesus. He prays:

“. . . that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”
(Eph. 6:3)

The psalmist spoke of bearing fruit in old age:

“They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green . . .” (Ps. 92:14).

Eliphaz, Job’s friend assured Job with the words:

“You will come to the grave in full vigor, like sheaves gathered in season” (Job 5:26).

That is the assurance we all want. Death at the end of a long and full life.

John’s prayer for his friend Gaius shows the close relation between the state of the soul and the body. John prays that Gaius

“. . . may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well” (3 Jn. 2).

Whereas a cloud of sin in our heart will leave a shadow upon the brain, the nervous system and negatively affect the whole physical body, a clear, calm and confident spirit will bring vigor to our physical wellbeing.

It is no wonder then that man’s quest for healing and health is as old as man himself. Billions of dollars are spent each year in United States alone on health.

Thirty-five years ago many, including Christians, were skeptical of supernatural healing. Many Christians took a naturalistic view of healing with the belief that with the advances in science, especially medical science, supernatural healing simply was not necessary any more. This “God helps those who help themselves” attitude limits the present Christian ministry of healing to whatever the medical profession can achieve. And healing by prayer then was meant for a more primitive age when reality was not understood with any sophistication and ignorant people were open to the powers of suggestion.
Even though miracles, usually, healing miracles, is still used by the Roman Catholic Church as a test for the canonization of saints, the average Roman Catholic viewed such miraculous manifestations as belonging to a select group of super-saints. While there was still a belief in the miraculous, what was difficult to believe was that healing was available to the laity and could be an ordinary, common activity in the Christian life.

Thus little had been written on the subject of healing. This has completely changed. Today there are numerous works on the issue. While many of these are sensational and outlandish, there are also very solid treatments on the subject. Both the Roman Catholic and Protestant Church have embraced healing as a reality. Even people who have little, if any, religious affiliation believe in the power of prayer and healing. The reasons for this are:

- As we have come into the latter part of the 20th and now 21st century, we recognize that there are questions of meaning and purpose to which science just doesn’t have very good answers.

- People have become very dissatisfied with being treated like bodies, just physical bodies.

- Older adults in America today are a very religious population.1

According to the November 10, 2003 issue of Newsweek in an article entitled “Faith & Healing” the consensus is clear in the community at large and in the medical community that religion can improve health. Even though there is much debate in medical journals and medical schools, more Americans ask for doctors’ prayers:

- 84% of Americans think that praying for the sick improves their chances of recovery.

- 28% think religion and medicine should be separate.

- 70% say they pray often for the health of a family member.

- 52% say they pray for world peace.

- 27% say they pray for financial or career success.2

More surprising is the acceptance of the medical and scientific communities of healing. More than half of the medical schools in the country now offer courses in “Spirituality and Medicine” which teaches students how to talk to patients about faith and illness.3 This surging interest in the role of religion in health and healing in the medical community is due to several reasons. One is that patients have stubbornly insisted on being treated as persons, not just bodies, and thus want to be talked to. As Dr. Jeffrey Bishop, an M.D. and an Episcopal priest who teaches a class on “Spirituality & Medicine” at the University of Texas put it, “Patients really do want
their physicians to connect with them on a deeper level than just their cholesterol.”4 Another reason is that the medical community has discovered the great benefit that healthy spirituality can bring to physical health.

Numerous studies have verified this as people who attend church regularly have shown to enjoy better health. They

● Have lower blood pressure
● Have lower cancer rates
● Are less likely to be addicted to alcohol or drugs
● Are more likely to survive major surgery
● Are less likely to experience depression
● Are less likely to commit suicide
● Are better able to cope with chronic disease
● Live longer5

Studies also show that meditation helps reduce stress-related diseases and that loving support groups contribute to people living longer, happier and more productive lives.

In the medical establishment, therefore, scientists are seeking the most ethical, effective ways to combine patients’ spiritual and religious beliefs with high-tech treatment.6

Faith healers are a dime a dozen. Many spectacular claims have been made that simply have not passed the test of authenticity. But for the numerous claims that are not credible, there are numerous other claims that are. To disparage supernatural healing because of fake healers and spurious healings makes no more sense than to discard all money because there is counterfeit money.

Paul exhorted us to “Test all things!” Healing is part of “all things.”

There is nothing like personal experience to make a believer out of us: “Go back and tell John [the Baptist] what you have seen and heard: the blind see again, the lame walk . . . and happy is the man who does not lose faith in Me” (Lk. 7:22-23). The poor people followed Jesus because they saw what happened while the religious leaders were threatened and tried to understand what Jesus’ healing meant.
After the healing of the cripple at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, the high priests, rulers, elders and scribes arrested Peter and John:

“They were astonished at the assurance shown by Peter and John, considering they were uneducated laymen; and they recognized them as associates of Jesus; but when they saw the man who had been cured standing by their side, they could find no answer. So they ordered them to stand outside while the Sanhedrin had a private discussion. ‘What are we going to do with these men?’ they asked.

‘It is obvious to everybody in Jerusalem that a miracle has been worked through them in public, and we cannot deny it. But to stop the whole thing spreading any further among the people, let us caution them never to speak to anyone in this name again’” (Acts 4:13-17).

The occasion for the first persecution of the early church was not only the apostle’s preaching of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, but also the power of healing in the name of Jesus.

Although these leaders were convinced that the healing was real, they decided to forbid it because it would undermine their authority. This was especially true since extraordinary healings were done by people who were “uneducated laymen.”

Uneducated laymen as well as educated laymen have been used of God to bring healing to thousands ever since. Dr. Ramsey MacMullen, professor of classics at Yale University, in his book Christianizing the Roman Empire, A.D. 100-400 writes as an historian to show that the primary reason for the explosive growth of Christianity in the first three centuries was because pagans were impressed by God’s power as they witnessed Christians healing the sick and casting out evil spirits.7 Chapter 2 of this book goes into great detail to show that healing did not stop shortly after the death of the last apostle.

In his early writings St. Augustine claimed that healing had ceased with the Early Church and was no longer necessary. Then in his own diocese nearly seventy attested miracles took place in two years’ time. This led St. Augustine to write his book, Retractions, written in A. D. 427, three years before he died, in which he took back what he had said in his early writings (De Vera Religione) concerning the age of miracles being past and instead described cures he had witnessed. These miracles provided a dramatic rebuke to his faulty theology and limited experience.

The title of the book is important. It emphasizes that healing is primarily the result of God’s power and sovereign will, not man’s power and faith. The psalmist recognized the true Source of all blessings:

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness” (Ps. 115:1).
Although faith plays a very crucial role in healing, God’s will is the bottom line. “Divine” healing puts the stress where it ought to be. “Faith” healing too often makes man—either the one being healed or the healer—the center of attraction. As a result healing is reduced from a divine process to a spectacular event that focuses attention on man—his faith and power.

It is no wonder then that so many “faith healers” have gone astray. Any time we promote ourselves in the name of Christ we are setting ourselves up for disaster. And the history of the healing movement is littered with men and women who have been disgraced in the process.

Why another book on the subject? This book is a testimony to my witnessing the amazing healing of my mother and my own healing on two occasions. Furthermore, I have ministered in a denomination (The Christian and Missionary Alliance) whose founder, A. B. Simpson, taught that Jesus can be trusted as our Healer, as well as our Savior, Sanctifier and Coming King. As a pastor for almost forty years, I have regularly prayed for healing which has included healing for the body.

Therefore this is written with a strong conviction that God is a Healer, not only of souls, but also of psyches and bodies. The book is thus an attempt to provide a theological foundation, based on historical and scientific understanding, for a serious ministry of healing today.

This book is soaked in Scripture. This is vital since miraculous divine healing has been such a controversial subject. Only in the light of God’s authoritative Word can we find balance to a subject that entices us toward extremes. Some people have no belief in the supernatural, at least since apostolic times, while others give skeptical intellectual assent which believes God can but probably won’t. Still others take a “name-it-claim-it” position which holds that if a person is not healed it is his fault—he lacked faith.

In spite of the numerous doctors, nurses, hospitals, medicines, etc. that serve the healing profession, millions continue to suffer from illnesses. Thus the sick need healing, just as much as they did in Christ’s day. Those needs and desires are basic to our humanity.

It is crucial that we recapture Jesus’ message to a suffering world!

There is no reason why a healing ministry should not be a normal part of our Christian lives and of the life of the church.
INTRODUCTION
Does God heal today as He did in Old and New Testament times?

Does life in the Spirit always guarantee good health?

Should medical care be the first line of defense or a last resort for Christians?

How do we explain why God heals some people and not others?

What is the role of faith in divine healing?

What is the relationship of sin and sickness to divine healing?

Such questions have confronted most of us since we have become Christians. And simple answers have often been given by well-meaning but unthinking believers, and even practitioners, of divine healing. “Not enough faith,” “sin in your life,” etc. have been formulas quickly tossed out to those who had not experienced healing. Yet most of us have intuitively recognized such formulas as being inappropriate, inadequate and simplistic. Too many of us have witnessed people whose faith was not impressive being healed while those who took their spirituality more seriously continued in their illness. Trite explanations have sent many people away confused and disappointed. The accusations of absence of faith or presence of sin as pat reasons for chronic illness or physical limitation only lay heavier burdens on already overburdened people. It is nothing short of cruelty. It is already difficult to cling to God’s love when healing does not take place.

Some of us have suffered from our own lack of discernment. We have sincerely believed that God has shown us that He was going to do a certain thing, whether in the area of healing or some other area, only to have become disappointed and even disillusioned when that particular revelation did not occur.

Discerning God’s voice and revelation is not always easy. In fact, at times it is extremely difficult. The prophets often did not understand the full implication of what they were prophesying. On many occasions they only caught a glimpse of the full ramification of what God was saying. As history unfolds it has shown the deeper and fuller meaning of that revelation.

It should not surprise us, therefore, if we have misconstrued what we believed to be God’s promises or revelation. While at times we may have missed understanding God’s ways altogether, at other times we may have missed part of the whole picture of what God was trying to communicate to us. In either case, we should not throw up our hands and give up on God, ourselves, and thus our relationship with God. After all, as Paul pointed out,

“Now [we] know in part . . .” (1 Cor. 13:9,12) and “now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror” (v. 12).
But in the end, when Christ returns,

“. . . the imperfect will disappear” (1 Cor. 13:10) and “[we] shall know fully, even as [we] are fully known” (v. 12).

Until that day we must be patient, even with our own misconceptions.

Deciding why people are healed or not impinges on God’s right to be Lord and preempts His authority to decide when and how to manifest His power. It is easy to make God the servant of our needs and not the Master of our lives.

Few subjects, then, are as controversial in the Christian world as healing! There are those who relegate it to the past, to Old and New Testament times. Others make it the litmus test of spirituality so that anyone who does not believe it is always God’s will to heal lacks faith. Christians today find themselves somewhere between the two extreme positions.

What the Bible teaches about healing is not so clear. This is why so many deeply spiritual people take various positions on the subject. Yet I do believe there is a position that provides balance to this whole discussion.

Ultimately, the issue before us, if only theoretical, will make little difference in our lives. This subject of healing has touched my family in astounding ways. When I was seven years old every medical expert predicted that my mother only had two to three months to live. I witnessed supernatural healing in my mother who was miraculously touched by God through an evangelist. She lived another twenty-two years. I experienced God’s miraculous touch personally on two occasions when I was in my thirties. As I have prayed with elders and others through the years I have seen many experience God’s miracle of divine healing.

I know the consequences of what we believe or do not believe. I also know that many times people have prayed for my healing or others when God did not respond in miracle healing power.

So what do we do with that? Do we demythologize our healing experiences to powers of suggestions, or do we live with the tension that seems so contradictory to our way of thinking, the tension that God heals in unpredictable times and ways and does not heal when most expected?

Does God always heal? Does He heal only when we are right with Him? Is healing unpredictable?

We must skirt the pitfalls of simplistic explanations for the absence of healing even while we believe God’s power and willingness to heal.
Is it possible that God is no less good when He does not heal than when He does? Can it be that His compassion sometimes shows itself in the working of miracles and other times in the withholding of miracles? Is it reasonable that it is God’s task to decide what is best and ours is to accept that decision with love and faithfulness? Is it possible that the God of miracles is also the God of medicine working in different ways, at different speeds, and for different purposes? Is it conceivable that divine goodness can work both through suffering that is patiently endured and through healing joyfully received and celebrated?

God’s providence has shown itself at least as frequently in permitting the persecution of His people, along with others, to natural disasters—earthquakes, fires, floods, plagues, droughts—as in miraculously restoring them to health.

Could it be that we must allow mystery in our lives? This does not mean that we back away from the mysterious. We are to study the complex and to scrutinize the puzzling as we face the tough questions put to us by the Scriptures, the church and the contemporary world. It should not surprise us that we must give room to mystery since we all claim to believe that God’s thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways (Isa. 53:8-9). Yet we also affirm that God accomplishes His purpose (vv. 10-11).

There is the danger that we miss the full range of the grace and power of God by catering to an immature expectation that the power of God’s kingdom manifests itself primarily in temporary, though miraculous, relief of occasional sickness and pain. More importantly, God’s grace enables us to bear the cross and accept the burdens of suffering for the sake of doing God’s will in a world that hungers for forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, peace, the feeding of the hungry and the relief of the oppressed.

While it would be presumptuous to think we can dissect the subject of healing and come to a complete comprehension and understanding of it, we can find some pointers that help us to better understand this complex and difficult subject.

But most of all, may this study encourage us to look to Jesus, our Savior and Healer, who is available to meet us at the deepest needs of our lives and equip us to minister healing to a broken world.
1. PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF HEALING
“I am Yahweh (Jehovah)-rapha, The Lord who heals.”

--Exodus 15:26
My Mother’s Healing

My mother had been ill for many years and the medical experts, virtually all of whom my parents had consulted with, said there was no cure but that my mother had only two to three months to live. We had a nanny who would come and do chores during the day since my mother was bed-ridden most of the time.

I will never forget the day we took a two hour ride to see an evangelist who was known for his healing ministry, but more important, for his deep spirituality. In fact, this man of God had stayed in our home for the week he ministered in our church (a Covenant Church, which belonged to the Covenant denomination, a Swedish denomination which also exists in United States and Canada) in Sweden. Although I had not experienced salvation at this age, I was very aware of the godliness of this man. I could sense it. To this day I do not understand why he did not pray for my mother while he stayed with us evidently because my parents did not ask him which I also do not understand. Therefore a week after this evangelist had stayed with us my father got my mother out of bed, a place she had spent several years in during my early childhood. The trip was daunting because my mother was in a lot of pain and the bumpy road to his place made it that more difficult. Although she was a woman who had withstood tremendous amounts of pain already, without complaint, I remember her agonizing, quiet tears of pain throughout the trip. As her young son, I could feel some of it vicariously. My older sister and brother and I were left at a beautiful lake to go swimming while my father and mother went to see this evangelist.

You can imagine our surprise when we saw them return to pick us up with smiles on their faces! God had miraculously intervened in my mother’s life. She felt like a new person. No agonizing tears on the way back, though the pain lessened gradually.

My mother lived twenty-two years beyond the doctors’ expert predictions. She worked 70 hour weeks while my parents owned a restaurant in Hollywood, California.

Yet during this time the doctors found a tumor on her lungs. She and my father attended healing services at various places but God did not see fit to heal her supernaturally. She finally decided to go home to Sweden and have a very serious lung operation. Thanks to God and the medical profession, she lived another 10 years after this operation.

Shortly after I became pastor at my first church in Manhattan Beach, California, I came down with a very bad case of mononucleosis. For several months I felt caught in physical limbo--too sick to stay up and too healthy to stay in bed. Doctors tried various medications that made the problem worse. I had been praying to God to heal me during this time. At one point I got the impression in my mind that God was telling me that He was going to heal me miraculously. I told the elders of the church and asked them to meet with me on a Sunday morning before the service. I felt led to ask Richard, who was a medical technician to bring his vials because I wanted him to draw my blood. Just before the elders prayed for my healing they drew blood. Right after they prayed for my healing, about ten minutes, Richard drew blood again. I went into the pulpit, not
feeling any different. Yet I had the assurance that God was healing me. The following morning, when I got up early to drive to San Diego (two hours away) for ordination exams, I felt like a new person. I had been completely restored. A couple of days later, while in San Diego, I called Richard to get the results of the test. He said that the blood that was tested before the elders’ prayer was filled with mononucleosis whereas the blood drawn after the prayer “did not have one trace of mononucleosis,” as Richard put it.

My Own Healing

A couple of years later I was having a lot of back problems. The interesting thing is that it always happened on Sunday morning before I was going to preach. For many months I didn’t know whether I would be able to get out of the chair to step up to the pulpit to preach. But somehow, by the grace of God, I managed to do it. No one suspected this was going on since I had not shared it with anyone. But I had been asking God to heal me. The timing of the back problem (Sunday morning) made me convinced this was more than mere physical; it was spiritual—it was spiritual warfare. Again, at a certain point as I was praying, I became convinced that God was telling me that He was going to heal me. In fact, I believe He was saying to me to have a friend, Jerry, pray for my healing. I felt some reluctance, and even resistance, to this idea because Jerry and I disagreed on so many things, especially education and theology. This was a little like God telling Naaman to dip seven times in the river Jordan. But like Naaman, I eventually agreed, though I found it humbling. When Jerry put his hand on my back I was instantly healed. Free to get up and move around like before.

It was a few years later that I had a boil on my neck. Day by day it was getting bigger. I prayed for healing. But God did not see fit to heal me. Eventually I went to my doctor and he removed it. I was free from this menacing boil, but thanks to the medical profession as well as to God.

Many of us can testify that God heals miraculously, but that He also heals through the use of medicine, and in some cases, our own bodies heal through diet and rest, etc.

Colby Olson’s Healing

Colby Olson shares the following story which testifies to God’s power to heal mental illness.

“When I was eight years old I was sexually abused by a foster child. It happened on a few different occasions. He told me that if I told anyone about what he had done I would be killed. Obviously I was very upset but did not tell anyone.

Although I carried the baggage of my experience with Clifton for many years, it was not until my sophomore year in high school when this issue began to haunt me again. Toward the end of the baseball season of my sophomore year I realized something bizarre was happening to me. I was not sleeping much, if at all. I could
not stop my mind from thinking multiple thoughts at the same time and was unable to do my homework. I would run for hours after baseball practice and do flips in the middle of practice even though I had never learned how to do that. Hallucinations became frequent. My life was in shambles. It all went back to my experience when I was eight.

I was hospitalized for over three and a half weeks. The doctors discovered I had a bipolar disorder. My symptoms were mild depressions and the highest stages of mania.

When I tried out for soccer I discovered I had no coordination. I could no longer do the things that came natural the previous season and was cut from the soccer team.

I told my doctor what had happened and he immediately took me completely off Lithium and provided no substitute in its place.

Three weeks before my high school graduation my great-grandmother died and one week later my grandmother died and once again I showed signs of bipolar disorder. I felt similar to how I had felt the last time. I had relapsed and was hospitalized once again for two weeks. This time they placed me on Depakote.

Christ has healed me of all of the terrible things that I have gone through. He has freed me from the bondage of bipolar disorder by healing my mind. I have been free of the disorder now for a couple of years. For two years I wrestled with whether I was truly healed or not because family members constantly argued similar to what doctors’ told me, ‘People do not get healed of bipolar without medication.’ In most cases this statement may be completely true. I feel so blessed to have been healed and continue to experience God’s healing as I understand that sometimes God does not choose to heal people of this disorder. Many people with bipolar disorder, whom I know God loves just as much as me, have not and may not ever be completely healed.

I was on medication for seven years before my miraculous healing. Someone may ask how I know I am healed? I know because it has been clearly communicated to me by God. No, I am not having an episode though many people will think this is the case. The doctors have been amazed at my progress and some have been shocked that I no longer show signs of bipolar disorder. I have met with numerous doctors and none of them are able to determine how someone with stage two bipolar could possibly be healed. Logically and medically it makes no sense. May God use my healing for His glory!
He is healing me daily and has set me free from my past sins and from my bipolar illness. Praise Him always!"

Albert Simpson’s Healing

At the close of the 19th century, Albert B. Simpson, had learned of the renewal of healing taking place in Europe, Great Britain and the United States. Although at first he was cautious about accepting such a phenomenon, he came to accept Jesus Christ as the Healer after many difficult years. He founded the Christian and Missionary Alliance and brought a renewed emphasis to the doctrine of healing.1 His preaching and writing ministry has had worldwide impact. His emphasis on the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit and divine healing sparked the Pentecostal movement. The founders of the Assembly of God denomination were inspired and instructed by Simpson. Because they wanted greater emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit, especially the gifts of tongues, healings and miracles, in 1906 they left the newly formed Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Simpson’s pilgrimage began with his constant battle with sickness. Even though he had once witnessed the healing of a paralyzed man in his early days as a pastor, which sparked interest in personal healing, his faith was quickly squelched by a leading parishioner in his congregation who seriously questioned the authenticity of the healing. It took many years later for him to be open to personal healing.2

Simpson used medicine profusely and felt insecure when he did not have some with him wherever he traveled. He claims that there were hundreds of times in his early ministry that he felt like he would “drop into an open grave.”3

While pastoring in Louisville, Kentucky and struggling with poor health, he witnessed divine healing of a young paralytic in his congregation and thought to himself, “If God could heal this man’s paralysis, then he could perhaps heal me!”4 Simpson says of this incident:

“The impression produced by this incident never left my heart. Soon afterwards I attempted to take the Lord as my Healer, and for a while, as long as I trusted Him, He sustained me wonderfully.”5

This healing was a life-changing experience for him and as a result divine healing came to play a crucial role, not only in his personal life, but also in his preaching ministry.6

For Simpson healing was not merely an empty theory. He accepted Christ as Healer and made a definite covenant with God to trust Him for healing. This led him to covenant with God the following “three great and eternal pledges”:

1. I shall solemnly accept this truth as part of Thy Word and of the Gospel of Christ, and . . . I shall never question it until I meet Thee there.
2. I take the Lord Jesus as my physical life, for all the needs of my body until all my life-work is done . . . I shall never doubt that He does become my life and strength from this moment and will keep me under all circumstances until all His will for me is perfectly fulfilled.

3. I solemnly promise to use this blessing for the glory of God and the good of others, and to so speak of it or minister in connection with it in any way in which God may call me or others may need me in the future.7

This covenant of prayer renewed him. He testified, “Every fibre of my soul was tingling with a sense of God’s presence . . . It was so glorious to believe it simple and to know that . . . He had it in hand.”8

But then times of testing came. The fourth and most difficult test took place shortly after making this covenant. After having lost their son Melville to diphtheria, their three-year-old daughter Margaret came down with the same disease. No wonder Mrs. Simpson wanted to call a doctor. It seemed like another nightmare. Although his wife insisted on calling a doctor, Albert did not call a doctor even though from a medical standpoint Margaret would probably not last another day. He recalls, “With trembling hand I anointed her brow and claimed the power of Jesus’ name.”9 Throughout the night Albert remained at his daughter’s bedside praying and saw his prayers answered by morning as his daughter was well again.10

This account may seem reckless to many and it should be pointed out that although Simpson believed in the power of divine healing he did not oppose medical assistance. Therefore he never counseled anyone to carelessly and haphazardly discard their medication. This experience with his daughter Margaret confirmed to him that medicine should be ceased only when Christ makes it crystal clear that He will bring supernatural healing.

His covenant of healing reinforced his conviction that Christ is a Healer and found his strength for ministry renewed. This catapulted a ministry in healing. A healing home was opened and he conducted meetings weekly. Ridicule and rejection from others followed.

The weakness he experienced before his healing was a great source of frustration for him. This new anointing to do God’s work renewed his strength. He testified,

“I am intensely conscious, with every breath, that I am drawing my vitality from a directly supernatural source and that it keeps pace with the calls and necessities of my work. . . .”11

As God poured His fullness on my exhausted frame, a divine strength came, full of sweet exhilaration and unwearied buoyancy and energy, and in that light and life of God I am working without exhaustion, and trust still to work in His glorious all sufficiency until my work is done.”12
The amount of work that he accomplished in the following 38 years was staggering. Simpson’s ministry of divine healing lasted nearly four decades. News about his and his daughter’s physical healing spread rapidly. People flooded his meetings so it became necessary to have a regular meeting established.13

While he was enthusiastic about the prospects of such meetings, he was also concerned that healing would not dominate the Sunday services feeling that many weekly churchgoers were not prepared for such events. Therefore, Friday was chosen as the day for his healing meetings, which proved to be an effective means of teaching people. Soon the Friday afternoon meeting became an attraction to thousands of people connected with the churches of the city of New York and its suburbs.”14 These meetings grew to be the largest weekday religious meetings in New York at the time.15

Successful “healing homes” in Germany, Switzerland, London, Boston, and Buffalo, New York inspired Simpson to begin one in New York City. Less than two years the Berachah Home was opened for those interested in instruction and counsel which typically preceded the anointing and prayer for healing.16

Simpson viewed healing not as a means of personal advancement but for living the life God intends and thus advancing the work of Christ.

In *The Fourfold Gospel*, the compendium of Christian and Missionary Alliance distinctives, Simpson sets forth his understanding of divine healing. This was also Simpson’s third book dealing with the subject of divine healing. In chapter 3, Simpson disperses myths about healing and points to the ten things that divine healing is not:

1. Divine healing is not medical healing. Simpson had no trouble with people using medicine. He suggested they remain on medication unless directed otherwise by the Lord.

2. Divine healing is not metaphysical healing. It is not mind cure or Christian Science.

3. Divine healing is not magnetic healing in which a mysterious current flows from one body to another.

4. Divine healing is not spiritualism. Calling on any spirit other than Jesus Christ is *not* divine healing.

5. Divine healing is not prayer cure. This idea has the vague idea that if enough humans band together and pray, God, as if to be swayed by democracy, will finally get the message, bend His stubborn will and heal that person.
6. Divine healing is not faith cure. God does the healing, not the faith. (Faith is the avenue to healing that must be placed in Christ the Healer.)

7. Divine healing is not cure by will power. Divine healing is a work from the divine, not the victim.

8. Divine healing is not defiance of God’s will, as if to say, “I will have this . . . whether He wills it or not!”

9. Divine healing is not physical immortality. It is fullness of life until the life work is done.

10. Divine healing is not mercenary healing. One could not adopt divine healing as a professional trade just like any other job; God’s gifts are free. Simpson follows up with what divine healing is:

1. Divine healing is the supernatural divine power of God infused into human bodies, renewing their strength and replacing the weakness of suffering human frames by the life and power of God.

11. Divine healing is founded on the Word of God alone. Human reason, intellect, testimony and dedication are less than worthless, if not founded on the Word of God.

12. Divine healing is always done in submission to and within the will of God. Simpson warned people against fighting that will, if indeed their life work was complete.

13. Divine healing is part of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. It is partly the reason for the incarnation; the foundation of healing being in the cross.

14. Divine healing comes through the life of the resurrected Christ, who bodily rose from the dead.

15. Divine healing is the healing that comes via the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus healed by the Holy Spirit while on earth, and He is still the same today.

16. Divine healing is based on God’s grace, not man’s work or merit. It is a free gift that must be received.

17. Divine healing comes by faith. God does the healing, yet it is faith that enables healing to take place.
18. Divine healing is in accordance with all the facts of church history. There are endless examples of God’s continuous healing hand at work from Paul to the present.

19. Divine healing is one of the signs of the age. It is the forerunner of Christ’s coming and proof of God’s power.18

Servanthood and submission are key concepts in Simpson’s understanding of divine healing. Healing is primarily two-fold: for God’s glory and for building up the church.

Simpson deliberately stayed away from any semblance of sensationalism. Filling auditoriums or offering plates was not his aim. It dare not be either a professional business or a public parade. Its most significant victories will be accomplished in an attitude of humility and holiness.19
2. ARE “SUPERNATURAL” GIFTS FOR TODAY?
“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out My Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
Even on My servants, both men and women,
I will pour out My Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
I will show wonders in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and
glorious day of the Lord.
And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

--Acts 2:17-21 (see also Joel 2:28-32)
Many teach that the “supernatural” or “sign” gifts are not for today. Such teaching is based on lack of experience in healing and theological presuppositions which I find have no basis in Scripture. Not only is this issue argued from a theological perspective; it is also argued from an historical perspective. I believe Scripture, history, reason and experience will show the validity of the “sign” or “supernatural” gifts for today.

THEOLOGY

In the first place, the Bible nowhere makes the artificial distinction between “natural” and “supernatural” gifts. Miracles and service, prophecy and hospitality, healings and administrations, tongues and mercy, discerning of spirits and giving are listed side by side without these labels. All are manifestations of the Holy Spirit and therefore “supernatural.” Service, administering or giving are no less supernatural than prophesying or healing. All is of grace which by definition is supernatural.

There is no indication in Scripture that God intended to withdraw any gifts. On the contrary, “the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11:29). Jesus Christ, the Giver of the gifts, “is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

Paul’s teaching of the church as a body undermines the teaching that some gifts are temporary. Paul devotes three chapters of his first letter to the Christians at Corinth as to the nature, purpose and use of spiritual gifts. If Paul were going to prepare the believers for the phasing out of certain gifts this is where one would expect him to do that. Instead he emphasizes the importance of each gift and carefully and methodically instructs this new Christian community in the proper use of prophecy and tongues.

The cessation theory is based on the belief that the “sign gifts” (miracles, healings, apostleship, prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues) were enablements given to certain believers for the purpose of authenticating or confirming God’s Word when it was proclaimed in the early church before the Scriptures were written. These gifts, were, therefore, temporary. Once the Word of God was completed the sign gifts were no longer needed and therefore ceased.

This cessation theory is based primarily on an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:10:

“. . . but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.”

“Perfection” (teleion) in this verse is understood to refer to the completed canon of Scripture (the New Testament), recognized at the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397. The “imperfect” is then interpreted to mean “supernatural gifts” which have disappeared or ceased.
There is stress on the fact that “perfection” is a neuter noun, and must according to this view, refer to a thing, not a person. Since Scripture is a thing and is neuter in gender, it follows that the Bible is the “perfect” to which Paul is referring. Also this fits well with verses 8-9,11-12 of the same passage in 1 Corinthians 13:

“. . .where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away . . . When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child . . . Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

The reasoning is that tongues and other “supernatural” gifts are childish whereas Scripture is mature.

Here a major teaching is based on a fairly unclear passage. Biblical hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) states that the simplest explanation of a passage or verse is usually the best, and obscure passages of Scripture must always give way to clear passages. Thus the simple exhortation given by Paul must provide the basis of this issue rather than the more complicated passage. The simple exhortation is:

“Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophecy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues” (14:39).

Furthermore, there is no hint of this complicated and elaborate teaching of the cessation of gifts anywhere else in the Scriptures.

Also while “perfecting” is a neuter noun, in Greek there is no warrant for limiting its reference to another neuter noun. A neuter noun or pronoun can be used to describe masculine or feminine things or persons. One example is the Greek word “child” (teknon). Even though it is neuter in gender, this noun may describe a girl or a boy. In Greek, like English, gender is grammatical, not sexual. The word “Spirit” (pneuma) is also a neuter noun, and the Bible is clear that it is not referring to a thing but a Person—the Third Person of the Godhead.

This cessation theory leaves the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 13 in order to identify “perfection.” 2 Timothy 3:15-16 is used to identify “perfection” as Scripture. This is arbitrary. Biblical scholar F. F. Bruce convincingly argues that the most plausible interpretation of “perfection” is the second coming of Christ which ushers in our eternal state.1 Such an interpretation fits well with the context of 1 Corinthians, especially chapter one verse seven:

“Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”
The second coming of Christ as “perfection” fits well also because Paul describes the perfection as the time when we “shall see face to face” and “know fully, even as I am fully known” (v. 12), that is, “perfectly.” This condition did not exist at the end of the first century, and will not occur until the end of the age at the coming of Christ.

The nature of the eschatological (futuristic) language in verse 12 clearly implies that the term “perfect” has to do with the eschaton (end) itself, not some form of “perfection” in the present age. This does not mean that the End itself is “the perfect” but what happens at the End, when God’s goal has been reached. For the coming of Christ ushers in the final purpose of God’s saving work in Christ. This coming leads to the final consummation when God will be “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:20-28). At Christ’s coming, therefore, those gifts now necessary for the building up of the church in the present age will disappear, because “the complete” will have come. As Swiss theologian Karl Barth beautifully put it:

“Because the sun rises all lights are extinguished.”

While Scripture is perfect in all that it affirms, its perfection has to do with the fact that it is without error and will not lead us astray. If perfection in reference to Scripture means completeness then why did Paul affirm: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 13:12)? It is very unlikely, therefore, that “when perfection comes” refers to the Bible.

The conditional temporal “when” with the subjective form of the verb “perfection,” “end,” “termination” (“when or whenever the end or perfection should come”) suggests that Paul felt an indefiniteness about when the perfection or end he has in mind will come. He shows no such indefiniteness about the written Scriptures. When he speaks of the second coming, however, he shows the same indefiniteness.

While teleion can and does refer to something completed at some time in the future, the time of that future completion is not suggested in verse ten as being close.

In a number of contexts the related words telos (“end,” “termination,” “last part”) and teleo (“to bring to an end”) are used in relation to the second coming of Christ. This is true in both Pauline and non-Pauline writing (1 Cor. 1:8; 15:24; Jas. 5:11; Rev. 20:5,7; 21:6; 22:13). Since these related words are used in the contexts of the second coming of Christ and since Paul himself used telos in talking about the second coming elsewhere in I Corinthians, it seems more normal to understand teleion in verse ten to mean that “perfection” is to come about at the second coming, or, if before, when a believer dies and is taken to be with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1-10).

Another problem with interpreting teleion to mean the completion of the canon is found in the “then,” “at that time” (tote) clauses in verse twelve. Did Paul expect to live to the time of the completion of the canon and then expect to “know fully” when other apostles (e.g. John) might (and actually did) live longer than he and it would be they who at that time would “know fully”?
The cessation view also narrows the function of the gifts to the few apostles and prophets through whom inspired Scripture was written. Paul, however, teaches a wider purpose for these—continually building up the body of Christ. Sign gifts such as prophecy, tongues and word of knowledge, as well as the others, are given as long as the church has not reached her maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:7-13).

To limit the “miraculous” gifts to the first century church is to see the apostles’ miracles only as a temporary validation of the prophetic revelation. Although miracles, signs and wonders etc. authenticated a prophet’s ministry, the New Testament is clear that they served a broader purpose. Jesus’ healings, for example, were an integral part of His ministry. It was His great love and compassion that “moved” Him to make people whole in every dimension of their lives. And this ministry was passed on to His disciples.

Peter sees Joel’s prophesy (Joel 2:28-32) as a fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13). Joel, like the other prophets (Isa. 2:2; Hos. 3:5; Mic. 4:1), had spoken of what was going to take place “in the last days.” Peter interprets the passage as referring specifically to the latter days of the new covenant (Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:26-27; 39:29) in contrast to the former days of the old covenant. This means the age of Messianic fulfillment has arrived. The phrase “last days” begins at this time but does not end until the return of Christ. This means that the manifestations of the Spirit’s outpouring is the prophetic gift, exercised in visions and dreams and by word of mouth. Instead of a decrease of supernatural manifestations this prophecy states that there will be an increase. And such manifestations were potentially available to all, since all now possessed the Spirit in fullness (Acts 2:17-18).

Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12:14 not that the supernatural gifts were designed primarily to validate the revelation given to the apostles, but that their purpose is the upbuilding of the body of Christ.

Just as a body is crippled by the paralysis of its members, so the Christian community is weakened by the loss of gifts. This is so whether they may be "natural" or "supernatural." This is why Paul rejoiced that the Corinthians did not lack any spiritual gift (1:7).

The healing ministry of the church is commanded as an ongoing obligation (Jas. 5:15-18). James shows that this type of ministry models the work of Elijah. Jesus’ ministry of preaching the good news and healing the sick was motivated by a deep compassion for those who were helplessly lost (Mt. 9:36), not as a technique for convincing people of His deity. The latter was, and is, a by-product of the ministry of love and compassion.

Narrow Definitions

Another flaw in the cessation teaching is the narrow definitions given to apostleship and prophecy. To claim that prophecy can only refer to giving new revelation and an apostle as only one who was an eyewitness of Christ's resurrection is erroneous. Although such meaning is at the
heart of what apostleship and prophecy is, it is too restrictive. Apostles were not only those who saw the resurrected Lord, but also those who had been gifted by the Lord for planting churches and advancing the gospel (Acts 14; Rom. 16:7).

Prophecy is sometimes used for an explanation of a revelation already given. Zechariah, when filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied (Lk. 1:67-79). The content of his prophecy was not a new revelation but an announcement that the Old Testament revelation had been fulfilled and was now to be his and Israel's experience. Thus it was prophecy for the purpose of strengthening, encouragement and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3).

God's Name

I believe that one of the strongest arguments for the validity of the "supernatural" gifts for today is God's name. The name Yahweh is compounded with seven names. One of those is:

"Yahweh (Jehovah)-rapha, The Lord who heals (Ex. 15:26).

God's name does not change. Names in the Bible always represent the nature and character of the person. This is also true of God. It is, therefore, God's very nature to heal.

When Moses asked God what His name was God replied:

"'I am who I am.' This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you'" (3:14).

God said His name is "I am," not "I was"! God said that He is the God who is and always will be.

When the Jews sarcastically questioned Jesus whether he considered Himself to be "greater than Abraham" Jesus replied:

"... before Abraham was born, I am! (Jn. 8:58).

Not only is God the Father immutable (unchangeable), but so is God the Son. The writer of the book of Hebrews put it:

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

The following are a few other references that speak of God's immutability:

"But You remain forever, and Your years will never end" (Ps. 102:27).
"I the Lord do not change" (Mal 3:6).

"... the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change, like shifting shadows."
(Jas. 1:17; see also 1 Kgs. 8:56; Isa. 14:24; 2 Cor. 1:20)

To argue that the day of miracles is past is to fly in the face of God's name. Just as His name has never changed so His nature and character have not changed. Since His name is still "Yahweh-rapha" we have no reason to deny that He is "the Lord who heals."

To teach that some gifts have ceased (supernatural gifts) and others have not (natural gifts) is to go further than Scripture allows. The Bible tells us how to regulate and exercise these gifts and how to test their validity. Not until Jesus comes again are we to expect their cessation.

**Worldview**

Our Western worldview, I believe, has also had a tremendous impact on our understanding of theology. It has blinded us to the supernatural, the miraculous, the spirit world.

Our worldview is a set of assumptions about the world around us that affects, even controls, our thinking about any situation or subject. A person's worldview is more caught than taught. It begins as soon as we are born into this world. We pick it up from the family and society in which we live.

Since our Western worldview is basically scientific our approach to all matters in life is heavily scientific. A scientific approach emphasizes the observable, the measurable, the logical, the rational. It is highly antisupernatural with a disdain for the miraculous. Its focus is on this materialistic world. This materialism blurs our perception of the spiritual.

Our rationalism (which has led to great advances in science) is incapable of understanding the things of the spirit world since it can never be reduced to rules of logic or theories requiring scientific, observable proof.

It is therefore crucial that we Westerners discover the worldview of Jesus. He has shown us that He saw the world in the context of the kingdoms of light and darkness. His view, unlike many of His contemporaries whose worldview was primarily magical and mystical, was realistic in that He embraced both the material and the spiritual. He acknowledged both the natural and the supernatural.

As we approach the Bible we must take off our Western worldview spectacles and allow the Bible to speak for itself. This means we take a natural approach whereby Scripture is understood literally unless such an interpretation is foolish. This will save us from mythologizing,
allegorizing, spiritualizing and psychologizing God's Holy Writ. Eventually it may help us shed our antisupernatural, antimiraculous bias and open us up to hear and see what God has communicated to us.

**History**

The Early Church (A.D. 100-400)

It was God's power that brought about the spread of Christianity in the early centuries. It began with 120 in the upper room around A.D. 33 and within three centuries it became the predominant religion of the Roman Empire.

Ramsay MacMullen, historian at Yale University, came out with a fascinating book entitled, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, A.D. 100-400*. He writes not as a Christian historian or theologian arguing a point, but simply as an objective secular historian telling it like it is.

Early in his book, MacMullen raised what he considers a most important question: "What did Christianity present to its audience? For plainly the process of conversion that interests me took place in people's minds on the basis of what they knew, or thought they knew." The answer is deceptively simple. While Christianity was being presented to unbelievers in both word and deed, it was the deed that far exceeded the word in evangelistic effectiveness.

In a world where people accepted the miraculous power of pagan gods, the God of the Bible was presented first and foremost as a God who works miracles. His power was declared to be greater than the power of the pagan gods. It was a power for good, not evil, and it promised eternal life.

MacMullen points out that in the early centuries very few pagans were converted because of Christian doctrine or because of logical presentations of truth. Christianity swept through the Roman Empire because the people could see with their own eyes that Jesus did miracles greater than any gods they had known.

Christian preachers in those days were so sure of the power of God that they did not hesitate to engage in power encounters. They would challenge in public the power of pagan gods with the power of Jesus.

For instance, MacMullen tells of how the author of *Acts of Peter* confronted and challenged demons in the presence of a highly interested crowd. This involved "the manhandling of demons—humiliating them, making them howl, begging for mercy, telling their secrets, and departing in a hurry." By the time the Christian preachers got through, no one would want to worship such "nasty, lower powers."
MacMullen concludes his careful study with the fact that the supernatural power of God "driving all competition from the field" should be seen as "the chief instrument of conversion" in those first centuries.23

Historical research is showing that there never was a time when miracles ceased, especially on the frontiers where the gospel of the Kingdom was proclaimed to new people.

In the immediate postapostolic age there was no distinction between the natural and supernatural or extraordinary gifts. Apostles and prophets are mentioned in the Didache (The Teaching of the Twelve) which was written before A.D. 100. Apostleship, in the broader sense, was not regarded as unique to the apostolic period. Miracles, especially healings, do not call for special notice as though they were unusual or extraordinary. Ignatius (A.D. 35-107), personally prophesied.24

A Phrygian physician named Alexander was "not without a share of the apostolic grace [charisma].25 Papias (A.D. 60-130), bishop of Heirapolis in Phrygia, is said to have been told by the daughters of Philip of the resuscitation of a man from the dead.26

Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165) claimed that "it is possible now to see among us men and women who possess gifts of the Spirit of God."27 He testified,

“For numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world and in your city, many of our Christian men, exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed, and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists and those who used incantations and drugs.”28

In his "A Dialogue with Trypho" Martyr claimed that the gift of prophecy existed among the Christians. He also felt that the gifts of the Spirit which used to be manifested by the Jewish prophets, were now the possession of the church. This was evidenced by the cessation of Jewish prophets and the appearance of gifts among Christians.29

Origen refers to exorcisms, healings and predictions (prophecy). He says:

“And some give evidence of their having received through their faith a marvelous power by the cures which they perform, invoking no other name over those who need their help than that of the God of all things and of Jesus, along with a mention of his history. For by these means we too have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities and from distractions of mind and madness, and countless other ills which could be cured neither by men or devils.”30

He claims that, while miracles are less frequent in his day (the third century) they still remain "in them that live according to the Logos.”31
Irenaeus (A.D. 130-200) states that "many" in his time were heard "speaking through the Spirit in all kinds of tongues." He was probably referring to foreign languages, since the early church fathers usually construed the tongues of 1 Corinthians in terms of languages of Acts 2, which were foreign languages. He also says, "Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole." He testifies,

“Wherefore also those who are in truth the disciples receiving grace from him do in his name perform miracles so as to promote the welfare of others, according to the gift which each has received from him.”

Clement says, in giving directions for visiting the sick and afflicted:

“Let them, therefore, with fasting and prayer, make their intercessions, and not with the well arranged and fitly ordered words of learning, but as men who have received the gift of healing confidently, to the glory of God.”

He argued against the cessation of gifts: “I cannot on the other hand assent to the opinion of those who maintain that in this century miracles had entirely ceased.”

Hermas as well refers to prophets with visions, revelations and other prophetic utterances.

Tertullian (A.D. 160-220), claims: "We acknowledge spiritual gifts." He then went on to list prophecy, revelation and visions as examples, and concluded that "the apostle most assuredly foretold that there were to be 'spiritual gifts' in the church." He testifies:

“For the clerk of one of them who was liable to be thrown upon the ground by an evil spirit was set free from his affliction, as was also the relative of another, and the little boy of a third. And how many men of rank, to say nothing of the common people, have been delivered from devils and healed of disease”

Although he witnessed extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, their manifestation was waning.

Yet Cyprian, writing in the third century, said that baptism itself could be the means by which grave illness was healed. Furthermore Dr. Marshall, the translator of Cyprian, says “. . . there are successive evidences of them down to the age of Constantine.”

Tertullian and others attributed this decrease to the increasing formalism of the church. As a strong defender of orthodox Christianity he vigorously maintained that spiritual gifts constituted the full Christian experience and challenged his skeptical contemporaries by citing the apostle Paul.
Unfortunately Tertullian became a part of the Montanist movement, a reform movement which protested against the religious establishment urging a return to apostolic purity with a revival of all the gifts of the Spirit. Zealous missionary pioneers and martyrs sprang forth from this movement. But their zeal and reckless enthusiasm antagonized the church leaders and many of them fell into fanaticism and heresy.

The church thus became wary of supernatural manifestations of the Spirit. It was the typical overreaction against fanaticism which served to tighten further the ecclesiastical control against which the Montanists were protesting.43

Many church leaders, however, continued to advocate the whole range of spiritual gifts. Presbyter Novation (A.D. 257), wrote concerning the Holy Spirit:

"This is He who places prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, gives powers and healings, does wonderful works, offers discrimination of spirits, affords powers of government, suggests counsels, and orders and arranges whatever gifts there are of charismata, and thus the Lord's church everywhere, and in all, perfected and completed."44

He was a witness that they were operative in the church in his time.

By the third century carefully selected laity were trained as exorcists. There became so many of these that bishops complained there were more exorcists than priests. A century later, most exorcists became priests. Exorcism was done routinely by priests and deacons in situations where wild and bizarre actions were manifested by people. In fact, before a sick person was prayed for, it was the common practice to exorcise the house first. Furthermore, all candidates for baptism were routinely exorcised.45

A century later Bishop Hilary (A.D. 367), gave a list of all the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:4-10 and witnessed that these were the effects of the Holy Spirit in the Christian.46

This same century Macrina, sister of Gregory of Nyssa, known as the Cappadocians, founded a monastery for men and women on the family estate. Her brother Gregory was so impressed by Macrina’s life that he decided to write her biography. Hearing that he wanted anecdotes, a Roman officer came forward and told the story of his and his wife’s visit to Macrina some years earlier.

“Upon arrival, he went to the men’s quarters and she and her little girl to the women’s quarters. There his wife visited Macrina. The little girl had a badly infected eye, and the eyeball was swollen and white. Macrina took the child in her arms and kissed the eye.
‘Do me a favor,’ Macrina said, ‘and stay for dinner. In return, I’ll give you some medicine for the child’s eye.’

So they stayed for dinner and then went on their way. Part way home, the wife suddenly exclaimed to her husband that she’d forgotten the medicine, but then turning towards their child, she said, ‘Look, we don’t need any other medicine! She gave us the cure that comes from prayer and it’s already worked!’

There was no sign left of the disease.

To her brother Gregory of Nyssa, healing was not just an appendage to the Christian life, it was central to the Christian faith and saw healing as the main doorway to our knowledge of God. His rationale was that since God came to this earth in human flesh He showed the dignity, and therefore the importance, of the human body.

Most of Chrysostom's writings were toward the end of the fourth century. His attitude toward the charismata (gifts) is not easy to ascertain. In his Homily XXXII he speaks of prophecy as though they only occurred in the past. But later he suggests that the gifts in general have continued. In Homily XIV he maintains that raising the dead, exorcising and performing miracles still existed in the church, and adds: "We work signs by the power of the Spirit."

Augustine (A.D. 354-430), influential theologian and Bishop of Hippo, originally disputed the existence of the gifts of the Spirit in his day, as did the Western church in general, teaching that the gifts were given for the founding of the church and then withdrawn because they were no longer necessary. On the whole Augustine really did not have much to say about the gifts. But in his volume 2 of The City of God he recounts his experience as a witness to a number of miraculous manifestations like exorcism and healing.

In the sixth century, Pope Gregory wrote his “dialogues.” In it he endeavors to show the Italians what great saints they have produced. His evidence is primarily a case history of the miracles performed by these saints.

Middle Ages

Important Medieval writers became rare until Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in the thirteenth century. He wrote about the gifts of the Spirit in Summa Theologica. In volume 24 he contrasts them with love in the same way as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 13. Thomas suggests that all the gifts fall into three general categories: gifts of knowledge, gifts of demonstration and gifts of expression. As regards demonstration, he argued that in matters of divine revelation, which is above human reasoning, ordinary proof will not do. Confirmation has to be provided in ways that are proper to divine power.
Aquinas passed no judgment on the continuation or cessation of individual gifts, nor did he see any distinction between natural and supernatural gifts. All the gifts were seen as special graces, whether knowledge, demonstration or expression. All relate to God's supernatural revelation and are congruent with it.52

There is no question that some spiritual gifts (especially the "sign gifts") became rare during the time of the Middle Ages. **They waned, however, not because they were no longer needed but because the church was departing from New Testament principles and practices.**

Political and social developments highly influenced the church's attitude toward spiritual gifts. After the Western part of the Roman Empire fell in the fifth century, Christian thought and life divided and separated. The Roman or Latin tradition developed a different attitude toward spiritual gifts and worship in general than that of the Greek or Orthodox tradition.

In the West, the church was pressured to exercise many functions of secular authority and thus became very practical in orientation. This led to an authoritative pattern of leadership in the church which so emphasized unity of the body that there was little, if any, room for diversity. Authority, not individual religious expression, was the emphasis. Thus the congregational exercise of spiritual gifts held little place in the life of the church.53

It was quite different in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire which retained a strong central government at Constantinople until 1451. This provided a stable society in which the church could develop. Therefore it was not pressured to take over the secular functions assumed by the church in the West.

The Eastern Orthodox church continued to be more mystical and other worldly encouraging introspection, individuality and religious experiences. They encouraged diversity in which the gifts of the Spirit could be developed and used in freedom. All the spiritual gifts, with the possible exception of tongues, have always been regarded as normative by virtually all of the Eastern Orthodox Church.54

**The Reformation**

With the Reformation period came an extraordinary outburst of prophecy where special revelations of the Spirit were again claimed. The problem of spiritual gifts was posed in an acute form for the reformers. The Zwingly band under the leadership of Storch brought confusion to Wittenberg with the new prophesying until Luther chased them away with the Word and Spirit.55

A visionary element marked the spiritual leaders of the Peasants' War and fanatics like Matthys and John of Leyden were driven by strange apocalyptic fantasies. There were wild prophesyings claimed.
One example is a girl at St. Gall in Switzerland who vacillated between claiming to be Christ and antichrist. There were also the so-called "dreamers" who rearranged their marriages according to a revelation of their "proper heavenly pattern."

The issue here, as with the heretical Montanists earlier, is the claim that they possessed prophecy, which to them, meant that the Spirit was teaching **new truth and conduct** in accordance with the advance knowledge that He also gives of future events.56

In answering these various types of "heavenly prophets," the reformers, instead of pointing out that their predictions were falsified by events, maintained that the Spirit of God does not add to or replace the Word.

Prophecy, they taught, could not be understood as an extension of revelation. The written Word is the only authentic and irreplaceable basis of criterion of true proclamation. Thus there can be no antithesis between the spoken and the written word, between the Spirit and Christ.

Zwingli, Bullinger, Calvin, Whitaker and Luther constantly emphasized the fact that **the Word and the Spirit belong inseparably together.** The gifts of the Spirit are thus properly exercised when they serve the ministry of the Word.57

Luther, who had earlier denied the gift of healing for his time, lived to see his friend Philip Melanchton miraculously brought from the point of death through his own bold prayers. Luther demanded Melanchthon to get well and God honored his fervent faith. The story is that Melancthon had become ill on a journey, and a messenger had been dispatched to Luther:

> “Luther arrived and found Philip about to give up the ghost. His eyes were set; his consciousness was almost gone; his speech had failed, and also his hearing; his face had fallen; he knew no one, and had ceased to take either solids or liquids. At this spectacle Luther is filled with the utmost consternation, and turning to his fellow travelers says: ‘Blessed Lord, how has the devil spoiled me of this instrument!’ Then turning away towards the window he called most devoutly on God.’58

Here follows the substance of Luther’s prayer:

> “He beseeches God to forbear, saying that he has struck work in order to urge upon him in supplication, with all the promises he can repeat from scripture: that he must hear and answer now if he would ever have the petitioner trust in him again. After this, taking the hand of Philip, and well knowing what was the anxiety of his heart and conscience, he said “Be of good courage, Philip, thou shalt not die. Though God wanted not good reason to slay thee, yet he willeth not the death of
a sinner, but that he may be converted and live. Wherefore, give not place to the spirit of grief, nor become the slayer of thyself, but trust in the Lord who is able to kill and make alive.’59

While uttered these things Philip began, as it were, to revive and to breathe, and gradually recovering his strength, is at last restored to health.”60

Melancthon writing to a friend says:

“I should have been a dead man had I not been recalled from death itself by the coming of Luther.”61

In referring to this incident Luther wrote to friends:

“Philip is very well after such an illness, for it was greater than I had supposed. I found him dead, but, by an evident miracle of God, he lives.”62

Again, referring to his attendance at the Diet of Worms, he says:

“Toil and labor have been lost, and money spent to no purpose; nevertheless, though I have succeeded in nothing, yet I fetched back Philip out of Hades, and intend to bring him now, rescued from the grave, home again with joy, etc.”63

Another remarkable instances of his power in prayer for the sick is that of Myconius, well known, who wrote of himself: “Raised up in the year 1541 by the mandates, prayers and letter of the reverend Father, Luther, from death.” Luther furnishes this version of the event:

“Myconius, the venerated superintendent of Gotha, was in the last stage of consumption, and already speechless. Luther wrote to him that he must not die: ‘May God not let me hear so long as I live that you are dead, but cause you to survive me. I pray this earnestly, and will have it granted, and my will will be granted herein, Amen.’ ‘I was horrified,’ said Myconius, afterwards, ‘when I read what the good man had written, that it seemed to me as though I had heard Christ say, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’ And from that time Myconius was, as it were, kept from the grave by the power of Luther’s prayers, and did not die till after Luther’s death.”64

Toward the end of his life when he was asked what to do for a man who was mentally ill, Luther gave instructions for a healing service based on James 5:13–16. He wrote: “This is what we do, and what we have been accustomed to do, for a cabinetmaker here was similarly afflicted with madness and we cured him by prayer in Christ's name.”65
The reformers recognized prophecy as a legitimate gift. They did not relegate it to the apostolic age. John Knox announced doom in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets on many occasions, although he made no claim to new and special revelation. Zwingli had at least a premonition of the Cappel disaster of 1531. There was also a widespread belief among the reformers that they were living in the last times with Rome on the seven hills and the Turkish antichrist advancing from the east.66

Calvin never distinguished between permanent and temporary gifts. He saw a distinction only as it relates to offices. Those necessary for the government of the church are perpetual while those applied at the beginning for its foundation are temporary. He thus saw pastors and elders now playing a leading role rather than apostles and prophets.

While Calvin generally downplayed the need for the gifts since the apostolic era, he seemed open to the idea that they could have surfaced later on. In fact, he once included Luther among modern "apostles."67 The primary focus for Calvin, however, was the preaching of the Word.

The Post-Reformation Age

John Elliot testifies:

“At Leonberg a town of Wirtembergh, A.D. 1644, thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, a girl of twenty-three years of age, was so disabled in her limbs as hardly to be able to creep along by the help of crutches. But whilst the Dean, Raumier was his name, was from the pulpit dwelling on the miraculous signs of Jesus’s name she suddenly was raised up and restored to the use of her limbs. This story the American editor omits as though solicitous for the critics reputation; but Faucett the English translator retains it in its place, and adds from information gathered from other sources that “this happened in the presence of the Duke of Eberhard, and his courtiers and was committed to the public records which are above all suspicion.”68

The Waldenses, whose testimony to God’s grace burned brightly throughout a very dark period in the history of the church, testify:

“Therefore, concerning this anointing of the sick, we hold it as an article of faith, and profess sincerely from the heart that sick persons, when they ask it, may lawfully be anointed with the anointing oil by one who joins with them in praying that it may be efficacious to the healing of the body according to the design and end and effect mentioned by the apostles; and we profess that such an anointing performed according to the apostolic design and practice will be healing and profitable.”69
“Albeit we confess that the anointing of the sick performed according to the design, end and purpose of the apostles, and according to their practice and power of which St. Mark and James make mention, is lawful; and if any priest possessing the grace of healings had so anointed the sick and they have recovered we would exhort all that when they are really ill they omit not to receive that ordinance at their hands, and in no way despise it, because despisers of that or of other ordinances, so far as they are ordained by Christ, are to be punished and corrected, according to the rules of the evangelical law.”

Rev. A. Bost, in his treatment of the history of the Moravians, gives his view of the continuance of the apostolic gifts:

“We are, indeed, well aware that, so far from its being possible to prove by scripture, or by experience, that visions and dreams, the gift of miracles, healing and other extra-ordinary gifts, have absolutely ceased in Christendom since the apostolic times, it is on the contrary proved, both by facts and by scripture, that there may always be these gifts where there is faith, and that they will never be entirely detached from it. We need only take care to discern the true from the false, and to distinguish from miracles proceeding from the Holy Ghost, lying miracles, or those which without being so decidedly of the devil do not so decidedly indicate the presence of the Lord.”

The famous Moravian leader Zinzendorf writes as follows:

“To believe against hope is the root of the gift of miracles; and I owe this testimony to our beloved Church, that apostolic powers are there manifested. We have had undeniable proofs thereof in the unequivocal discovery of things, persons, and circumstances, which could not humanly have been discovered, in the healing of maladies in themselves incurable, such as cancers, consumptions, when the patient was in the agonies of death, etc., all by means of prayer, or of a single word.”

Speaking of the year 1730, he says:

“At this juncture various supernatural gifts were manifested in the Church, and miraculous cures were wrought. The brethren and sisters believed what the Saviour had said respecting the efficacy of prayer; and when any object strongly interested them they used to speak to him about it, and to trust in him as capable of all good; then it was done unto them according to their faith. The count (Zinzendorf) rejoiced at it with all his heart, and silently praised the Saviour who thus willingly condescended to what is poor and little. In this freedom of the brethren towards our Saviour, Jesus Christ, he recognized a fruit of the Spirit, concerning which they ought on no account to make themselves uneasy, whoever it might be, but rather to respect him. At the same time he did not wish the brethren and sisters to
make too much noise about these matters, and regard them as extraordinary but when, for example, a brother was cured of disease, even of the worst kind, by a single word or by some prayer, he viewed this as a very simple matter, calling to mind, ever that saying of scripture, that signs were not for those who believed, but for those who believed not.”73

The following provides a glimpse into the actual miraculous experiences just referred to:

“Jean de Watteville had a childlike confidence in our Saviour’s promise to hear his children’s prayers. Of this he often had experience. One example we will here offer: a married sister became extremely ill at Herrnhut. The physician had given up all hopes, and her husband was plunged in grief. Watteville visited the patient, found her joyfully expecting her removal, and took his leave, after having encouraged her in this happy frame. It was at that time still the customer of unmarried brethren, on Sunday evening, to go about singing hymns before the brethren’s houses, with an instrumental accompaniment. Watteville made them sing some appropriate hymns under the window of the sick sister, at the same time praying in his heart to the Lord that he would be pleased, if he thought good, to restore her to health. He conceived a hope of this so full of sweetness and faith that he sang with confidence these lines:74

‘Sacred Cross, oh sacred Cross!
   Where my Saviour died for me,
   From my soul, redeemed from loss,
   Bursts a flame of love to thee.

   When I reach my dying hour
   Only let them speak thy name;
   By its all prevailing power
   Back my voice returns again.’75

What was the astonishment of those who surrounded the bed of this dying sister when they saw her sit up, and join with a tone of animation in singing the last line:

   ‘Back my voice returns again.’76

To his great amazement and delight he found her, on ascending to her chamber, quite well. She recovered perfectly, and not till thirty-five years after did he attend her earthly tabernacle to its final resting place.”77
John Scrimgeour, minister of Kinghorn in Fife, and known as “an eminent wrestler with God” we have this testimony:

“Mr. Scrimgeour had several friends and children taken away by death; and his only daughter who at that time survived, and whom he dearly loved, being seized with the King’s evil, by which she was reduced to the point of death, so that he was called up to see her die; and finding her in this condition he went out into the fields, (as he himself told) in the nighttime in great grief and anxiety, and began to expostulate with the Lord, with such expressions as for all the world, he durst not again utter. In a fit of displeasure he said--’thou O Lord knowest that I have been serving thee in the uprightness of my heart according to my power and measure: nor have I stood in awe to declare thy mind even unto the greatest in the time; and thou seest that I take pleasure in this child. O that I could obtain such a thing at thy hand as to spare her!’ and being in great agony of spirit at last it was said to him from the Lord—’I have heard thee at this time, but use not the like boldness in time coming for such particulars.’ When he came home the child was recovered, and sitting up in the bed took some meat: and when he looked on her arm it was perfectly whole.”78

In reference to a record of evangelizing in Twy-cross in Lincolnshire, England, he says:

“Now there was in that town a great man that had long lain sick and was given over by the physicians: and some friends in that town desired me to go and see him, and I went up to him in his chamber and spoke the word of life to him and was moved to pray for him, and the Lord was entreated and restored him to health.”79

While preaching in Hertfordshire, they told him of a sick woman and requested him to go to her help. He says:

“John Rush of Bedfordshire went along with me to visit her, and when we came in, there were many people in the house that were tender about her: and they told me she was not a woman for this world, but if I had anything to comfort her concerning the world to come I might speak to her. So I was moved of the Lord to speak to her, and the Lord raised her up again to the astonishment of the town and country.”80

Vavasor Powell, known as “the morning star of the Welch Baptists,” was endued with such power of the Spirit that extraordinary revivals followed his life in 13 different prisons for his testimony for Christ. Besides the uncommon blessing which attended his preaching, it is recorded that “many persons were recovered from dangerous sickness through the prayer of faith
which he offered.” He took the promise in James 5, literally, as shown in the story of his own recovery, and especially as declared in the following article of his creed—“Visiting the sick and for the elders to anoint them in the name of the Lord is a gospel ordinance and not repealed.”

“We then went to pray; and, while we were kneeling and prostrating ourselves, as on other occasions, he also prostrated himself, as if some one had forcibly thrust him down, and began to pray: in what manner, with what earnestness, with what emotion, with what flood of tears, with what agitation of his whole body, I might almost say with what suspension of respiration by his groans and sobs, who shall attempt to describe? Whether the rest of the party were so little affected as to be able to pray I knew not. For my part I could not. This, alone, inwardly and briefly, I said: “Lord, what prayers of thine own children wilt thou ever grant if thou grant not these?” For nothing seemed more possible but that he should die praying. We arose, and, after the benediction by the bishop, left him, but not till he had besought them to be with him in the morning, nor till they had exhorted him to calmness. The dreaded day arrived, and the servants of God attended as they had promised. The medical men made their appearance; all things required for such an occasion are got ready, and, amidst the terror and suspense of all present, the dreadful instruments are brought out. In the meantime, while those of the bystanders whose authority was the greatest, endeavored to support the courage of the patient by words of comfort, he is placed in a convenient position for the operation, the dressings are opened, the seat of the disease is exposed, the surgeon inspects it, and tries to find the part to be operated upon with his instrument in his hand. He first looks for it, then examines by the touch; in a word, he makes every possible trial, and finds the place perfectly healed. The gladness, the praise, the thanksgiving to a compassionate and all powerful God, which, with mingled joy and tears, now burst from the lips of all present, cannot be told by me. The scene may more easily be imagined than described.”

John Wesley, the father of Methodism and the subsequent holiness movements, observed a correlation between the loss of gifts and the general state of the church:

"The causes of their decline was not as has been vulgarly supposed because there is no more need for them, because all the world becomes Christian. . . . The real cause was: the love of many, almost all Christians so-called, was waxed cold . . . this was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were no longer to be found in the Christian church: because the Christians were turned heathen again and had only a dead form left."  

It was Wesley's belief that though orthodoxy remained, it did so with diminished expectations. The church had accommodated itself to secularism and unbelief reigned.
Throughout church history various groups came into being which were characterized by their open practice of spiritual gifts. Many of these were considered fanatical and even heretical by "mainstream" Christians of their day.

This has also been true of the Pentecostals in the early part of our own century. The Waldenses, the Moravians (United Brethren), Huguenots, Covenanters, Albigenses, the Camisards, the Jansenists, the early Quakers, the Shakers, the Irvingites, etc. suffered persecution at the hands of Christians because of their open use of the charismatic gifts.

With such views, he watched with great interest any indications of a revival of these gifts, and in the movement in that direction going on in his day, he believed he witnessed some genuine instances of miraculous healing, as well as of speaking with tongues. We refer to one case mentioned in his letters:

“In March, 1830, in the town of Port Glasgow, on the Clyde, lived a family of MacDonal ds, twin brothers, James and George, with their sisters. One of their sisters, Margaret, of saintly life, lay very ill, and apparently nigh to death. She had received a remarkable baptism of the spirit on her sick bed, and had been praying for her brothers that they might be anointed in like manner. One day when James was standing by, and she was interceding that he might at that time be endowed with the power of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit came upon him with marvelous manifestations. His whole countenance was lighted up, and with a step and manner of most indescribable majesty, he walked up to Margaret’s bedside and addressed her in these words, ‘Arise and stand upright.’ He repeated the words, took her by the hand, and she a rose. Her recovery was instantaneous and complete, and the report of it produced a profound sensation, and many came from great distances to see her. Mr. Erskine visited the house and made careful and prolonged inquiry into the facts, and put on record his conviction of the genuineness of the miracle.”84

“The first thing which the man now did was to go to his fellow-sinners, from cottage to cottage, and tell them what he had just experienced. First they were astonished, and could not understand it; yet they saw the marvelous change in him. He urged them to go to the minister about their souls; some he even dragged as it were in triumph to the manse, till about twenty persons were in the same way convinced of sin, and found grace and forgiveness in Jesus.”85

Then follows the account of a most gracious and wide-spread revival. The whole village became a Bochim. With tears and lamentations the people came confessing their sins, and inquiring the way of escape from the wrath of God that was resting upon them. The Pastor’s house was besieged from morning to night with penitents, so that within two months, as he declared, there were not 20 persons in the place who had not come to him bewailing their sins and finding peace in Jesus Christ.86
“The soul is the life of the body; faith is the life of the soul; Christ is the life of faith”—so wrote the good John Flavel; and thus he traced very obviously and directly the course through which Christ the Redeemer acts upon the human body.”87

In 1842 in a village by the Black Forest, Germany, a Lutheran pastor named Johann Blumhardt prayed for a parishioner who seemed to be demonized. Pastor Blumhardt prayed for her and in the process came in touch with her demons. After a long spiritual battle, she got well. The parish and Pastor Blumhardt were never the same. People began to flock to his church for prayer and healing. The Lutheran authorities were alarmed and in 1846 forbade him to practice physical healing. He replied that it was impossible for him to be the pastor and not have healings just happen. The authorities were persuaded and he was allowed to continue his healing ministry.88

Blumhardt’s ministry had a vast influence as did the ministry of Dorothea Trudel, a young Swiss florist. In 1851 several of her coworkers became ill and did not respond to medical treatment. Trudel anointed them with oil and prayed and they were instantaneously healed. As a result, sick people flooded her home. Eventually, she was brought to trial for practicing medicine without a license. She won and the publicity brought even more people to her. To accommodate them, Trudel opened several “faith homes.”89

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the beginning of a vast change in the history of Christian healing as individuals and movements dedicated to healing blossomed. Although at first the majority of this attention was outside the major denominations and within the pentecostal churches, it was not long before other denominations such as The Christian and Missionary Alliance joined in the healing ministry. And in the late 1960s the charismatic movement began with an Episcopal priest by the name of Father Dennis Bennett. With this movement healing played a key role and churches of every denominational stripe, including the Roman Catholic Church. The grace and gifts of healing greatly enlivened the faith of believers.90

Six major figures stand above others in influence in the healing ministry in the past century: William Branham, Oral Roberts, Kathryn Kuhlman, Agnes Sanford, John Wimber and Francis MacNutt.

Roman Catholic scholar Morton Kelsey has contributed immensely to the field of healing with his substantive books on healing in general and his contribution in the history of Christian healing in particular (e.g. Healing and Christianity (Harper & Row, 1975) and the revised edition entitled Psychology, Medicine & Christian Healing (Harper & Row, 1988).

In 1962 Kathryn Kuhlman published her first book, I Believe in Miracles. It was ghostwritten by Emily Gardiner Neal who, in 1950, published the first magazine article to give Kathryn Kuhlman national attention. This was unusual since Mrs. Neal was initially a reporter who set out to debunk the healing movement and ended up with a full-time ministry of healing in
the Episcopal Church. She wrote seven books on healing, held innumerable healing missions, and served on her church’s Commission on the Ministry of Healing. Her work continues through the Episcopal Healing Foundation.

In 1962 at Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church changed its official attitude toward last rites and healing and opened the way for the development of a ministry of healing.

After the Pentecostal and charismatic movements came the “third wave” movement under the leadership of evangelicals John Wimber (*Power Healing*, 1987) and Peter Wagner (*How To Have A Healing Ministry Without Making Your Church Sick*, 1988). Rather than a Pentecostal emphasis on the speaking in tongues, the emphasis of this movement has been on an increased openness to God’s power to heal, to guide and to convert.

**The Significant Role of Healing in the Church Throughout the Ages**

The following is a summary of the significant role healing has played in the life and ministry of the church throughout the ages. Here are some examples of that claim.

1. In the first one hundred years (the apostolic era) of the church healing was a common activity. A byword among Christians was, “If you see a brother who is sick and do not heal him, his blood will be on your hands.” Healings, signs and wonders were an integral part of the proclamation of the gospel in the early church.

2. It is surprising to see how many references to healing miracles occur in the ministry of the early church fathers, e.g. Irenaeus (140-202), Origen (185-254), Ambrose (340-97), Athanasius (296-373), Basil (320-79), Gregory of Nazianzus (329-89), Macrina (327-379), Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Benedict (480-547), Gregory of Tours (538-594), Pope Gregory I (540-604), Bede (673-735), Marlararchy of Ireland (1094-1149), Antony of Padua (1195-1231), Edmund of Canterbury (1180-1240), Richard of Chichester (1193-1253), Dominic (1170-1221), Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), Thomas of Hereford (1218-1282), and Catherine of Siena (1333-1380).

3. Healing was taken over into the Reformist Movement; the life and work of Peter Waldo of Lyons (died 1217), founder of the Waldensians, Martin Luther (1483-1546), and Blaise Paschal, a leading Jansenist (from 1656 onwards).

4. Healing has always accompanied the great religious revivals: John Wesley (1703-91), Prince Alexander of Hohenlohe (c.1815), Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1842), Dorothy Trudel (1850), Alexander Dowie (1847-1906, Mary Woodworth-Etter (1876), Smith Wigglesworth (1860-1947).
5. Healing has been a common phenomenon in the proclamation of the gospel by many missionaries during the history of the protestant missionary movement commenced by William Carey (1761-1834).

6. In the 20th century Smith Wigglesworth, Alexander Peddie, F. L. Wyman, Agnes Sanford, Kathryn Kuhlman, Oral Roberts, Francis MacNutt, Jim Glennon—and a vast number of others have become increasingly involved.

It is obvious from this study that all spiritual gifts have continued throughout the centuries since the time of Paul.

It is also true that the manifestation of the "sign" gifts became less after the first four centuries of the church. No reasons were given in the early church as to why certain gifts diminished in use. Only after their disuse do we see reasons given. These seem to be rationalizations to justify their virtual absence.

“The Church can no longer say, silver and gold have I none,” said Pope Gregory to Thomas Aquinas. “No, nor can she say any longer, In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk,” answered Thomas.

As we study church history we witness the unmistakable truth that as riches increase, close dependence on God, which is the fertile soil of faith and trust, decreases. It is when we have nothing and recognize our vulnerability that we find the key with which to enter in and possess our riches in Christ. Thus with the renewal of the church there has also been a resurgence of the "supernatural" gifts.

**Spiritual Gifts are Needed Until Christians Reach Unity in the Faith**

Paul asserted that all the gifts Christ gave would continue in His church until it comes to full unity of faith and to mature spiritual development in Christ:

"It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13).

The church has not yet reached that stage, and it still needs all the gifts of the Spirit.

**Healing Gifts are Given to the Whole Church for All Time**

The Bible is clear: healing gifts are given to the whole church for all time and the elders of the church are to have a regular healing ministry:
"Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (Jas. 5:13-16).

The statement "If he has sinned, he will be forgiven" emphasizes the interrelatedness of body and soul. For instance, Jesus healed the paralytic spiritually when He said, "Your sins are forgiven," and physically by saying, "Get up, take your mat and go home" (Mk. 2:5,9-11). Jesus heals soul and body to make man complete.

Confession of sin and praying for one another in faith are vital ingredients of the healing ministry in the Christian community. When sin is removed, the power of prayer becomes evident in its effectiveness.

As we have already seen, healing is not limited to the elders of the church as God has also gifted certain individuals within the body of Christ for such ministry. Thus the kingdom of Christ is meant to have miracles as a normative part of church life.

Donald Bridge and David Phypers in their book, Spiritual Gifts & the Church put it:

"Indeed, as the century towards its close, the church would seem to need the benefits of spiritual gifts more than ever before. For at a time when Christians of all traditions realize deeply the imperfections of the church, Christ has given gifts 'for the perfecting of the saints' (Eph. 4:12)."

At a time when the continued existence of the Christian ministry is at stake, with panic, uncertainty and surrender on every hand there are gifts “for the work of ministry” (v. 12).

At a time when Christians are ashamed at their divisions but embarrassed by misdirected efforts to heal them, gifts are available “until we all attain to the unity of the faith” (v. 13).

At a time when heresy and half truths and doctrines of men bewilder Christians, God has given His gifts,

“...so that we may no longer be children, tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (vv. 14-15).
In the darkness and gloom so characteristic of much of the present day Western church, spiritual gifts and the miraculous in general are being claimed by Christians in many different traditions, sometimes in the most unusual of places. Can this be an indication that God has not abandoned His people in these bewildering and depressing days?

"The God Who Was"

In jettisoning the miraculous to the distant past, much of evangelical Christianity has come to worship and serve the "God who was" rather than the "God who is" (Ex. 3:15).

Even evangelicals who pray, "If it be Your will, please heal so-and-so," would probably be in shock if God actually answered their prayer. The God of evangelicalism is a God that can help us in ordinary situations, but is not much help when we "really" need help. In such circumstances we quickly head for the medical profession.

Those who stubbornly insist on believing a God who still can be trusted for the supernatural, as well as the natural, are biblically correct. Although they may overbelieve, the rest of evangelicalism, for the most part, underbelieve.
3. JESUS’ WHOLISTIC APPROACH TO MINISTRY
“Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to Him, crying out, ‘Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.

Jesus did not answer a word. So His disciples came to Him and urged Him, Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.’ He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.’ The woman came and knelt before Him. ‘Lord, help me!’ she said.

He replied, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ she said, ‘but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.’”

--Matthew 15:21-27
Jesus, M.D. An interesting title of a recent book on healing by physician David Stevens. To most of us calling Jesus “Dr. Jesus” seems strange. Yet we have heard of Jesus being referred to as “the Great Physician.”

Dr. Stevens imagines the argument in the doctors’ lounge with representatives from numerous specialties arguing that they know what kind of doctor Jesus would be. Then he offers this assessment.

- The orthopedist knows Jesus was a fellow orthopod. After all, he made the lame walk and the “bowed” to stand straight (Lk. 11:11-13).
- The internist notes that he healed people with heart failure (dropsy) (13:2-4).
- The ophthalmologist counters, “Don’t forget he made the blind to see.” (18:35-43)
- A neurologist points out that Jesus cured a man with palsy (5:18-25).
- Our ear-nose-throat specialist reminds us that he caused the deaf to hear (7:22).
- The infectious-disease specialist proudly declares, “He cured leprosy!” (5:12-14; 17:11-19)
- The pediatrician quotes Jesus himself, who said, “Let the little children come to me.” (18:16)
- An elderly GP points out that great crowds came to Jesus for healing (Mt. 15:30), surely proving he must have been a general practitioner. A younger family practitioner thinks that Scripture and others imply that Jesus dealt with whole families, from young to old, and worked in the community.
- Nobody is surprised when the psychiatrist cites Jesus’ treatment of the mentally ill. (Lk. 4:33-36)
- Of course, the gynecologist mentions the woman with the issue of blood (8:43-48).
- Everyone laughs with the colleague fresh from the office who says “Jesus must have had the heart of a surgeon. Note the boldness he showed in Luke 19:45-46, when he chased the moneychangers out of the temple with a whip. He rushed in where others feared to tread. He didn’t carry a stethoscope. After reading Matthew 5:29-30, I’m sure he’d agree, ‘When in doubt, cut it out.’1
It may be astounding to realize that the gospels, which tell about Jesus’ life and ministry, make more references to Jesus healing and casting out demons than to His preaching and teaching. The following list shows their prominence.

**The Miracles of Jesus**

This lists all the miracles of Christ in chronological order.

### Miracles of Healing

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<tr>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
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<td>Lazarus raised</td>
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The list shows that the overwhelming miracles that Jesus performed were miracles of healing. About a quarter of the gospels are concerned with this subject and records 26 individual healing miracles and some 14 instances of healings of large numbers of people. Usually when Scripture makes reference to Jesus casting out demons it calls such an act a “healing.” The person is healed in being liberated from demonic spirits. Such healing takes place in the spiritual, psychological and physical realms.

Should we be surprised at the numerous references to the miraculous healing ministry of Jesus? Scripture is clear that Jesus’ words and deeds go hand in hand. The Greek word “savior” (soter) is applied to salvation or rescue from disease as well as sin and the word “save” (sozo) means heal as well as save. In several languages the words salvation, healing and sanctification derive from the same root and present the same fundamental thought. The German language illustrates this since Heil (salvation), Heilung (healing) and Heilichung (sanctification) all come from the same root word. Salvation is the redemption which the Savior has obtained for us, health and healing is the salvation of the body which also comes to us from the divine Healer and sanctification reminds us of the salvation and wholeness which consists in being holy as God is holy.

At the early part of His ministry Jesus went into a synagogue in Nazareth and read the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 61:1f.; 58:6):
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk. 4:18-19).

Then Jesus, The Messiah, rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down
and said to everyone in the synagogue whose eyes were fastened on Him, “Today this Scripture
is fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21).

Jesus’ messianic application of the words—words that spoke of Himself—shows that the
sense of vocation that came with the heavenly voice at His baptism remained strong. Jesus saw
Himself as coming with good news for the world’s troubled people.

This statement from Isaiah shows that Jesus’ ministry will be uniquely marked by the
presence of the Holy Spirit as prophetically told.

The coming of God’s Kingdom is signaled by several acts in the ministry of Jesus. The
healings of Jesus, rather than conflicting with His preaching of the Kingdom of God, were instead
referred to as a direct evidence of it. He stated specifically that His healing was a sign that the
Kingdom of heaven was breaking forth. In answer to the charge that he was a sorcerer, He replied:

“And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out?
So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God,
then the Kingdom of God has come upon you” (Mt. 12:27-28).

Similarly, when John the Baptist’s disciples came to Jesus to inquire if He were the One or
if they should look for another, whether He really was the Messiah, Jesus, before their eyes,
answered them by healing many of sickness, disease, blindness and released them from evil spirits
(Lk. 7:21). Then Jesus said to John’s disciples, “Go back and report to John what you have seen
and heard. . . . Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me” (vv. 20-23).

Peter who had been an eyewitness to Jesus’ miracles, when confronting those who had put
Jesus to death, reported,

“Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, signs and
wonders” (Acts 2:22).

Not a word or voice of protest was raised. No one dared even suggest that those miracles
had not occurred. For they occurred so openly that they could not be denied.
When you study the ministry of Jesus you have to come to the same conclusion that Nicodemus came to:

“Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. **For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with Him**” (Jn. 3:2).

The healing ministry of Jesus, then, was a powerful evidence that He was the Messiah, the long-awaited messenger of the Kingdom of heaven.

Foremost among His works was His forgiving of people’s sins, an act for which God alone had authority (Mk. 2:7). He also preached the good news to the poor that their day of satisfaction had come (Mt. 11:5), to the captives that their day of liberation had come, to the slaves that their day of freedom had come (Lk. 4:18) and to the blind that they would see. He made it clear that such good news signaled the advent of God’s rule (v. 18). The “poor,” like the “prisoners,” the “blind,” and the “oppressed,” are not only the unfortunate people of this world but their vulnerability makes them have special need of dependence on God. The “acceptable year of the Lord” refers to the era of salvation.

Jesus’ teaching was different, in that He saw God as acting in the present, in His own work.

This Old Testament prophecy, which Jesus accepted as the charter of His ministry, shows Jesus’ wholistic approach to ministry. He came to deliver His people physically, emotionally and spiritually. This is in line with Hebrew tradition.

**HEALING AND THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES**

In the Old Testament prosperity connotes several things in addition to healing:

- The realization of goals (Gen. 24:21,40,42,56).
- Success in labor (Gen. 39:3,23; 2 Chron. 32:30).
- Living in peace and safety (Dt. 23:6; 1 Chron. 14:7; Lam. 3:17).
- Enjoying the benefits of familial relationships (Ruth 4:11; Job 1:1-5).
- Acquiring and possessing material goods.
  (Dt. 28:11; 1 Kgs. 10:7; 1 Chron. 29:23; Job 21:23f.)

More important than the material blessings to the Hebrews were the spiritual and ethical dimensions of prosperity. True prosperity was linked to the blessings of covenantal obedience before God (Dt. 28:29; 29:9; 1 Kgs. 2:3; 1 Chron. 22:13). It is God who bestows prosperity on those who keep and do the words of the Mosaic (and subsequent) covenants (Dt. 28:11; 29:9; 30:9; Neh. 2:20; Ps. 68:6).
The material and spiritual blessings tied to covenant-keeping are rewards for the righteous, those who fear the Lord (Ps. 1:3; 25:13; 37:11). Similarly, prosperity is one of the rewards of godly wisdom. That is, the wise receive effective instruction and practice righteousness, justice, and equity (Prov. 1:3-5,33; 2:8; 3:2-4; 13:21; 19:8).

Those who refuse to acknowledge God in their prosperity (Heb. 10:21; 22:21) and to share their abundance with the poor and needy (Ezek. 16:49) forfeit the blessings associated with covenant-keeping; instead they are subject to the curses connected with covenant-breaking (Dt. 28:11,29; 29:9; 30; Prov. 3:9f.).

Isaiah prophesies that the Servant of God will prosper, be exalted, and prolong His time, and that the will of God shall "prosper in His hand" (Isa. 52:13; 53:10). This was fulfilled in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.

Prosperity is one of the fruits of the revival and restoration prompted by the implementation of the new covenant in the eschaton (the End—Ps. 106:5; Isa. 48:15; 66:12; Jer. 33:6,9; 44:17; Zech. 1:17; 8:12).

**Miracles of healing in the Old Testament belonged to its entire history.** The healing of Abimelech, Miriam, Job, Naaman, Hezekiah, the incident of the brazen serpent, the statute at Marah, the blessings and curses at Ebal and Gerizim, the terrible rebuke of Asa, etc.—all leave the testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures that **the redemption of the body was part of God’s redemptive purpose.** Intercession for healing was part of the very ritual of Jewish worship and its answer a part of God’s explicit covenant with His people.

In the Old Testament there was no question, in theory, that **Yahweh could heal.** In several places remarkable instances were recorded. Some of the most impressive stories are those in which children were given to women who were barren. Though barrenness was often considered the result of divine disfavor (Gen. 20:18, 30:2), a child was given as a particular gift of God to

- Sarah (Gen. 18:10,14).
- Manoah’s wife, the mother of Samson (Judg. 13:5,24).
- Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:19-20).
- The Shunammite woman (2 King 4:16-17).

There is a strange story of raising from the dead which took place after the death of Elisha and involves the touching of relics, which in the middle ages became so prominent a theme. Some men were carrying a body out for burial, and as they came to Elisha’s tomb a band of Moabite raiders appeared. The Israelites threw the body into the tomb and ran, and “The man had no sooner touched the bones of Elisha than he came to life and stood up on his feet” (13:21). Twice a plague was halted, once by Aaron’s act of atonement, again by David’s prayer (Num. 16:47-50, 2 Samuel 24:10-25).3
The same theme is found scattered through the Psalms and the prophets. In Psalm 103 Yahweh is blessed for healing diseases, and Psalm 91 tells how he protects from all plague. Similar confidence is found in Psalm 41, 46, 62, 74, 116; 121, and 147. In certain Psalms healing power is simply implied; others, like 73 and 94, protest that Yahweh has failed to reward goodness with health and mercy. Hosea made clear that Yahweh had power to save from evil—from plagues and death—but did not exercise it because of the people’s wickedness (Hos. 6:1-11, 13:12-15).

At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prayed:

“When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers, or when enemies besiege them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come, and when a **prayer or plea** is made by any of your people Israel—each one aware of his afflictions and pains, and **spreading out his hands toward this temple**—then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. **Forgive**, and deal with each man according to all he does, since You know his heart (for You alone know the hearts of men), so that they will fear You and walk in your ways all the time they live in the land You gave our fathers” (2 Chron. 6:28-30).

The Lord appears to Solomon at night and says:

“I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a temple for sacrifices. When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among My people, if My people, who are called by My name, will **humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways**, then will I hear from heaven and will **forgive their sin and will heal their land**. Now My eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place. I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that My Name may be there forever. My eyes and My heart will always be there” (2 Chron. 7:12-16).

Such a promise, conditioned by humility, fervent prayer, repentance and faith, is not limited to a certain era but is evidenced throughout the history of God’s people in the Old Testament and applies to God’s people for all time.

James uses Elijah as an example of the efficacy of prayer:

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

**Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly** that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops” (Jas. 5:16-18).
Elijah belonged to the people of God just as Christians today belong to the people of God. Therefore God’s miraculous power is available to all since

“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—
the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him” (Rom. 10:12).

David shows this same full-orbed understanding of God’s blessings:

“Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits—
who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Ps. 103:1-5).

With God’s love and compassion as his theme in this psalm, notice how the psalmist ties these many blessings together: forgiveness, healing, redemption, crowning, satisfaction and physical renewal.

Although the Hebrew Scriptures are replete with accounts of healing, they also have numerous passages that seem to indicate that sickness is the result of God’s punishment. Two key passages that emphasize this are:

- “I put to death and I bring to life; I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand” (Dt. 32:39).

  God is the author of life and death. He inflicts pain and healing.

- “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?” (Ex. 4:11).

  This verse is found in the context of Moses making excuses why he should not be called to be God’s leader and spokesman (Ex. 1-10). The point made here is that God in sovereign power divides His gifts among people as He chooses. As God the Creator, the Lord of nature, He will give Moses what he needs, which will serve as signs of his credentials.

- “I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I the Lord, do all these things” (Isa. 45:7).

  God then is the author of sickness, darkness, disaster and death as well as healing, health and life.
Consider the following examples:

● Amos, the prophet asked, “Does misfortune come to a city if Yahweh has not sent it?” (Amos 3:6).

● Jacob became lame from his wrestling with the angel (or Yahweh Himself) the night before he was to meet Esau on his journey home (Gen. 32:32).

● One of the most curious events was that of Moses coming directly from his encounter with God at the burning bush, when “the Lord met Moses, and was about to kill him.” His wife interfered by cutting off the foreskin of their son and touched it to Moses’ genitals, and God let him live (Ex. 4:24-26).

Why did God inflict him with such a near-fatal illness? In all probability it was because of Moses’ neglect of the covenant sign of circumcision in the case of his own son, Gershom. A rather extreme measure to deal with neglect!

● David was so displeased and fearful at seeing Uzzah struck down for merely steadying the ark as they were taking it to Jerusalem that he changed his plans and left it outside the citadel (2 Sam. 6:7-10; 1 Chron. 13:10-13).

In Old Testament times, then, sickness was mostly seen as God’s rebuke for man’s sin. Until late in the history of Judaism there was a limited or underdeveloped conception of the afterlife. Thus any reward or punishment coming to a person has been seen as here and now. The shadowy existence of Sheol, or the Pit, did not adequately make up for the disappointments and tragedies of this life.

God’s goodness, then, has to be evident in this life. Rewards and punishments have to be immediate, if at all. Health and wealth seem to be the rewards of God, and sickness and misfortune His punishment.

HEALING AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus’ ministry was unique to the Hebrew and Greek traditions because it is one of complete wholeness. While modern medicine has looked to Hippocrates and Galen as the only ancient source and inspiration of modern medical practice, they should have paid more attention to Jesus who had more influence on the basic ideas of modern man than anyone else. Not only is Christendom indebted to Him, but so is Western civilization. As one physician put it:

“It has become traditional to identify modern doctors in spirit with a long line of historical greats reaching back to Hippocrates. This notable Greek, a veritable pinnacle in ancient medicine, often called the “Father of Medicine,” largely set the pattern for current professional attitudes and relationships. But sometimes it is
forgotten that medicine owes its greatest debt not to Hippocrates, but to Jesus. It was the humble Galilean who more than any other figure in history bequeathed to the healing arts their essential meaning and spirit . . . Physicians would do well to remember that without His spirit, medicine degenerates into depersonalized methodology, and its ethical codes become a legal system. Jesus brings methods and codes the corrective of love without which true healing is rarely actually possible. The spiritual “Father of Medicine” was not Hippocrates of the island of Cos, but Jesus of the town of Nazareth.”

The interest Jesus showed in the physical and mental health of people was far greater than that of such religious leaders as Confucius, Buddha or leaders of Zen and Islam. This is true whether it has to do with what He considered the value of healing people’s minds and bodies or in the way He put it into practice.

**Jesus’ Spiritual Emphasis**

Yet Jesus Himself did not stress the miraculous nature of His ministry. This is why He calls His healings “works” rather than “miracles,” that is, they were the normal thing for Him to do and thus formed an integral part of His mission. Jesus’ healing is a vehicle of His proclamation of the coming of God’s Kingdom. They are presented as part and parcel of the Good News. Preaching, teaching, healing and liberating people from demonization provided hope for those who were lost and hopeless.

Jesus was able to heal man because He understood man. This is why Jesus came to make people whole as He met every dimension of human need. This only makes sense since man is made in the image and likeness of God. The Hebrew concept of body and soul is one of totality. It begins with the story of creation. God in Genesis 2 is seen as the Potter who molds man from clay, and breathes into the molded image the breath of life, and man becomes a “living soul.” Notice, God does not put a soul into the clay. The clay becomes a living soul. “Soul,” translated from the Hebrew word “nephesh” means person—body, mind and spirit. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures *nephesh* enter and die in battle. Men, not spirits, die in battle. Such as he is, man, in his total essence, is a soul—body, mind and spirit. This means that if we are to minister to souls we are to minister to persons, not just spiritually but physically and emotionally as well.

Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:7-29), who had come to the well for water, not for spiritual healing, bypassed a topic of general historical and theological argument (v. 20) to concentrate on the way in which the woman’s marital escapades had repeatedly broken God’s laws. His analysis of her disreputable condition and His presentation of Himself to her as the Messiah (v. 26) who would fulfill her deepest needs is a powerful paradigm for spiritual counseling.
The “mighty works” we hear of in Virgin Mary’s prophecy of her divine Son’s coming does not have so much to do with temporary healings of individual bodies, but she speaks powerfully of the gifts of freedom to the oppressed, food to the hungry, power to the weak and judgment on the proud (Lk. 1:47-56). Her vision of the rule of God is one of righteousness, of justice and of peace among men and women.

The miracles of healing, important as they were, were not an end in themselves. They did not constitute the highest good of the messianic salvation. This fact is illustrated by the arrangement of the phrases in Matthew 11:4-5. Greater than deliverance of the blind and the lame, the lepers and the deaf, even than raising the dead, was the preaching of the good news to the poor. This “Gospel” was the very presence of Jesus Himself, and the joy and fellowship that He brought to the poor.

That salvation from physical sickness was only the external aspect of spiritual salvation is shown by a saying about demon exorcism. While this miracle was one of the most convincing evidences of the presence of God’s Kingdom (Mt. 12:28), it was preliminary to God taking possession of the vacant dwelling. Otherwise, a person is like a house that stands in good order, clean but empty (Mt. 12:44-Lk. 11:25). Unless the power of God enters that life; the demon can return bringing along seven other demons, and the person will be worse off than at first. In this sense healings and demonic exorcisms were the negative side of salvation; the positive side was the incoming of the power and life of God.

The bond between physical salvation and its spiritual aspect is illustrated by the healing of the ten lepers. All ten were “cleansed” and “healed” (Lk. 17:14f.). To the one, a Samaritan who returned to express his gratitude, Jesus said, “Your faith has saved you” (v. 19). These are the same words used elsewhere of healing. Does this mean that the other nine were not really healed? This is unlikely since these same words are clearly used of “spiritual” salvation (7:50). Rather it is probably referring to a greater blessing bestowed on the Samaritan than on the nine. His “salvation” or wholeness was more than physical healing. It implied a sound spiritual state.

Jesus’ healing ministry was also unique because of His understanding of evil and evil spirits. Unlike the Platonic and Aristotelian understanding of man which sees sin being rooted primarily in ignorance with education providing the answer, Jesus recognized pride as the essence of sin requiring nothing less than a spiritual rebirth (Jn. 3). The Hebrew understanding reaches its ultimate expression in the book of Proverbs where wisdom is enough. If you get wisdom and exalt wisdom, then you shall be brought to honor. Thus morality was a relatively simple matter of education and good will, and fear a most useful instrument to enforce the right way when good will was not present.

Sin is not merely a matter of the mind, but of the will and of the spirit—the deepest recesses of man’s inner being. Paul explained man’s sinful condition by stating that mankind is “dead in [their] transgressions and sins in which [they] used to live when [they] followed the
ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Eph. 2:1-2). He further points out that all of mankind “gratify the cravings of [their] sinful nature” and follow its desires and thoughts and is thus “by nature objects of wrath” (Eph. 2:3).

But Paul also proclaimed the remedy for man’s sinful condition and declared the good news of the gospel, that is, that “because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions” (Eph. 2:4-5). He then explains twice that this is possible because of God’s grace, His undeserved favor: “it is by grace you have been saved” (vv. 5,8). He further explains that this grace is appropriated by faith: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (vv. 8-9).

Paul ends this section with the theme of God’s sovereign purpose and planning: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (v. 10).

Luke in summarizing Jesus’ ministry said:

“. . . He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil” (Acts 10:38).

While there is more to doing good than healing, healing is one of the good things we are to imitate our Master in.

Furthermore, Jesus also knew the reality and power of evil. He knew that evil spirits (demons) can possess people and that God can touch such people and free them from such alien spirits and put something else in its place. This means that man cannot always, by his own will, fight the infiltration of such spirits.

He believed that people could be influenced by “spiritual powers,” that is, nonmaterial psychic realities. He was Himself driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. He repeatedly referred to the angels of God or to the Son of man and his angels. While Jesus understood that people could be helped or enlightened and directed by positive spiritual powers, He also believed that they could be possessed by alien powers, unclean spirits, evil spirits, demons, satanic forces.

Furthermore, there is no evidence that He considered such realities merely psychological in nature, that is, what we might today call by the name of “complexes.” Demonic spirits made people sick physically, mentally, and morally and could not be controlled by the conscious will of the individual, once it had been set aside by the alien power. The issue was not that a person’s powers of knowing were impaired; rather he knew that he was demonized but could do nothing about it. It was a matter of an alien power possessing the will, not knowledge alone.
It is interesting that only four times did Jesus make any point of speaking to the sick about their sins:

- The paralytic whom Jesus forgave before healing him (Mt. 9:2; Mk. 2:5; Lk. 5:20).
- The man He healed at the pool of Bethsaida, whom He then warned not to sin again or something worse might happen to him (Jn. 5:14).
- The woman who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume and provided a model of someone who loved much because she understood that she had been forgiven much.
- The woman caught in adultery whom Jesus did not condemn nor did He condone her sin for He told her to “leave her life of sin” (8:11).

These four are the only accounts of His dealing directly with the sins of an individual. Judgment was for the establishment, for those in a position to take care of themselves who kept the old order inflexible at the expense of other people’s moral, mental and physical health. Jesus’ judgment, in fact, was reserved for those in a position to impose their ideas on others.

Jesus understood that people who were sick needed understanding and compassion, not judgment and punishment. He understood that they were dealing with realities or forces which the human will is incapable of handling on its own. They needed help and Jesus responded to their need.

At least six of Jesus’ healings were done on the Sabbath. Why? To show His own people, the Jews, that helping people is more important than following rules and regulations.

**How Did Jesus Heal?**

Jesus’ healing ministry was as diverse in the methods He used as in the kinds of diseases He healed. His most common means of healing was by speaking words and touching the sick person with His hand. The touch became known as a “laying on of hands” in later history of the church. There are only two incidents that touch alone was used by Jesus:

- When He was hindered by the unbelief of the people of Nazareth, and cured a few by laying His hands on them (Mk. 6:5).
- In the account of His healing of Malchus’ wound (Lk. 22:51).

The use of words or commands was perpetuated in the life of the church especially in the practice of exorcism. There are several instances where Jesus only used words:
- The raising of Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11:43).
- The healing of the ten lepers (Lk. 17:14).
- The freeing of the Gerasene demoniac (Mk. 5:8).
- The healing of the nobleman’s son at a distance (Jn. 4:50).
- The restoration of the impotent man at the pool of Bethsaida (5:8).

In raisings from the dead, it was simply said that the dead arose, and the implication is that they were then whole. The command Jesus gave to the daughter of Jairus was “Wake up,” and to Lazarus “Come out,” while Peter simply said to Tabitha “Arise.”

In most instances, the two means of **words and touch** were used together. In fact, nearly half the examples of healing in the gospels are characterized by this approach.

It is a safe assumption that **Jesus used oil** in healing since the disciples did (Mk. 6:13) who had witnessed Jesus’ healing and were sent out by the Master. This was a common healing practice from the earliest times of church history and has continued uninterrupted in both Western and Eastern Orthodox traditions.

On occasion people were healed as they **touched Jesus or His garments** such as the woman who suffered from a hemorrhage (5:25-34). Mark also points out that

“And wherever He went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged Him to let them touch even the edge of His cloak, and all who touched Him were healed” (6:56).

In some instances **prayer** was the key to healing. In raising Lazarus, Jesus prayed to God a prayer of thanks before commanding Lazarus to come forth (Jn. 11:41-44). It was the prayer of a Canaanite (or Syrophoenician) woman herself that brought the healing to her daughter (Mt. 15:25-28).

**God’s Rule**

The realization of God’s rule in the present time is a foretaste of its total triumph in another age. We still wait for “the new heaven and the new earth where righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13) and where “righteousness and peace . . . kiss” (Ps. 85:10). We still long for the time when healing is whole and death is no more (Rev. 21:4)!  

In reciting The Lord’s Prayer we pray for God’s Kingdom to come precisely because justice and peace have not yet embraced and the pain of disease still ravages the human body.
The New Testament warns against anticipating too much worldly benefit for the present time. Jesus Himself told us that the call of the disciple is to a life of the cross, of self-denial, not to a life of reliance upon miracles to free us from the ailments and agonies that we are heir to on earth. Thus the Kingdom of God exists in power among us whether it is manifested in a spectacular relief from pain and disability or in a life of selfless love (1 Cor. 4:20).

**Did Jesus Heal All Who Came To Him For Healing?**

Although in many instances the Bible states that Jesus healed "all" that came to Him (Mt. 8:16; 12:15; Acts 10:38), there are other instances where Jesus healed "many" (Mk. 1:34), one instance where there was a multitude of other sick people (Jn. 5:1-8).

Some have argued that John did not bother to mention that Jesus healed the others at the pool of Bethsaida, but this is highly unlikely given the rest of the passage (Jn. 5:10-15).

Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of Greek knows that the word "all" does not necessarily mean "every single individual." When Paul states that in the eschaton "all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:32), is he really saying that every single Israelite will be saved? Hardly. If this is so, then the question is raised, "How can we know when the Bible uses the word "all" whether it means every single individual or "people as a whole"? As with most issues of interpretation, we know it by the context.

As crowds were coming to be healed, Jesus would often withdraw to lonely places for a time of prayer (Lk. 5:15-16). Although Jesus healed "all" who came to Him, everyone in need was not healed.

**Jesus’ Compassion and Healing**

Some Christians seem to think that healing only has to do with faith. But Scripture is clear that healing is primarily related to who Jesus is—a person of compassion.

The Greek word here for compassion, pity, sorrow—*splagchnizomai*—means to be moved in the bowels, originally by anger; later with the connotation of other feelings. Jesus used it in the parables to express the feeling of the master toward the unforgiving debtor, the Samaritan toward the beaten men, the father toward the prodigal, and His own feeling for the crowds which were like sheep without a shepherd (Mt. 18:27, Lk. 10:33, 15:20, Mt. 9:36). Zechariah used a form of this word to speak of God’s mercy in Luke 1:78. It describes Jesus’ feelings toward the crowds when He provided the loaves and fishes (Mt. 15:32, Mk. 6:34, 8:2) and at the time of these four healings (Mt. 14:14, 20:34, Mk. 1:42, Lk. 7:13). The father of the epileptic boy used it to ask compassion of Jesus (Mk. 9:22).
All healing is the result of Jesus’ compassion. Jesus never performed miracles to impress people with the spectacular (which Satan tried Him to do—Mt. 4:1-11), but always performed miracles in response to human need.

When a man with leprosy came to Him and begged Him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean,” Jesus, filled with compassion, reached out His hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ He said. ‘Be clean!’” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured (Mk. 1:40-42; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13).

Evangelism by Healing & Deliverance

Jesus instructed His disciples to evangelize by healing the sick and casting out evil spirits (Mt. 10:1ff.; Lk. 9:1ff.; 10:1ff.). And the early church took that same approach and continued the same basic method of evangelism--”signs and wonders.” As pointed out in the last chapter, according to Dr. Ramsay MacMullen, professor of classics and history at Yale University, the main growth of Christianity in the first three centuries was due to healing and exorcism.

There were two basic points to the message:

1. There is a battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil.

2. Jesus Christ was sent by God to enable people to overcome evil by healing the sick, casting out evil spirits, and blessing people with a new divine life.

Thus Jesus is the Victor over the powers of evil which have invaded planet earth.

Healing & Hope

The renewed belief in healing has provided hope for Christians who often are only told to "grin and bear it.” Although the Bible is clear that self-denial, sacrifice and suffering is to characterize the follower of Christ (Lk. 5:1-11,27-28; 9:23-26,57-62; 14:25-35; 18:18-30) and that contentment is "great gain" (Phil. 4:11-13), this is not the whole story. God also wants us to believe Him for blessings which may include health, wealth, and prosperity.

As the Servant-Messiah, Jesus prospers in that He always does the will of the Father (Jn. 6:35-40; 10:1-18,31-39). Prosperity is seen in that He reconciled Israel and the Gentile nations to God through His redemptive work (Rom. 5:1-11,15-17; 11:11-32; 2 Cor. 5:16-21). He has been exalted highly and now sits at the right hand of God (Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 8:1-7), and He will come again in majesty with power and great glory (Mt. 24:29-31).
Is it unreasonable to believe that as followers of Christ, who will one day share in Christ's coming glory, we will share in some of the prosperity before His glorious appearing? Does not God at times provide a downpayment (deposit) guaranteeing our full inheritance in the anticipation of future glory (Eph. 1:14)?

Although prosperity may prove to be a snare to spiritual development because it tends to foster an attitude of self-sufficiency (Mt. 6:24; 19:23-26; Lk. 12:13-21; 18:18-30; 1 Tim. 6:8-10; Rev. 3:17), it doesn't have to be that way. After all, many of God's people such as Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, Barnabas, Paul, etc. prospered without ill effects. Paul himself instructed the Corinthians to give to the Jerusalem church "in proportion to their measure of prosperity" (1 Cor. 16:2).
4. THE APOSTLES’ HEALING MINISTRY
The apostles’ healing ministry began after Pentecost with the healing of the crippled beggar who had been lame all his life. As Peter and John were going into the Temple for prayers, he begged them for money. They told him, “Look at us,” and when he did, Peter said,

“I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!” Peter then took him by the hand and helped him to stand up. Instantly his feet and ankles became firm, he jumped up, stood, and began to walk, and he went with them into the Temple, walking and jumping and praising God. Everyone could see him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the man who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. They were all astonished and unable to explain what had happened to him” (Acts 3:1-10).

A similar incident took place with a cripple who had never walked when Paul was ministering in the town of Lystra. While Paul was preaching, this man managed to catch his attention with Paul realizing immediately that he “had faith to be cured.” He simply called out in a loud voice, “Get to your feet—stand up,” and the cripple jumped up and started to walk. The crowds were so amazed that they thought Paul and Barnabas must be gods disguised as men, and called them Zeus and Hermes. The two then worked hard to persuade the people not to offer a sacrifice to them (14:8-12).

When Peter came to visit the Christians in Lydda, he met a man named Aeneas who had been paralyzed and bedridden for eight years. Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ cures you: get up and fold up your sleeping mat,” and the man rose immediately. Everyone who lived there as well as the next town, when they saw Him, were all converted to the Lord (9:32-35).

Paul traveled on the sea and was shipwrecked on the island of Malta. Publius, the chief official of the island, took them into his home, and when Paul found that his host’s father was in bed suffering from fever and dysentery he prayed for him and placed his hands on him and the man was healed (28:8).

Paul himself was miraculously saved on two occasions. Just before this healing incident, when they had landed safely on the shore, Paul was putting sticks on a fire and a poisonous snake, attracted by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand they said to each other that Paul must be a murderer. Although he had escaped the sea, divine vengeance had caught up with him. Paul shook the snake off, and they waited a long time for him to swell up and die. When nothing unusual happened, they changed their minds and concluded instead that he was a god (vv. 3-6).

In Philippi the apostles met a slave-girl who had “a spirit of divination” and made a great deal of money for her masters by telling fortunes. She annoyed Paul by following them everywhere shouting, “Here are the servants of the Most High God, who are telling you how to be
saved!” Paul finally faced her and ordered the spirit in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. At that moment the spirit left her. As a result she lost her soothsaying ability and her masters lost their profit. They took Silas and Paul into court and had them flogged and jailed (16:16-24).

Demons or evil spirits are also mentioned three times in passages telling how the apostles healed large numbers of people.

There is warning to those who experiment with demonic powers. In the case of the demon and the seven sons of Sceva, Jewish exorcists were going around driving out demons “in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches,” and these sons of the High Priest had found how effective this was. But one day an evil spirit answered back, “Jesus I recognize, and I know who Paul is, but who are you?” Instead of coming out of the man, the spirit made him jump on them and beat them until they ran from the house naked and bleeding (19:13-16). These men found it was dangerous to imitate apostolic methods without the apostolic Spirit and power.

Here we witness the difference between magic and healing. Whereas magic tries to control nature or spiritual powers, which often leads to destruction, healing relates to them. And modern science is very similar to magic in that it seeks to control nature without an accompanying spirit of humility and awe.

Another negative example of spiritual interference and thus is the opposite of a healing is what took place as the governor of Cyprus was about to be converted to Christianity. The sorcerer Bar-Jesus tried to interfere, and for this was struck blind (13:6-11). This incident parallels the story of Ananias and Sapphira and also Paul’s warning to the Corinthians about punishing themselves with weakness, sickness and even death for their misuse of the Lord’s Supper.

One example of a person who was raised from the dead is that of Tabitha, or Dorcas, who died in Joppa, a disciple who was always doing good and helping the poor. The widows who prepared her body for burial were even wearing clothes she had made for them. When the disciples there heard that Peter was nearby in Lydda, they sent for him to come in a hurry. He came immediately, put the mourners outside, knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to the dead woman and said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up, and Peter helped her to her feet (9:36-41).

Another incident is that of Eutychus, who was sitting in a third-story window listening to Paul preach. When he fell asleep he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. “Paul threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him, ‘Don’t be alarmed,’ he said, ‘He’s alive!’” The group then ate and talked until morning, and happily took Eutychus back home with them alive and well (20:8-12).

There are ten places in Acts which refer to the healing of large numbers of persons by the apostles:
Acts 2:43  “Awe came upon every soul, and **many signs and wonders** took place through the apostles.”

Acts 5:12  “And **many signs and wonders** happened among the people by the hands of the apostles.”

Acts 5:15  “The sick were brought out on beds and couches into the street so that **at Peter’s coming his shadow might fall on some of them.** And a crowd from the cities around Jerusalem also came together bringing their sick and those beset by unclean spirits, and they were **all cured.**”

Acts 6:8  “And Stephen, full of faith and power, worked **great miracles and signs** among the people.”

Acts 8:6  “And the crowds **with one mind** listened to the things Philip said when they heard and saw the **miracles** he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed by them, and many that were paralyzed and lame were **cured.** And the **joy** was great in that city.”

Acts 8:13  “And Simon also believed, and having been baptized, stayed by Philip, because he was amazed to see the **signs and great works of power** being done.”

Acts 14:3  “Therefore . . . [Paul and Barnabas] stayed there a long time, speaking boldly with reliance on the Lord, who gave witness to the message of his grace by causing **signs and miracles** to be done through their hands.”

Acts 15:2  “The crowds kept still and heard Barnabas and Paul telling what **signs and miracles** God had done among people through them.”

Acts 19:11  “And God worked **unusual works of power** by the hands of Paul, so that if even handkerchiefs or aprons from next to his skin were brought to the sick, the diseases let them and the **wicked spirits came out of them.**”

Acts 28:9  “[After the healing on Malta], all the rest on the island who had diseases came and were **cured.**”

There is no good reason to question the fact that the first Christians lived in daily expectation of “miracles” and may therefore well have experienced them.

It is clear then that the ministry carried on by Jesus was continued among his followers.
Although not all were converted, any more than all of the ten lepers returned to give thanks to Jesus after their healing, yet this ministry was a powerful means of evangelization. On the basis of Acts and the epistles, if simple, ordinary people have access to divine power, it is impressive. These men seem to have a power and Spirit more than their own, which worked through them and gave them uncommon and unusual resources to deal with the physical and mental illnesses of people.

The biblical record makes it clear that the apostles used the same basic sacramental approach to healing as Jesus did. Some work—a word, a touch or a material element such as saliva or oil—was believed to convey the power that passed through the healer. The words or touch were important as an outward and visible sign of an inner grace—a spiritual energy. It was not magic in that the sacramental acts were only outward carriers of something nonphysical, something of the Spirit. The healer’s contact with the Holy Spirit had to be maintained or the action became empty and meaningless.

There are also examples of men healed by contact with the clothing of an apostle.

To the question, “Why did the apostles heal?” the most obvious and simple answer is that the reason was most likely obedience. The simple fact is that their Master had told them to do it, and so they did. It was only natural for them to continue to minister the way they had seen their Teacher minister of which healing was an integral part.

Gnosticism: A Challenging Theology

Even though the Hebrew concept that God created the world and it was good, and was meant to be good, was never lost to the mainstream of Christian thought, yet this new Christian movement was challenged by Greek Gnosticism. While Christianity looked upon the body as something valuable and the redemption of both body and soul remained a cardinal doctrine of the early church, early in the second century Greek Gnosticism was already attracted to the figure of Jesus and posed a serious threat. Groups of Gnostic Christians, known as Docetists, began to preach a Christianity quite different from the gospels. The physical world was seen as the creation of an evil demiurge, directly opposed to the God of Christ which meant that man’s body itself was evil. Thus any notion of an incarnation appeared unthinkable. The physical person called Jesus was seen as an illusion, and there could have been no crucifixion in the real sense. Christ had come to give a teaching, a system of knowledge (gnosis) through which man could save himself, and so any idea of atonement also disappeared in these systems.

Some of these Gnostics were leading thinkers and influential leaders. An intricate maze of philosophical and theological speculation captivated the intellectuals of the time alluring many, including Augustine at a later date, who reasoned that what one did with his physical self made no real difference. Accordingly the body had so little value that it did not need to be considered morally or in any significant way. Therefore the soul was the only salvageable part of a person. Thus Christian thinkers were forced to argue with great vigor to defend the value of the body and
the idea of the incarnation, the atonement and the resurrection of the body. These early Christians saw this teaching threatening the very fiber of Christian theology and thus feared it as much as persecution from the outside.3

The moral emphasis was one the ancient world was hungering for, and all over that world Gentiles flocked to the Hebrew synagogues. With one foot in Judaism and the other in the pagan world, the idea of incarnation took hold. They were at least aware of the Hebrew sense of value of the body, while the Greek notion of the gods consorting with men was certainly not foreign to them. If the incarnation was true, then the body was good and valuable enough to incarnate—to enflesh—not only the human soul but God himself.

Thus Christianity eventually won the debate and the power of the incarnate Christ was evidenced throughout.

The thoughts and experiences of the early leaders of Christianity was crucial for the church’s life and growth. As they began to explain the reality of their faith to a hostile world (e.g. creeds) their own understanding developed. As a result the historic Christian church has been left with a rich heritage of material they left behind for future generations.

Because of their continuing belief that Christ met the forces of death and conquered them through His cross and resurrection, those early believers believed that the power of death (the Evil One) was defeated, and that by following His Way people could find rescue from both sin and sickness.
5. LOSTNESS, FORGIVENESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS & HEALING
“Lord, Make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred let me sow love;
Where is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light; and
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
Seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

--Saint Francis of Assisi
Since research shows that emotional problems such as bitterness and the inability to forgive are often a root cause of poor mental and physical health, treating the emotional problems and removing emotional obstacles to healing with confession and prayer should be a high priority.

Numerous studies show that forgiveness is a key element to mental health. In fact, it is estimated that 70 to 80 percent of patients in hospitals would be well if the patients knew the power of forgiveness.

From a biblical standpoint, forgiveness is a two-way street. We need to be forgiven by God and we need to extend that forgiveness to others.

Our Need for Forgiveness from God

Why do we need to be forgiven by God? Because we have sinned against Him! (Ps. 51; Isa. 53; Rom. 1,3). When Adam and Even sinned against God in the Garden of Eden their fellowship with God was broken and they were banished from the Garden. Because of shame, they hid. But God took the initiative and went looking for them and called to Adam, “Adam, where are you?” (Gen. 3:9).

Two thousand years ago God sent His one and only son on a mission to earth. And Jesus’ mission was urgent because He knew the plight of mankind. Jesus took man’s lostness seriously. He came on a rescue mission. Luke put it,

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (Lk. 19:10).

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were upset with Jesus for spending too much time with the lost, the sinners of society. Luke puts it:

“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them”” (15:1-2).

To confront and reprove the Pharisees for murmuring about the fact that He spent time with those who were lost Jesus told three parables:

● The Parable of the Lost Sheep (vv. 1-7)

● The Parable of the Lost Coin (vv. 8-10)

● The Parable of the Lost Son (vv. 11-31)
People are Lost

The Bible is clear that **people, apart from Christ, are lost** (Mt.10:6; 18:11; 15:24). When Jesus was criticized for giving attention to “a sinner”—a tax collector-Zaccheus (Lk. 19:7) by saying, “He has gone to be a guest of a sinner,” Jesus responded, “For the Son of Man came **to seek and to save what was lost**” (v. 10).

In both the Old and New Testament the close relationship of God and His people is projected in the figure of **the Shepherd and the sheep** (Ps. 100:3; 23:1; Isa. 40:11; 53:6; Ezek. 34:11-16; Mt. 9:36; Jn. 10).

What is Lostness?

What does lostness mean? The Greek word *apollymi* carries two meanings: to “destroy,” “kill” and “lose” (to be lost, to die or to perish). Both meanings, to be destroyed and to perish, are used of mankind’s future destruction (*apoleis*, Mt. 7:13). Not to be saved means to lose one’s life (Mk. 8:35; cf. Mt. 10:39; 16:25; Lk. 9:24; 17:33), and to lose one’s life is to lose everything (Mk. 8:36) because one has lost oneself (Lk. 9:25). Thus to lose one’s life is to perish and to be destroyed.

It is within God’s power to destroy not only the body but also the soul; and this destruction is described in terms of the fire of Gehenna (Mt. 10:28; Mk. 9:42-48), eternal fire (Mt. 18:8; 25:41) and darkness (8:12; 22:13; 25:30). It is not the form of this ultimate destruction—fire and darkness—but its religious significance—ignorance of God—that is crucial. This is found in the words, “I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers” (7:23; Lk.13:27). Destruction means exclusion from the joys and pleasures of the presence of God.

**Diligently Seeking or Patiently Waiting**

What do these three parables teach us?

In the Parable of the Lost Sheep (15:1-7) we see that **the shepherd went out and looked all night** until he found the sheep. Then he called his neighbors to rejoice with him, saying, “I have found my sheep.” In the same way God seeks out every foolish and lost sheep.

In the Parable of the Lost Coin (vv. 1-7) **the woman turned everything in the house upside down**, and **diligently searched** until she found it. In Jesus there is a love that will not let go.

In the Parable of the Lost Sons (vv. 11-31) **the old father gave his son freedom to rebel and waited prayerfully for him to return**. The father does not go into the far country in search of his wandering boy. The foolish son was given the right to lose himself. The father was
not overly protective. He risked by giving his son freedom and waited. When the prodigal son “came to himself” and returned home, his father forgave him and restored him to his love. So it is with our heavenly Father.

In the Parable of the Lost Sons the prodigal son lost at least three things:

1. Fellowship with the Father
2. Self-respect
3. All he had

The salvation process came in four steps. Such a process provides the paradigm for all healing and wholeness.

1. Self-evaluation—He came to himself--his senses: “What a fool I have been.” (Lk. 15:17)
2. Confession—“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before You!” (v. 18)
3. Decision—“I will rise and go to my father” (v. 18).
3. Action—”And he arose” (v. 20)

The Lost are Lost to God

In these parables God is the Shepherd whose sheep has wandered off; He is the woman whose piece of money has disappeared in the darkness and debris of the house; He is the Father whose son has gone away, and become lost to Him.

What is the lesson? There are lost people! And lost people matter to God! .

The lost are a loss to God Himself. Because of sin, the highest glory—man—is lost to Him. Seeking the lost is not a chore to God; it is a heartfelt pursuit. The sheep, the coin, the son are not just lost; they represent loss.

The lost are helplessly and hopelessly lost in and of themselves. They need to be sought because

- Lost sheep don’t come home by themselves.
- Lost coins have no ability to find themselves.
- A son who has so blatantly raped his father’s estate has no claim to recovery unless he is received and forgiven by the father.
Notice that that which is missing is worth **an all-out search**. These people were in a search-mode. The search was intense, diligent and relentless.

And when they retrieved that which was lost there was great celebration. Why? Because what was lost was **so precious, so valuable**!

**God’s love for the lost** is seen in the fact that Jesus told three parables to emphasize the same thing, that is, that God seeks the lost. Nowhere in Scripture does Jesus speak on any subject by illustrating it with three parables, yet that is what He does here.

Taken together, it is an amazing picture of God. He is seen **grieving, seeking, finding** and **rejoicing**.

**The Price of a Soul**

David cried out in a cave:

“No one cares for my **soul**” (Ps. 142:4).

Yet the soul is the most precious thing we have. So precious it cannot be measured. This means people are precious, valuable! In fact, Jesus put it:

“What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his **soul**? Or what can a man give in exchange for his **soul**?” (Mt. 16:26; Lk. 9:25).

Nothing in life is worth as much as one single soul, one single human being. Jesus pointed out:

“Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. **Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows**” (Lk. 12:6-7; Mt. 29:31-33).

**Imago Dei**

If God even cares for little birds, sold cheaply for food, how much more are human beings worth to God, human beings who are made in the likeness and image of God Himself (the **imago dei**—Gen. 1:27) **“fearfully and wonderfully made”** (Ps. 139:14). We are so important to God that we are **known even before our birth** (v. 15). Notice God’s attention to man in the first sixteen verses of Psalm 139 (vv. 1-16). Is it any wonder that David ends this section with the affirmation: “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!” (v. 17).

Only man, after all, is made in God’s likeness and image. The closest thing to God on earth is man.
• **Spiritually** man is like God in that God who is Spirit communicates to man’s spirit. (Rom. 8:15-16; 1 Cor. 2:10-16)

• **Morally** man is like God in that he makes moral decisions.

• **Rationally** man is like God in that he thinks and reasons.

• **Emotionally** man is like God in that he experiences the whole range of emotional feelings.

• **Volitionally** man is like God in that he exercises his will by making decisions and choices.

• **Socially** man is like God in that he is a social creature who lives in relationship.

• **Physically** man is like God the Word in that when God the Word became flesh He took on a human body (Col. 2:9; Heb. 10:5,10) “in the likeness of man” (Phil. 2:7).

**The Fear of God**

We are to have a healthy fear of God! Jesus warned:

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mt. 10:28).

“But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him” (Lk. 12:5).

The point is that our fear is to be toward God who destroys both body and soul in hell. The soul refers to the true self. Body and soul are closely related in this life but are separated at death and then reunited at the resurrection (2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:23-24). We are to fear God since He alone determines the final destiny of us all. The word “forfeit” means to “lose the right to possess.” To forfeit the soul is to give it up to hell.

As Solomon points out,

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 1:7; 9:10).

The choice is between one’s soul and the world, between love and selfishness, between life and death.

Since nothing in life is as valuable as a soul, every effort must be made to help that person who is lost to be found.
In the Parable of the Great Banquet Jesus points out that we are to

“Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that My house will be full” (Lk. 14:23).

God wants His house full!

Jesus’ mission to save the lost has both a present as well as a future dimension. He sought sinners to save them from future doom and to bring them into a present salvation. To a repentant Zacchaeus Jesus said, “Today salvation has come to this house . . . For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost” (Lk. 19:9-10). The lost are in danger of perishing unless rescued. God promised through Ezekiel (34:16,22), “I will seek the lost . . . I will save my flock.” This mission Jesus claimed to be fulfilling. The salvation Jesus brought to Zacchaeus was a present visitation, although its blessings reach into the future.

FORGIVENESS
Jesus & Forgiveness

According to Mark, the conflict between Jesus and the scribes began when Jesus claimed to forgive sins. Such a claim was nothing less than blasphemy, for only God had the right to forgive sins (Mk. 2:7). The scribes were correct (Ps. 103:3; Isa. 43:25). In the prophets, forgiveness will be one of the blessings of the messianic age. The Lord who is judge, ruler, and king will save His people so that there will no longer be any sick, for the Lord will forgive all iniquity (Isa. 33:24). The saved remnant will be pardoned and forgiven, for their sins will be cast into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:18-20). God will make a new covenant and will inscribe his Law in the heart, granting a perfect fellowship with Himself and the forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:31-34; cf. also Ezek. 18:31; 36:22-28). A fountain will be opened for the house of David that will cleanse God’s people from all sin (Zech. 13:1).

With one possible exception, this function was limited to God. One prophecy tells of the servant of the Lord who will bear the iniquities of the people and give Himself as an offering for sin (Isa. 53:11-12); but Judaism did not apply this prophecy to the Messiah until the third century and later. There is no source known to us in which the Messiah by virtue of his own authority promises the forgiveness of sins. In all religions, including Judaism, the righteous person was not one who had been freely pardoned by God, but one whose merit outweighed his debt. Righteousness is considered the divine acquittal in the day of judgment, but this future acquittal is determined by a theory of merit. A person’s standing before God is settled by the balance between good deeds and bad deeds. If the former outweigh the latter, that person will be acquitted.

Against this background, one can readily understand the amazement and dismay among the scribes when Jesus on his own authority pronounced the free forgiveness of sins. John the Baptist had promised forgiveness (Mk. 1:4); Jesus fulfilled this promise. The healing of the paralytic was the external proof that “the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (2:10). The Son of
Man was the heavenly figure in Daniel 7:13 representing the saints of the Most High, who would come with the clouds of heaven to bring the Kingdom of God, and to judge human beings. In this saying, Jesus claimed that He was this heavenly judge, but that He had appeared on earth among men and women exercising the divine prerogative to forgive sins.

The centrality of the forgiveness of sins in the concept of the Kingdom of God is illustrated by the parable of forgiveness (Mt. 18:23-35). It sets forth the relationship between the divine and human forgiveness in the Kingdom of God. The divine forgiveness precedes and conditions human forgiveness. God’s judgment will be based on a prior experience of the gift of God’s forgiveness. The free gift of God’s forgiveness lays upon people the demand of a forgiving spirit.

Ladd points out that

“Jesus did not merely teach a new doctrine of forgiveness but brought to lost sinners a new experience of forgiveness. He did not tell the woman in the house of Simon that God was forgiving her or explain to her the way she might find salvation; He pronounced her sins forgiven (Lk. 7:48). This was her “salvation.” Jesus did what He proclaimed. The presence of the Kingdom of God was not a new teaching about God but a new activity of God in the person of Jesus bringing to people as present experience what the prophets promised in the future Kingdom.

A common enemy of health then is resentment or bitterness. We are warned in Scripture:

“See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many” (Heb. 12:15).

A “bitter root” refers to a root that bears bitter fruit. When bitterness takes over we become filled with pride, animosity, rivalry or anything else harmful to others. Instead we are to be quick to forgive those who have hurt us.

Forgiveness is Costly

Pardon, forgiveness is costly. In a British broadcast just before the close of World War II, C. S. Lewis declared:

"Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive, as we have in war time. And then to mention the subject at all is to be greeted with howls of anger . . . 'That sort of talk makes them sick,' they say. And half of you already want to ask me, I wonder how you'd feel about forgiving the Gestapo if you were a Pole or Jew?"
C. S. Lewis ended his quote with the following quote:

So do I. I wonder very much . . . I am not trying to tell you in these talks what I could do. I can do precious little. I am telling you what Christianity is. I didn't invent it. And there, right in the middle of it, I find, 'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.' There is no slightest suggestion that we are offered forgiveness, on any other terms. It is made perfectly clear that if we don't forgive, we shall not be forgiven."8

Slow to Forgive

Man is slow to forgive. We live according to the philosophy that life is a matter of getting even and of saving face. We bow before the altar of revenge. Samson, eyeless at Gaza, prays fervently for his enemies but only for their utter destruction. The potential beauty of human life is constantly made ugly by man's ever-recurring song of retaliation.

A servant had broken open and drunk several bottles of Governor Oglethorpe's rare wine. John Wesley interceded for the trembling offender, and tried to calm the enraged Oglethorpe. "Sir," shouted the irate governor of Georgia, "I never forgive." "Then," calmly Wesley replied, "I hope, sir, that you never sin." He continued:

"He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass."

The Result of Bitterness

Resentment is not only sweet; it is also bitter. We hate it because of the misery it brings into our lives. "It depresses us, robs us of gratitude, sneaks into other relationships. Resentment left to fester against an individual sours our relations with our wives, our children, and our mutual friends. We have a love-hate relationship with our own resentments."

Resentment, then, brings us deadly pleasures.

"Resentment forces a neighbor to be and remain an enemy. As we insist on keeping score of hurts, resentment feeds our anxiety that we are behind in this game of ill-will and must catch up. Resentment keeps enemy lists, files on every person who has injured us. Each one must pay for the pain he caused before he can face us as a moral equal."9

We have the desire that the person who offended us will remember the wrong as clearly as we do, so that when we finally even the score, he will hurt enough to satisfy us. Resentment is the desire that the offending person feels the pain he deserves. Then we are justified in our bitterness and it becomes clear to all that we are the morally superior person.
God’s Remedy

Only love—God's supernatural love—can drive out the demon of remembered pain. Love brings us a new beginning. It lets the past die. It moves people to a new beginning without settling the past. Love does not have to clear up all misunderstandings.

"To love, the details of the past become irrelevant; only its new beginning matters. Accounts may go unsettled; differences remain unsolved; ledgers stay unbalanced. Love prefers to tuck all the loose ends of past rights and wrongs in the bosom of forgiveness.”

For this pushes us into a new start. Letting go of the past in order to bring reconciliation is possible only through the love of God in Christ Jesus. Letting go of the past in order to bring peace, harmony and reconciliation is one of the most difficult things any human being is ever asked to do. Only God's love has the power to do that. His love keeps reaching out to us even though we have fed a thousand offenses into its memory-bank.

In The Lord’s Prayer Jesus tells us how to pray:

“Forgive us our debts [trespasses] as we forgive our debtors. . . . For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Mt. 6:12,14-15).

If we refuse to forgive those who offend us, we are in no position to receive the Father’s forgiveness. Our unforgiving spirit prevents our heavenly Father from forgiving us. Only the forgiving spirit is able to receive forgiveness.

Paul said,

“Forgive others as Christ has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

Forgiveness is healing to everyone who experiences it, though it may not be either easy or quick. But the anger of an unforgiving spirit gnaws away at our peace and calmness as it harbors resentment and bitterness in our hearts. Failing to forgive clearly damages us emotionally, hampers our own growth, progress and happiness. Like a sore which festers and swells, it becomes bigger and bigger until it sickens our entire mind and body.

This is a high price to pay for the “luxury” of feeling sorry for one’s self!

Yet it seems to be the path that we frequently choose.

Why?
One reason why we often fail to forgive is that we have **misconceptions about forgiveness**. Forgiveness is not:

- Sanctioning or condoning abusive behavior
- Conditional (“I’ll forgive you if you change”)
- Reconciliation (though reconciliation can be a step in forgiveness)
- Denial
- Forgetting saying, “Everything is okay now” or “I’m completely okay now”

Another reason, says Pastor Dale Ryan, CEO and founder of Christian Recovery International, a ministry based in Brea, California, is that we become **addicted to our rage**. We become so indignant that certain people have violated us that we adopt indignation as part of our personality, as part of who we are.

A third reason is it **makes us feel righteous**. It makes us feel better than those who hurt us. Lewis Smedes, in his book, *Love Within Limits*, gives the following penetrating insight into the nature of bitterness and resentment:

"Resentment is bittersweet. If we did not cherish it, we would let it go. What sorts of rewards do we get from our resentment? Why do we keep score? First, it makes us feel superior to the person we resent. Also, it gives us an excuse for indulging in exquisite plots of revenge, such as hurting the person by withholding our ultimate treasure—personal friendship. The more power we have the more dangerous is this kind of resentment. Third, there is a sense in which we want to remember past wounds to hurt ourselves. But, of course, we chew the cud of past wrongs to **enjoy** the feeling of hurt that memory rekindles. How we fondle these memories. We savor them lying in bed when we cannot sleep; we mull over them while driving our car; we brood over them while listening to sermons on love. We play the tape again and again because we get a strange, distorted pleasure in being hurt again—like someone who cannot keep his tongue off a sensitive tooth. We not only enjoy the painful pleasure of remembered hurt, we also enjoy feeling **noble** and **worthy** as the decent person who was wrongly hurt. Resentments serve a double purpose: they give us treasured pain and they give us a chance to justify ourselves. So we get two rewards—neurotic pleasure and religious pride.”

There are many ways to bury our hurts such as denial, trying to forget, or glossing over our hurt. But none of these provide true healing. When we either bury our hurts or nurse them, we hurt ourselves emotionally and even physically, says Dr. Vernon M. Sylvest, a physician with a prayer-based holistic medical practice in Richmond, Virginia, and author of *The Formula: Who Gets Sick, Who Gets Well*. While forgetting is part of forgiveness, it is not all there is to forgiveness, he points out.
What then is forgiveness?

Forgiveness is **acting in grace**. It is **acquitting the other person of whatever they have done to us**. Dr. Sylvest claims to have seen cancers go into remission once people process long-held resentments and forgive.15

**Forgiveness is a Process**

Forgiveness is a process. Dr. Ryan says that this usually means changing a relationship, establishing new expectations and boundaries but not returning to business as usual. **Forgiveness is discovering what hurt us**—exactly how and why we were hurt—**healing those hurts as best as possible**. Then we are in a position to learn to grow from them and beyond them.16

**Cause**

Anger is **caused** by various things such as **injustice, humiliation, fear, frustration** and **shame**.

Relating to **injustice**, a proverb states, “A harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov. 15:1). Any time our rights or even our imagined rights are violated, we are in danger of anger.

**Humiliation** is felt when we or loved ones fail or when we are looked down upon or put down. It is natural that we feel some anger when we are not treated with the fairness and respect with which every human being should be treated.

**Fear** also leads to anger for some people. It is a defense mechanism against the lack of control we feel when we are afraid. Parents sometimes find themselves angry when their children get hurt. This is displaced anger since it is the result of not knowing how to deal with fear. People who fear close relationships with others often become angry and drive people away. People who are afraid of being hurt use anger to hurt other people before they hurt them. We need to see fear for what it is as well as hurt and frustration and **ask God to help us deal with these emotions** in a responsible and reasonable way.

**Frustration** is passive anger in which a sequence of irritating events during the day can build up pressure until finally a relatively insignificant event can trigger an eruption.

**Shame** often results in depression or inward anger for it is a violation of who we are.

**Phases of Anger**

Anger has various **phases**. It can begin with **mild irritation** in which we have an innocent experience of being upset, then turn to **indignation** where we have a feeling that something must be answered or avenged. Both irritation and indignation can go unexpressed, though often they are
not. In fact, such feelings typically lead to unfair exaggerations and abusive language which result in put downs and insults. If fed, indignation leads to wrath, which never goes unexpressed. Then it increases to fury which suggests violence, even a loss of emotional control, and finally rage which is a temporary loss of control involving acts of violence.

TEN STEPS IN DEALING WITH ANGER

The following are ten steps in dealing with anger:

1. Understand
2. Admit
3. Honestly and freely express the anger to God
4. Quick to listen
5. Slow to speak
6. Leave vengeance with God
7. Make sure anger is thoroughly dealt with
8. Do not associate with hot-tempered people
9. Pray for change
10. Do good to those who have wronged you

UNDERSTAND

Key to overcoming anger is understanding it. Paul Hauck has outlined six levels people move through in getting angry:

1) “I want something.”
2) “I didn’t get what I wanted and am frustrated.”
3) “It is awful and terrible not to get what I want.”
4) “You shouldn’t frustrate me! I must have my way.”
5) “You’re bad for frustrating me.”
6) “Bad people ought to be punished.”

Our search for better control begins when we ask God to help us discover the specific causes of anger. To take the power out of anger we need to analyze its deception and distortion. By seeing anger for what it is helps us disarm its mystical hold over us.

In cases where we get angry all or most of the above steps are found. Steps 1 and 2 are true for us all. In step 3 our perception of truth begins to break down. We don’t like to be frustrated, but being frustrated is not as terrible as we may think. The retreat to irrationality and uncontrolled anger continues with the lies we tell ourselves in steps 4 through 6. Why must we have our way? Jesus didn’t. Nor did His disciples! Who says people are bad just because they frustrate us? Who says bad people ought to be punished? God said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay” (Dt. 32:35; Rom. 12:19).
In order to recognize the hurt, therapy may be necessary if we have long buried a major trauma such as childhood sexual abuse.

**Payoff**

We need to understand and acknowledge that there is a payoff in getting angry.

Notice that Jesus never displayed anger because His ego was bruised. Yet this is the main reason why we get angry. We get angry when our feelings are hurt and our ego is deflated. We get angry when someone lets us down or takes advantage of us.

**Pleasure**

There is great pleasure in anger. Pastor and writer Frederick Buechner perceptively analyses anger for us this way:

“Of the seven deadly sins, anger is probably the most fun. To lick your wounds, smack your lips over grievances long past, roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back—is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.”17 (Emphasis added)

Most anger is selfish and self-centered. It is an attempt to strike out or strike back due to egotism. While anger can be legitimate and even healthy, it also can be destructive.

**Control**

Control through intimidation is another payoff. Most of the time anger works for the atmosphere of anger tends to make people feel awkward and uncomfortable and so they try to find a way to minimize that by catering to the person who is angry. When we display anger people usually come to our aid, attend to our needs, make every effort to make life more comfortable, etc. People find themselves walking on eggshells for fear they will make the person even angrier.

**Displaced Anger**

We need to make sure we do not have displaced anger. That is, to take out our anger on the innocent. Too many children, spouses, and animals suffer from displaced anger. Anger must be addressed honestly and appropriately, that is, openly expressing it to God who alone fully understands the hurts and frustrations we are feeling and it must be addressed gently with the person who has triggered such anger.
Triggers

We need to **look for the cues that trigger our emotions**. When we find them, we need to avoid them until we have grown beyond them. As we have seen, there is always a **pattern** to our anger. Notice the beginning stages and nip it in the bud.

Exaggeration

**Look for exaggeration.** It is natural to demonize the offender when anger sets in for it blinds us to reality. In moments of anger, even the people we love will appear unattractive—a bit defective and repulsive. We need to ask ourselves if there were extenuating factors that contributed to what the other person said or did. If so, this does not excuse that person, but it makes it easier for us to understand why the person may have fallen into the trap of temptation.

ADMIT

The second, and probably the most difficult, step in Jesus’ cure for anger is that we **admit**, that we take ownership of our anger, that we face the fact that we have a problem of anger—that we are hot-tempered, that we are easily angered. We might consider that such a point is obvious and that everyone would naturally do this. But it is not obvious. A person may be guilty of such horrible sins such as murder, adultery, cheating, lying, stealing and yet when he is confronted with his actions he will find scores of reasons why such actions were not his fault, and in fact, he will argue that it was necessary for him to commit such acts.

We must then **take responsibility** for our anger. We should feel the anger, the shame, and the pain and watch where those feelings take us. When people get angry, they often say, “I just couldn’t help myself. I don’t know what came over me.” The implication is that the anger springs from some external source, and we are only the innocent victims. If so, then God could hardly hold us responsible. While it is true that things do happen that trigger psychological response which we label anger, at the point that this signal goes from the body to the brain, we become responsible for our actions. Our response to the signal, not the signal itself, constitutes the sin. Thus we choose to be angry or at least choose a response to our impulse of anger.

If we had no control over our anger how come most of it occurs in the privacy of our homes? How come that so-called “uncontrollable anger” does not usually occur in front of our boss or in front of someone we like to impress?

So often when we sin we refuse to acknowledge it even to ourselves. This is why Jesus taught that we must first acknowledge our sin, admit our anger and guilt.
HONESTLY AND FREELY EXPRESS YOUR ANGER TO GOD

Go to God in prayer and **honestly and freely express your anger to God**. Since God knows what we think and feel anyway, we might as well be open and honest about how we feel with Him. He can take it! People cannot. Their egos are fragile. They are often devastated by expressions of anger. David shows us how we can honestly and freely express our anger to God in the book of Psalms. Study it and learn to be transparent with God.

When it comes to fits of temper we can either count to ten or talk to God. Either works to a certain extent, but talking to God will have more lasting results. By doing this each time we establish a habit which eventually will become second-nature to us.

**CORRECT**

The fourth step for those who wish to conquer their anger is to **correct the injustice**. Jesus said,

“So, then, if you bring your gift to the altar, and if you there remember that your brother has something against you, **leave your gift** there before the altar, and go, and **first be reconciled** to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Mt. 23:24).

The typical reaction at this point is, “Didn’t the meaning of the sacrifice lie in the fact that it atoned for sin, that it covered the guilt of the one presenting it?”

While this was true it was never supposed to excuse the necessity for restitution. We must never forget that King David is in heaven today because he looked for the Messiah he knew was coming to save men from their sin, but when he wrote of his daily relationship to God and of his sin he said, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will never hear me” (Ps. 66:18). Samuel said to King Saul on the occasion of Saul’s first great disobedience to the Lord after he was king, “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22).

People have always found it easier to substitute the ceremonial aspects of religion for the demands of a clear conscience before God. While in ancient times this meant the presentation of sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem, today it means church attendance, participation in a Bible study or prayer meeting, or giving to the church. Although these things are right in themselves and should be done, they are worthless from God’s point of view so long as there is unconfessed sin in the life and failure to make things right. 1 Jn. 3:18,20 says,

“My dear children, do not make love a matter of talking and of the tongue, but **love in deed and in truth** . . For if our heart condemns us in anything, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things.”
Consequently, **make things right by apologizing if you have hurt someone by your anger.** Plan a constructive confrontation in which you humbly take responsibility for your anger and ask for forgiveness. Confess things and make them right insofar as we are able.

God’s order is “**First go . . . then come** and offer your gift.” We are to hold up our worship until our relationship with our brother is one of Christian love. God is more interested in correct relationships than in gifts. **Reconciliation precedes sacrifice.** It is impossible to be wrong with our brother, and right with God. Jesus says the initiative lies with us, not with the offended brother.

Of course, it might not be easy to get right with some people. You might honestly be like the fellow who was testifying in a meeting and said, “The Lord, he done saved me and blessed me. And I love him and intend to follow him. And I love all the brethren, but I want to say right here there’s a few of them that I ain’t no fool about.” But even if your enemy should be a vicious adversary, Jesus advises,

> **Be agreeable with your opponent quickly while you are with him in a difficulty,**
> so that he does not take you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the jailer, and you be put in the prison. I’m telling you a fact—you won’t get out of there until you’ve paid the last cent of your fine” (Mt. 5:25-26).

Jesus did not say, “Agree with your adversary,” but “be agreeable.” His emphasis was on the **attitude.** He was fully aware that there would be may times when the kingdom citizen would find himself in complete disagreement with the opinions and actions of people of the world, and that this could easily lead one to be cross, angry, and generally disagreeable. This was what Henry Ward Beecher had in mind when he said, “I can stand reforms, but I can’t stomach reformers.” People who are right are usually in the greatest danger of being a nuisance. The fact that they are right, and know it, has a powerful tendency to make them intolerant of those who are not in a position to see it their way. And this further alienates the very people who need to be drawn closer. Truth is thus hurt by its own advocates.

**Immediately Act**

In correcting a problem we must do so **immediately.** First, we must **understand,** then **admit** the wrong in our anger. Third, we must do what we can to **correct** it and do so **immediately.**

In the next two verses of this chapter, Jesus speaks of agreeing with your adversary quickly so that terrible consequences do not follow.
“Get on good terms again with your opponent, while you are still on the road with him, in case your opponent hands you over to the judge, and the judge hands you over to the court officer, and you be cast into prison. This is the truth I tell you—if that happens, you certainly will not come out until you have paid the last ‘penny’” (Mt. 5:25-26).

Continuing to speak to the offending brother, Jesus exhorts him to make a speedy reconciliation. He is saying that sin has consequences and that, if you want to avoid the consequences, you must confess and make right the sin as soon as you are able. Jesus’ point is that where only personal interests and not principles are involved, compromise is better than prison. Just as it is wise to be reconciled with our adversary quickly and before judgment is given, so it wise to be reconciled to our wronged brother before the judgment of God falls on us for our sin.

QUICK TO LISTEN

In our communication we must first be quick to listen. James put it:

“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you” (Jas. 1:19-21).

James calls anger “moral filth” and “evil.” Solomon gave a similar advice:

“The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride. Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools” (Eccles. 7:8-9).

In other words, “Don’t be a fool by flying off the handle!”

The point of this fifth step is that we be patient with people and circumstances. Listen to people around you for what they’re really saying. Listen for the message, for its meaning, for the need or hurt conveyed delicately by the words.
SLOW TO SPEAK

In our communication, we are also to be slow to speak (Jas. 1:19). When we are less hurried in speech, giving more thought to what we say and possible consequences, we will speak less rashly. Since God gave us two eyes to see with, two ears to hear with, but only one mouth to speak with, He must have intended that all of us would be swift to listen and slow to speak, slow to offer opinions, and still slower to express irritation and anger.

When you write a letter in the heat of anger, make sure you do not mail it until that anger has subsided.

Use Personal Communication

The seventh step in overcoming anger is the use of personal conversation in addressing anger. When John wrote his second and third letters, he dealt with some deeply disruptive problems in the church. Fellowship had been broken among some of the people, and John himself was being misjudged. The situation held the possibility of boiling anger and serious disruption. When he closed the letter, he said,

“I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face” (3 Jn. 14).

You can uncover the pain behind your anger more quickly in personal conversation than by any other means. In fact, soft, thoughtful conversation in which each person really understands the other not only helps to resolve anger but also goes a long way toward preventing it from arising.

LEAVE VENGEANCE TO GOD

Leave vengeance to God. The Bible is clear that we are to trust God to take care of vengeance:

“‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

Eventually all of us will pay for what we have done. The poet Friedrich Van Logauz put it:

“Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds he all.”

In the end, justice will come from God.
Getting even diminishes and cheapens us. Acts of vengeance are never enough. Vengeance leaves those who seek it with a sense of having been cheated. It brings a hollow victory.

MAKE SURE ANGER IS THOROUGHLY DEALT WITH

The eighth step deals with making sure anger is thoroughly dealt with. Otherwise it will turn inward and thus result in depression. Suppression is a coping mechanism often used by religious people to pretend that they have forgotten all about the evildoers and are not going to let themselves be bothered by such people. But what we suppress from our consciousness is only driven into the “underground” of the subconscious where it will haunt us. Buried anger simply re-emerges in other forms such as depression, gossip, resentment, sarcasm, or self-hatred.

It is vital that we explore the ways the original offense has been compounded by our denial and subsequent hurts. This one big hurt may have caused dozens of other hurts that cause us to cower, cry, or boil up in certain situations.

Work, one at a time, on each hurt and behavior or attitude that handicaps us.

A determination never to get angry simply causes us to internalize the problem. So instead of a blustering red face, we get stomach ulcers!

At the same time we must be careful about expressing our anger. Solomon observed:

“A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.”

(Prov. 29:11)

Expressing negative emotion may offer the pleasant sense of emotional release, but it brings no lasting solution. Only by dealing constructively with the root cause can we find a long-term solution to anger.

While many psychologists and psychiatrists recommend that we are free to express our anger, we also need to realize that expressing an emotion reinforces it and often causes us to feel the emotion even more intensely. Those who do loving acts usually feel love increase. Those who do kind deeds usually end up feeling kind. And those who express anger usually feel more anger.

Just notice people who claim that expressing anger really helps them. If this is so helpful, why do they continually feel the need to express their anger while those who control their anger don’t seem to have the same need to express it?

Although it may be healthier to express anger than to suppress it, expressing it usually intensifies it. Feelings and actions reinforce each other. Therefore we need to express our anger toward God . . . for He can take it. The psalms are a good example of this.
DO NOT ASSOCIATE WITH HOT-TEMPERED PEOPLE

The ninth step makes the point that we are not to associate with hot-tempered people. We are warned by Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived:

“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared” (Prov. 22:24).

Anger is infectious. By associating with hot-tempered people we are more likely to justify and rationalize anger and thus imitate their lifestyle. Anger can easily become our defense against the unjust aggression we meet in contact with others.

PRAY FOR CHANGE

The tenth step in the cure of anger is to ask God to change our heart. This makes sense because only God is able to do it. A few years ago I worked for a contractor by the name of Mr. Green who cheated me out of several hundred dollars. This person did everything he could think of to cheat people and to treat them as things to be trampled upon. Our daughters overheard the conversation my wife and I had concerning the money we lost because of this corrupt employer. Later one evening our daughters mentioned what a mean person this boss of mine was and added that they sure would like to see us get even with him. I explained about God forgiving us and how we are to forgive others also. A week later I asked them what they thought I should do. Whether I should go back there and see to it that he’d get a licking or that we would instead pray for him. They both replied that I should go and give him a licking and then we should pray for him. I’d prefer to see him licked too for that is the way we are. But God wants us to be different.

It is natural when you are offended to want to get even with the person. This is why we need to ask God to change our hearts and minds so that we will not even want to do it. When we do that God will change our minds—we shall be transformed from within by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2).

Is there anything between you and your fellow-men? Are there any feelings of bitterness and resentment toward anyone? If so, then go immediately to that person and make things right. Then, and only then, will God receive your worship and use you for His service.

DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HAVE WRONGED YOU

The eleventh and final step in overcoming anger is that we need to imitate Christ by actively doing good to those who have wronged us (e.g. Mt. 5:40-44). It is difficult to remain angry toward those whom we humbly and lovingly serve. Our actions of obedience to God’s Word will free us from such anger as the natural result is changed feelings.
A child said to her mother before bedtime, “I have had such a happy day.” “I am glad,” her mother replied, “But tell me what made this day any different from yesterday?” The child answered, “Well, yesterday I let my thoughts and feelings push me around, and today I pushed my thoughts and feelings around.”

We can allow anger to push us around, or we can handle it in a Christian spirit. Submitting it to the control of Christ enables us to diffuse it and become

“... quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires” (Jas. 1:19-20).

**We are able to forgive to the extent that we ourselves have experienced God’s forgiveness.** No more, no less!

In a parable about a king and a debtor Jesus illustrated forgiveness (Mt. 18:23-24). Although the king completely forgave his servant’s debt of ten million dollars, the servant was unwilling in turn to forgive a fellow servant of an obligation of a mere twenty dollars. When we who have been forgiven an incalculable debt of sin (ten million dollars) to God are unwilling in turn to forgive the minor offenses (twenty dollars) of another, our profession of faith in Jesus Christ becomes a mockery and void of reality.

The point of the parable is that **we are to be to others what God has been to us.** We are to freely and graciously forgive others as God in Christ has so freely and graciously forgiven us.

We need a new vision of God’s greatness and majesty. When we see God as He is, we also see ourselves for what we are—people in desperate need of God’s mercy and grace. Such a vision will open up again the flow of God’s forgiving love in our lives.

C. S. Lewis gave the following advice to a new Christian:

“I hope, now that you know you are forgiven, you will spend most of your remaining strength in forgiving. Lay all the old resentments down at the wounded feet of Christ.”18

Mark Twain, not noted for his piety, nevertheless gave what I consider one of the most beautiful definitions of forgiveness I have ever heard. He said,

“Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.”

Let us spread the fragrance which so characterized the life and ministry of our Lord. Let us “forgive one another as Christ forgave us,” that this fragrance will also characterize His body, the church. Then we will realize in a fuller way healing and health.
Closely related to forgiveness is righteousness. **Righteousness in Christianity is not primarily an ethical quality, but a right relationship.** It is the divine acquittal from the guilt of sin. To seek the Kingdom means to seek God’s righteousness (Mt. 6:33); and to receive the Kingdom of God means to receive the accompanying righteousness.19

**Righteousness in Jewish thought was a human activity.** The rabbis taught that it was a human work consisting of obedience to the Law and acts of mercy. Jesus taught that it was both God’s demand and God’s gift. A righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and the Pharisees was demanded for entrance into the eschatological Kingdom (5:20). This righteousness includes freedom from anger, from lust, from retaliation (vv. 21-48). If the attainment of such a perfect righteousness is left to human effort, no one can acquire it; it must be God’s gift.20

**The very heart of Jesus’ ethical teaching is the renunciation of self-attained righteousness and the willingness to become like children who have nothing and must receive everything.** The scribes were unwilling to lay aside their pride in their righteousness to become nothing that they might receive the gift of God’s righteousness. So long as they considered themselves to be righteous (Mk. 2:17; Lk. 18:9,31) they felt no need of God’s gift. In contrast to the self-righteous Pharisee stands the tax collector, who cast himself entirely upon God’s mercy. He had nothing: no deeds of righteousness, no acts of merit. He was therefore open toward God. “This man went down to his house justified” (v. 14), declared righteous by God. Obviously his righteousness was no attainment of his own, but the gift of God. The teaching of this parable is the same as the Pauline doctrine of free justification with the exception that there is no mention of the cross.21

In the Sermon on the Mount righteousness is also God’s gift. The promise of satisfaction to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness (Mt. 5:6) is **a promise to those who are conscious of their own unrighteousness but hunger and thirst to be right with God.** In opposition to the Jewish thought of merit, biblical righteousness is clearly viewed as a gift that God gives to those who ask for it.22

**The mission of Jesus brought to people an actual foretaste of the future salvation.** Ladd puts it:

“Jesus did not promise the forgiveness of sins; He bestowed it. He did not simply assure people of the future fellowship of the Kingdom; he invited them into fellowship with Himself as the bearer of the Kingdom. He did not merely promise them vindication in the day of judgment; he bestowed upon them the status of a present righteousness. He not only taught an eschatological deliverance from physical evil; he went about demonstrating the redeeming power of the Kingdom, delivering people from sickness and even death.”23
The presence of the Kingdom is a new era of salvation in which we receive the Kingdom of God by submitting ourselves to God’s reign and thus enter into the enjoyment of its blessings. The age of fulfillment is present, but the time of consummation still awaits the Age to Come.24

Such hope is key to mental health.

Kindness and Health

The emperor Julian the Apostate gave a memorable picture of fourth-century pagans and Christians when he wrote:

“These impious Galileans give themselves to this kind of humanity: as men allure children with a cake, so they . . . bring converts to their impiety . . . now can you see what makes Christians such powerful enemies of our gods. It is the brotherly love that they manifest toward strangers and toward the sick and poor.”25

Love in action has not only been vital to the well being of others and thus a powerful influence in the history of Christianity in defeating her enemies, but it is also crucial to our own well being. Dr. Markova points out that the fruits of kindness not only help the people who receive them, they also help us to enjoy our good works. They help us feel connected to others, which helps us feel like a part of the family of God. Dr. Markova shares one particularly meaningful example.

“As Rabbi Abraham Twerski, M.D., a psychiatrist in Pittsburgh and author of Do Unto Others, speaks of giving as a double pleasure.

“When I eat bread, I have but a single pleasure . . . when I give of my bread to the hungry, my pleasure is doubled. Long after my appetite has been satiated, I can enjoy having provided relief to another person’s distress.”27
6. THE BODY FOR THE LORD AND THE LORD FOR THE BODY
“One of the chief benefits then of divine healing will be to teach us that our body ought to be set free from the yoke of our own will to become the Lord’s property. God does not grant healing in answer to our prayers until He has attained the end for which He had permitted the sickness. He wills that this discipline should bring us into a more intimate communion with Him; He would make us understand that we have regarded our body as our own property, whilst it belonged to the Lord; and that the Holy Spirit seeks to sanctify all its actions. He leads us to understand that if we yield our body unreservedly to the influence of the Holy Spirit, we shall experience His power in us, and He will heal us by bringing into our body the very life of Jesus; He leads us, in short, to say with full conviction, ‘The body is for the Lord.’

Oh, what a renewing takes place in us when, by His own touch, the Lord heals our bodies, when He takes possession of them, and when by His Spirit He becomes life and health to them! It is with an indescribable consciousness of holiness, of fear and of joy that the believer can then offer his body a living sacrifice to receive healing, and to have for his motto these words: ‘The body is for the Lord.’”

--Andrew Murray
“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. By His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and He will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Cor. 6:13-20).

By the statement “food for the stomach and the stomach for food” (1 Cor. 6:13) Paul was quoting some in the Corinthian congregation who were claiming that as the physical acts of eating and digesting food have no bearing on one’s inner spiritual life, so the physical act of illicit sexual relations does not affect one’s spiritual life.

Paul’s statement “The body is not meant for sexual immorality (porneia), but for the Lord” (1 Cor. 6:13) is a declaration of the dignity of the human body. It is intended for the Lord. Although Paul grants that food and the stomach are transitory, he denies that what one does with his body is unimportant. This is especially true of the use of one’s sexuality (genital sex), which the Lord has ordained only in marriage for the good of mankind (Heb. 13:4).

The expression “the Lord for the body” (1 Cor. 6:13) probably means that the body belongs to the Lord because in His death and resurrection He has given Himself for the body as part of that redemptive work.

As an illustration of God’s high regard for the body, Paul cites the resurrection of Christ’s body and, eventually, the believer’s body (1 Cor. 6:14; 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). The physical body, like the spirit, is destined for resurrection, the proof of which is Christ’s resurrection. And a body destined for resurrection should not be used for immorality.

The work of redemption includes the whole person, which in the Jewish view of things includes the body. If the stomach is irrelevant for future existence, the body itself is not. Through Christ’s own resurrection it has been marked as belonging to eternity.

The affirmation “By His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and He will raise us also” (1 Cor. 6:14) is an affirmation that stands in bold contrast to the Corinthian view of spirituality, which looked for a “spiritual” salvation that would finally be divested of the body, “the prison house of the soul.” Such a view that placed little or no value on the material order held
that the spirit is somehow immortal, but the body, along with the rest of the material order, is
destined for destruction. The Christian view is that the final consummation looks for a new heaven
and a new earth; and in that new order the body is raised so that God’s people will experience the
final wholeness that God intended.

Paul’s statement, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself?”
(1 Cor. 6:15) means that it is not merely the spirit that is a member of Christ’s body; it is the
whole person, consisting of spirit and body. This again emphasizes the dignity of the human body.
As members of Christ Himself we are not to take away from Christ what is united to Him and
“make them members of a prostitute.” The body of the believer is for the Lord because through
Christ’s resurrection God has set in motion the reality of our own resurrection. This means that the
believer’s physical body is to be understood as “joined” to Christ’s own “body” that was raised
from the dead.

The reference “Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with
her in body” (v. 16) means that in a sexual relationship the two bodies become one (Gen. 2:24;
Mt. 19:5), and a new human being may emerge from the sexual union. Sexual relations outside the
marriage bond are a gross perversion of the divinely established marriage union. This constitutes a
bodily union with a person who is not a member of Christ, whose own body therefore is not
destined for resurrection. And Paul’s point is that how could such a thing occur because the
believer’s body already belongs to the Lord, through whose resurrection body one’s own body has
become a “member” of Christ by His Spirit.

The statement “one with Him in spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17) points out that there is a higher union
than the marriage bond: the believer’s spiritual union with Christ, which is the perfect model for
the kind of unity that should exemplify the marriage relationship of two believers (Eph. 5:21-33).

The reference to “other sins . . . are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against
his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18) probably means that no other sin is directed especially against the
body as “for the Lord.” In an illicit relationship with a prostitute a man removes his body (which is
the temple of the Spirit, purchased by God and destined for resurrection) from union with Christ
and makes it a member of her body, thereby putting it under her “mastery” (v. 12; 7:4). Every
other sin is apart from the body in this singular sense. It may also mean that in a unique way
sexual immorality gratifies one’s physical body.

Even though the body is “one’s own,” it is more correctly God’s since it is a temple of the
Spirit and has been purchased through redemption. Thus the unique nature of sexual sin is not so
much that one sins against one’s own self, but against one’s own body as viewed in terms of its
place in redemption.
There is also a very physical aspect to this in that we have come to realize that there are at least 54 sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS that are related to illicit sexual activity. Bodily relations can easily result in devastating physical results. Such a direct correlation between sin and consequences is often not the case with other sins—sins of the spirit.

Paul’s statement, “Do you not know that . . .” (1 Cor. 6:15) is a theological justification for the prohibition of promiscuous sexual activity. At the same time the content of this question serves to reinforce the theology of the body already expressed in 1 Corinthians 6:13-17. He reasserts that the body in its present existence belongs to God. Thus the body is included in the full redemptive work of Christ—crucifixion, resurrection and the present work of the Spirit. Thus he ends the section with the exhortation, “Therefore honor God with your body” (v. 19). Rather than dishonoring God with the body by being engaged in sexual immorality, honor Him with the body by remaining pure.

Paul is arguing that since the Holy Spirit lives in our bodies our bodies belong to God. Then he reasons that God’s proper ownership of the body is affirmed in terms of our bodies being “bought at a price” (v. 19). This means that we are God’s rightful possession because His spirit indwells our bodies and because of the redemptive work of Christ on the Cross.

Paul’s argument is that though the Corinthians (and all Greeks) thought the presence of the Spirit meant the negation of the body, the Christian view is the direct opposite, that is, that the presence of the Spirit in their present bodily existence is God’s affirmation of the body.

Because the body is God’s, we are not to use it in illicit sexual relations; instead, we must make it a holy temple (house) whereby to honor God.

Sexual immorality is a sin, even though it has been justified under every conceivable rationalization. This is not a prudish or legalistic attitude; rather it is a recognition that God has purchased us for higher things. Our bodies belong to God through the redemption of the cross; and they are destined for resurrection. As Christians we must flee sexual immorality since are bodies are “for the Lord,” who is to be honored in deeds of the body as well as in all other behavior, attitudes and motives.

God made us whole people; and in Christ He has redeemed us wholly. Therefore there is no dichotomy between body and spirit. This means that we should neither indulge our bodies because they are irrelevant or punish them to purify the spirit. The implication is that we must be careful not to so emphasize “saving souls” that we neglect people’s material needs. The emphasis of historic Christianity has not been on the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body. Creation is good because God created it and though it has been defamed by man’s sin it has also been redeemed in Christ and awaits its final redemption (Rom. 8:22-23).

This same emphasis of honoring God with our body is addressed in Romans:
“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you may obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. . . .

Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness” (Rom. 6:12-14,19).

This is a call for Christians to become in experience what they already are in position—dead to sin (vv. 5-7) and alive to God (vv. 8-10). The second step toward victory over sin is refusal to let sin reign in our lives (v. 12). The third step is to offer ourselves to God (v. 12).

The word “offer” means that we put ourselves in the service of God, and the words “parts of your body” refers to the separate capacities of our being (v. 19).

In Paul’s statement “sin shall not be your master” he conceived of sin as a power that enslaves, and so personified it. The words “not under law” mean that Christians have been freed from all moral authority. He has, however, been freed from the law in the way in which God’s people were under the law in the Old Testament era. The Law provides no enablement to resist the power of sin; it only condemns the sinner. The Law reveals the presence and fact of sin and is therefore holy, righteous and good (7:7,12), but it does not provide the power to live by God’s commands. But grace enables us to fulfill the demands of the law since it is rooted in Christ and depends on the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Paul also emphasized the disciplinary aspect of grace in which he shows that grace is not the freedom to do what we like, but the freedom to do what we ought—to please God (Titus 2:11-12).
7. IS IT ALWAYS GOD’S WILL TO HEAL?
Erroneous Biblical Theology: Realized Eschatology

Many proponents of faith healing fail to understand biblical theology as it does not see the theology of the New Testament as eschatological or see eschatology as realized (the eschaton—the coming of the End).

By the time of the coming of Jesus, Jewish hopes for salvation had become totally eschatological. The present age was seen as under Satan's dominion, and thus totally evil as evil people ruled and oppressed the righteous. Thus the Jews had come to give up on salvation within history.

Therefore "the people of God" looked for God to vindicate them by bringing an end to the present age. This He would accomplish through the coming Messiah who would judge evil and usher in the New Age, the Kingdom of God.

This was the kind of hope into which Jesus came. Yet He announced the Kingdom as present in His own ministry and proceeded to demonstrate it by healing the sick, casting out demons and freely accepting the outcasts (which was in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of the coming Messiah—Isa. 61:1-2; Lk. 4:17-21).

As Jesus began His public ministry He announced that the kingdom of God was “near” (Mk. 1:15). Immediately He began healing the sick and casting out demons. After He healed a demonized man who was blind and mute, He told the Pharisees,

“If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Mt. 12:28).

In Luke 17:21 Jesus proclaimed,

“. . . the kingdom of God is within you”

In 1 Corinthians 10:11 Paul refers to the Corinthian believers and himself as

“. . . on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.”

The Present Age and the Age to Come

Jesus, then, ushered the ‘kingdom of God’ or the fulfillment of the ages” or “the age to come” into what Paul calls “the present age” (Eph. 1:21) or “the present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). Yet the Bible states that we have only “tasted” of “the powers of the coming age” (Heb. 6:5). Although the kingdom of God has broken into “this age” it has not been fully manifested.
The hope for the coming Kingdom became ever greater and reached fever pitch at Jesus' Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday (Lk. 19:28-44). The shouts of joy quickly turned to demands for crucifixion as the people came to the realization that instead of ushering in the glorious New Age of their high expectations, Jesus revealed to them that the Kingdom He was talking about was a spiritual Kingdom in which He would reign and rule in the hearts of people. As a result Jesus was crucified and the lights of the eschatological hopes went out.

The sequel is that the Light could not be snuffed out forever. Jesus was raised from the dead by the power and authority of God the Father. Thus His disciples concluded that now is the time for the Kingdom. But instead Jesus returned to the Father and sent the promised Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

What is perplexing is that while Jesus had announced the coming Kingdom as having arrived with His own coming, and that the Spirit's coming in fullness and power was also a sign that the New Age had taken place, evil and its effects are still evident everywhere. Beginning with Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 3), the church came to realize that Jesus had not come to usher in the "final" End, but the "beginning" of the End.

As pointed out earlier, with Jesus' death and resurrection, and with the coming of the Spirit, the blessings and benefits of the eschaton (future coming of Christ—the End) had already come. In a sense, the eschaton had already come. But in another sense it had not yet "fully" come. The Kingdom and salvation, therefore, is to be seen as both "already" and "not yet," that is, "here" and yet "to come."

In living between the first and second comings of Christ we are living between what the biblical scholar George Ladd calls the “already and the not yet.”

Because the fullness of the kingdom has not yet come divine healing is only partial. While it is present it is not fully completed. While our souls are saved completely in this age we still long for the time when

“...we will be changed...[and] the perishable [will] clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” (1 Cor. 15:52-53; see also 2 Cor. 5:4).

The tension between the "already" and the "not yet" or "yet to come" cannot be relieved biblically. Just because God has brought His Kingdom to bear on this present evil age, this does not mean that we can demand all of the future in this present age. The redemption of our bodies and the final resurrection still awaits us.

Paul is a testimony to the fact that we can live out a joyous life in the already as we experience a mixture of want and plenty, sickness and health, poverty and riches. This is so because we have the prospect of a future glory (Rom. 8:18-24; 1 Cor. 15:20-28).
Just as we still die even though death has been conquered, so we still get sick though sickness has been destroyed. Just as the Son of God Himself was perfected through suffering, so we continue to be perfected through suffering.

When the prayer of faith is not answered and the healing for which we have prayed does not come, we are not to look for someone to accuse of failure in faith.

While we may search our hearts to see if God points out the reason, we must be careful that we do not become unduly introspective whereby we either too readily blame ourselves or others.

A healthy option is to remember that besides faith there is hope (1 Cor. 13:13). Just as faith has to do with God's promises that are for the here and now, hope has to do with God's promises for the future. Not only does Today belong to God, but so does Tomorrow.

Total health still awaits us. The promise of "redemption for our bodies" is still future (Rom. 8:23). Our bodies are still subject to "corruption" (v. 21) and thus we feel the effects of its limitations (e.g., aging—2 Cor. 4:16). Then, and only then, are we assured of perfect health pictured for us in Rev. 21:4:

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Only when the “old order of things has passed away” are we promised such perfection. In this age “we know in part” but then we are assured that “we shall know fully” (1 Cor. 13:12).

The Holy Spirit is not yet our full inheritance, only a “deposit” guaranteeing our “inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession” (Eph. 1:14). The day for our glorified bodies is still in the future. The day of our “full inheritance” is still in the future. Healing, therefore, is not a guarantee, but a benefit of Calvary.

The physical healing that Christ secured for us in or through the atonement therefore, is not always experienced today. Since it is God’s sovereignty, lordship and kingdom that bring any benefits of the “age to come” it is our responsibility to pray “Your kingdom come” and graciously and gratefully receive whatever healing God may choose to give knowing that in the age to come we will experience His kingdom in all its fullness.

The teaching that obedient Christians ought never to be sick, therefore, is false. Not only is this false teaching based on the failure to distinguish between the “already and the not yet,” the “deposit” and the “full inheritance” of the Holy Spirit; it is also the result of the erroneous idea that sickness is the result of personal sin. The Rabbis used to teach that dropsy was due to immorality, jaundice to hatred, poverty to pride, liver trouble to backbiting, and leprosy to an evil
tongue. Though disease and death have come to the human race in general because of Adam's sin, it is a cruel hoax to claim that individual sickness is always the consequences of personal sin or that a person with sufficient faith will be healed. Illness is not necessarily the result of personal sin (Job; Lk 13:1-5, Jn. 9:1-3).

Since suffering is so prevalent in Scripture some have argued that there is a distinction between suffering and sickness. Suffering is something external to us which comes as the result of our following Christ. In the case of the thorn in the flesh, it is argued, this is what Paul suffered and which we may expect to suffer as well. Sickness and disease, on the other hand, are a part of the fall and the curse which have now been overcome by Christ.

Such a distinction cannot be made biblically. The biblical writers simply did not make neat distinctions. In both the Old Testament and New Testament the most common word for sickness is the word that is also used for weakness. Usually only the context tells us what kind of “weakness” is meant.

The reason why there is no etymological distinction is that all evil is seen to be the result of the fall, not just sickness. And God delivers us from all kinds of evil, not just sickness. But this does not mean He always delivers us from evil. Even though Paul was hindered by Satan from returning to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:18), there is no hint that he or God “failed.” Sickness, then, is not some unique part of the fall which we are delivered from as we demand God to heal us by faith. Sickness is a part of the whole of evil and fallenness.

We therefore live "between the times." That is, between the time of the beginning of the eschaton and the consummation or completion of the End. At the Lord's Table we celebrate our eschatological hope as we proclaim "the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). Although we can already experience God's forgiveness, yet we have not been perfected (Phil. 3:7-14).

The "already" and the "not yet" pervades this "between the times."

- Although death has been conquered (1 Cor. 15:54-57; Heb. 2:14-15), yet we still die (Phil. 3:20-22; 1 Cor. 15:26).

- Although we live in the Spirit, yet we battle our sinful nature (Gal. 5:16-25) and Satan, the enemy of our souls (Eph. 6:10-13).

- Although we have been justified and thus face no condemnation (Rom. 5:1-9), yet there is still a future judgment (The Great White Throne Judgment for unbelievers—Rev. 20:11-15 and The Judgment Seat of Christ for the believers—1 Cor. 3:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 21:4; 22:12).

- Although the Early Church lived in the light of the values of the eschaton and knew its benefits, she had to live out these values and benefits in the present world.
It is the mistake of many to so emphasize the "already" that the "yet to come" is swallowed up. Thus Christ is seen as exalted, but not as crucified, and God's work is viewed in terms of signs and wonders and power, but not servanthood and suffering.

Is it true that because God heals, He must heal everyone? Is it true that because God provides, He must abolish all weakness, hunger, poverty, hardships, difficulties, persecutions—suffering? Hardly! (2 Cor. 4:8-12; 6:3-10; 11:21-12:10).
8. REASONS FOR SICKNESS
There are many reasons for sickness.

1. **Germs.** Most often, we are sick not because of the devil, nor because of sin in our lives, nor because of judgment from God. We are sick from bacteria, viruses, or physiological abnormalities. This is the "fallen" world in which we live. We may be sick because of inherent weaknesses. Our bodies are finite and therefore break down. Frailty has been passed down through the human family ever since the fall.

   Sickness can also be the result of abuse of our bodies. Improper diet, lack of exercise, or lack of rest may bring illness.

2. **Old Age** (Dan. 8:27). Although Daniel recovered, Elisha did not (2 Kgs. 13:14). There is no reason to believe that Elisha, who performed twice as many miracles as Elijah, died because of a lack of faith. If there was something spiritually wrong with Elisha, causing him to die in his sickness, why did his bones retain enough power after his death to resurrect a dead man (vv. 20-21)?

   Our bodies get weaker as they get older since the moment we are born we begin to die physically.

3. **Overwork** may sound like an unexpected cause for sickness:

   "But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me" (Phil. 2:25-30).

   There is no evidence that Epaphroditus was ill because of hidden sin or lack of faith. Paul tells the believers at Philippi that he "almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me [Paul]" (v. 30). Paul tells them that he is an example of a servant of God and therefore should be welcomed with great joy and honored (v. 29).

   Hardly a person with sin or lack of faith!

   Paul explains that "outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16).

4. **Discipline or Judgment** (1 Cor. 11:30).
There are believers who claim that God does not chastise His own with either sickness, disease or poverty. But this means that the Holy Spirit contradicts Scripture since the cross of Jesus Christ shows us that suffering and love are not incompatible. The Father loves the Son, and yet the Father willed that the Son die on a cross:

"Yet it was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer . . ." (Isa. 53:10).

Jesus never once questioned His Father's love.

David was glad for his afflictions because it was through them that he learned obedience to God's Word (2 Sam. 24:13-15; Ps. 119:67-71). Just as in the case of judgments (1 Cor. 11:30), chastisements (Heb. 12:5-11), and trials (Jas. 1:2-3), there are times when sickness is designed to elicit repentance, to produce endurance, and to result in holiness.

Some claim that God does not inflict His people with illness. This is not true:

"The Lord said to him [Moses], 'Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?'" (Ex. 4:11).

"The Lord brings death and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and raises up. The Lord sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts." (1 Sam. 2:6-7)

“The Lord has chastened me severely, but He ahs not given me over to death.” (Ps. 118:18)

“My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline and do not resent His rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, as a father the son he delights in” (Prov. 3:11-12).

"Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against You. You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. . . . The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything He does; yet we have not obeyed Him" (Dan. 9:11-12,14).

"I [Jonah] knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity” (Jonah 4:2).

When God allowed Satan to tempt Job, Satan said to God,
"But stretch out Your hand and strike everything he has, and he will Surely curse You to Your face" (Job 1:11).

Notice "Your hand," that is, God's hand, not Satan's. God did this first by using the Sabeans who were probably south Arabians from Sheba who became known as traveling merchants (Job 6:19). But then "another messenger" came and said,

"The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you" (Job 2:16).

"The fire of God" which fell from heaven is obviously God's doing. This is probably lightning (Num. 11:1; 1 Kgs. 18:38; 2 Kgs. 1:12).

It was God who struck Zecharaiah dumb for his unbelief:

"Zecharaiah asked the angel, 'How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.' The angel answered, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time'' (Lk. 1:18-20).

It is God who brings judgment on Zechariah's unbelief. There is no indication whatsoever that He uses Satan to bring punishment as Faith teachers typically claim.

Ironically, Paul's Damascus Road conversion makes it clear that it was God who brought physical blindness on Paul even as he found spiritual light:

"As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell on the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?' . . . Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything" (Acts 9:3-4, 8-9).

Although God does bring healing in all these instances, it was He who inflicted the disease. There are other instances, however, where God inflicts sickness without bringing physical healing:

"Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind, and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun.' Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand" (Acts 13:11).
The result of such blindness, as in the case of Paul, was belief:

"When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord" (v. 12).

When Gehazi sought to use the grace of God granted to another individual for his own material advantage, which was equivalent to making merchandise of God's grace (2 Cor. 2:17), he was struck with leprosy from which he and his descendants never recovered:

"Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.' Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and he was leprous, as white as snow" (2 Kgs. 5:27).

Those who say that it is unfair and unworthy of God to inflict punishment need to be reminded that God subjected Himself to the same laws of the universe that man is subjected to. Dorothy Sayers states it clearly:

"...that for whatever reason God chose to make man as he is--limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death—He had the honesty and the courage to take His own medicine. Whatever game He is playing with His creation, he has kept His own rules and played fair."1 (Emphasis added)

5. **To bring Glory to God.** Jesus ties sickness to the work of God:

"As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life'" (Jn. 9:1-3).

Without the blindness there could be no healing. So the blind condition provided an opportunity for Jesus to display the work of God.

Even **death can bring glory to God:**

"Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God" (21:19).

Emily Gardiner Neal was an agnostic reporter who determined to expose "the myth of healing." But in the process of her research found Christ. She writes,
"We are often led astray by the false assumption that God can be glorified only by a witness of physical healing. The truth is that some of the most effective Christian witnesses I know are those who are lying flat on their backs expectantly awaiting their healing by God's grace and at the same time are offering their suffering to be used for His glory."2

In one situation God is glorified by healing, in another He is glorified by withholding healing. Only God knows what is best in any given situation!

If God's actions do not fit neatly into our formula, we better change our formula!
9. SICKNESS & SIN
Is Sickness Always The Result Of Personal Sin?

The teaching that suggests that obedient Christians ought never to be sick is erroneous. This teaching is the result of the faulty idea that sickness is the result of personal sin. This was the prevalent view of the Jewish people of biblical times (e.g. the friends of Job).

The Rabbis used to say that dropsy was due to immorality, jaundice to hatred, poverty to pride, liver trouble to backbiting, and leprosy to an evil tongue. Although disease and death have come to the human race in general because of Adam's (man's) sin, it is a cruel hoax to claim that individual sickness is always the consequence of personal sin or that a person of sufficient faith will be healed. Illness is not necessarily the result of personal sin.

Suffering, sickness and death are the result of original sin. If it were not for original sin through the fall of Adam there would be no suffering, sickness or death. The Lord told Adam literally "in the day that you eat from it [the forbidden fruit], you will surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

Sickness & Personal Sins

It is also true that sometimes there is a direct relationship between personal sins and sickness:

"Praise the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all His benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases..." (Ps. 103:3).

The Bible is clear that there are psychosomatic illnesses. Solomon said that a negative mental attitude will produce physical disease while a cheerful attitude will act as medicine to the body:

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”

(Prov. 17:22)

Becoming bitter or rebellious toward God or refusing to trust Him produces insecurity, guilt, fear, and anxiety which in turn can result in physical illness.

The law contains great detail about the kind of diseases God would send upon those who did not live by His covenant. In Leviticus we find numerous kinds of diseases that result from rebellion and disobedience: fever, pestilence (Lev. 26:16,25) and in Deuteronomy the list is extended:

“The Lord will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured. The Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. At midday you will grope about like a blind man in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after
day you will be **oppressed and robbed**, with no one to rescue you. . . . The Lord will afflict your knees and legs with painful **boils** that cannot be cured, spreading from the soles of your feet to the top of your head” (Dt. 28:27-29,35).

There are numerous other historical references to God’s power to punish them with sickness:

- Moses hand was turned leprous and then restored (Ex. 4:6-7).
- Yahweh’s angels struck the men blind who were threatening Lot’s house (Gen. 19:11).
- Yahweh threatened the people of Israel with pestilence when they were rebelling against Moses and Aaron, struck down a few and then many, and later inflicted plague upon them when they turned to Baal of Peor (Num. 14:11-12, 36-37; 17:12-15; 25:3-9, 17-18; 31:16).
- The seventy sons of Jeconiah were struck down because they did not rejoice at the return of the ark (1 Sam. 6:19).
- Yahweh determined the death of Jeroboam’s child in order to wipe out the house of the unfaithful king (1 Kgs. 14:10-14).
- Ahaziah was refused healing by Yahweh because he consulted Baalzebub (2 Kgs. 1:16).
- In answer to Elisha’s prayer Yahweh struck the enemy blind and later restored their sight (2 Kgs. 6:18-20).
- The king Uzziah was struck with leprosy (2 Kgs. 15:3-5). It is believed that this happened because of his pride (2 Chron. 26:16-20).
- Sennacharib’s army was struck down in the night by the angel of Yahweh. (2 Kgs. 19:35, 2 Chron. 32:21, Isa. 37:36)
- Jehoram was struck down by an incurable disease of the bowels because he deserted Yahweh (2 Chron. 21:14-15).
- Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead because they lied to the Holy Spirit. (Acts 5:1-11)
- Some Corinthian believers had become weak, sick and had even died because they partook of the Lord’s Supper in an “unworthy manner” (1 Cor. 11:30).
This theory of sickness was expressed in various ways in the Psalms (Ps. 6:2; 41:4). Sickness is included as one of the punishments that seem to come from the Lord Himself to those that cry to Yahweh for deliverance from enemies and foreign adversaries.

In the book of Proverbs this basic theory runs like a recurring theme, warning that illness and misfortune follow sin:

“Do not be wise in your own eyes, fear Yahweh and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones” (Prov. 3:7-8).

“A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy brings healing.” (13:17)

Health and long life is promised to those who follow wisdom. Conversely, misery, misfortune, sickness and death follow those who rebel against God.

David testified to the direct relationship between his own personal sins and sickness:

"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'—and You forgave the guilt of my sin" (Ps. 32:3-5).

"Because of Your wrath there is no health in my body; my bones have no soundness because of my sin. My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart" (38:3-5).

When the lame man was let down through a roof for healing, Jesus told him that his sins were forgiven (Mk. 2:5). Jesus first dealt with his physical problem at the spiritual level, where the real cause of his paralysis was. Once the spiritual problem (sin) was removed, Jesus then healed his physical condition.

Paul warned that some of the Corinthian believers were "weak and sick" and some had even "died" because they were sinning against the Lord's body by partaking of the holy Eucharist in an "unworthy manner":


"Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:27-30).

Here we see that many Corinthian believers came under the "discipline" of God as they were weak, sick, and even dead. As God's redeemed children we are disciplined—just as a human father disciplines his child (Prov. 3:11-12)—so that we might repent of our sins (2 Cor. 7:10) and grow in grace (2 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 12:7-11).

The "judgment" referred to here means not God's eternal judgment, which is to come on the unbeliever, but such disciplinary judgment as physical sickness and death (Heb. 12:30). Since physical death is final there is no possible way to grow through such discipline.

Then what is its purpose? Possibly to save us from further committing the kind of sins that would result in God's eternal judgment (possibly what John calls "the sin unto death"—death to the body to save the soul—1 Jn. 5:16-17; see also Acts 5:1-11).

**Personal Sin Not Always Cause of Sickness**

There are the stories of both Elijah and Elisha healing a child, a precursor to the later healings of Jesus. No sin is imputed to the child or its mother, and these are acts of compassion through the power of Yahweh (1 Kgs. 17:17-23, 2 Kgs. 4:18-37). Elisha’s cleansing Namaan of leprosy is another example of healing where no sin is attributed to the sick man. (5:1-14).

While general or original sin (the inherited sin nature traceable to Adam, the original "head" of the human race—Rom. 5:12) is the cause of death and all disease (vv. 12,17-19), personal sin (individual acts of wrong we regularly commit—3:23) is not always its cause:

"Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?' I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (Lk. 13:1-5).
In ancient times it was often assumed that a calamity would befall only those who were extremely sinful. But Jesus pointed out that all are sinners who must repent or face a fearful end.

The Rabbis believed that "there is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity" and even thought that a child could sin in the womb or that its soul might have sinned in a preexistent state. They also held that terrible punishments came on certain people because of the sin of their parents. Here again Jesus clearly contradicts such beliefs:

"As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life'" (Jn. 9:1-3).

Some are born with afflictions--suffering before they ever reach the age of committing sins (Jn. 9:1-3; Acts 3:1-2). Others like Job undergo great suffering while living upright lives. Jesus Himself "although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). Jesus never committed sins, yet He suffered.

**Job and His "Friends"

Some have taught that Job suffered because of fear. They base this upon Job's statement where he testifies that what he feared came upon him (Job 3:25). But this is not why Job suffered. **Job suffered** not because of fear, but because he was the most "upright" person of his day:

"In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was **blameless and upright**; he feared God and shunned evil. . . . Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is **blameless and upright**, a man who **fears God and shuns evil**' (1:1,8).

This is God's view of Job. Because of his integrity, Job could be trusted with extreme testing (1:6-21; 2:1-10).

Satan, who insisted that Job's righteousness was due to God's blessings, that his service was for profit, was repeatedly shown to be incorrect. Satan even tried to use Job's wife to encourage him to curse God when calamities hit, but Job refused and thus "he did not sin in what he said" (2:10).

Eliphaz, the Temanite, as he ponders why Job was suffering so much, reasoned:

"Consider now: **Who, being innocent, has ever perished? Where were the upright ever destroyed?** As I have observed, **those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.** At the breath of God they are destroyed; at the blast of His anger they perish" (4:7-9).
The point is that innocent and righteous people never suffer. Since Job was suffering, it must be that God was punishing him for some sin (5:17; 15:20).

Scripture is clear that Eliphaz falsely accused Job for this is what God said to Eliphaz, who had attributed Job's sickness to sin:

"After the Lord had said these things to Job, He said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has"' (42:7).

Bildad, the Shuhite, added that if Job was upright then God would have blessed him. Since Job was suffering, it was obvious that Job was evil:

"If you are pure and upright, even now He [God] will rouse Himself on your behalf and restore you to your rightful place" (8:6).

Bildad reasons that since God cannot be unjust, Job and his family must be suffering as a result of sinfulness. But if Job pleads for mercy, and if he has really been upright, God will restore him.

Zophar, the Naamathite, had harsh words as well. He decided that God was actually being lenient with Job and that he could have suffered more severely if he would have gotten all that his iniquity deserved:

"Oh, how I wish that God would speak, that He would open His lips against you and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom has two sides. Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin" (11:5-6).

Here we see that Zophar also thinks that Job is shallow and lacks an understanding of the true nature of God (11:7-9). We see later in this saga, however, that it is Zophar who lacks wisdom as eventually God spoke against Zophar himself (42:7).

Job's response to the theology of his friends was that they were "miserable comforters":

"I have heard many things like these; miserable comforters are you all!" (16:2).

Job saw the fallacy of their arguments as they had over-simplified life. He states that some wicked people do prosper:
"The tents of marauders are undisturbed, and those who provoke God are secure—those who carry their god in their hands. . . . Why do the wicked live on, growing old and increasing in power? They see their children established around them, their offspring before their eyes. Their homes are safe and free from fear; the rod of God is not upon them" (12:6-9).

Job's counselor's have elaborated on the fate of the wicked (8:11-19; 15:20-35; 18:5-21; 20:1-29), but Job insists that experience shows just the reverse of what his friends have said.

The wicked, who want to know nothing of God's ways and who even consider prayer a useless exercise often flourish in all they do (21:14-15). Far from dying prematurely, as Zophar assumed concerning them (20:11), they live long and increase in power (v. 7). Bildad's claim that the wicked have no offspring or descendants (18:19) Job flatly denies (21:8,11).

Such statements irked the counselors and made them brand Job as a man whose feet were slipping (12:5; 9:21-24).

Yet Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, concurred with Job's observation:

"In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness."

(Eccles. 7:15)

The prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous is also addressed by Ezekiel (12:1-2) and by David in two entire psalms (Ps. 37 and 73). For this position to be logical it would follow that if disobedience is the result of sin, then prosperity must automatically be the result of obedience to God. But to hold to such a position is to fly in the face of Scripture as well as life.

Yet Job's friends insisted upon their distorted theology as they instructed Job:

"Submit to God and be at peace with him; in this way prosperity will come to you. Accept instruction from his mouth and lay up his words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored; If you remove wickedness far from your tent and assign your nuggets to the dust, your gold of Ophir to the rocks in the ravines, then the Almighty will be your gold, the choicest silver for you. Surely then you will find delight in the Almighty and will lift up your face to God. You will pray to Him, and He will hear you, and you will fulfill your vows. What you decide on will be done, and light will shine on your ways" (22:21-28).

This ancient counsel sounds like an echo from the Faith teachers of today. And it was as convoluted then as it is now.
Job had already made it clear that he deeply yearned to see God and be His friend (19:25-27). And he responds to this last attempt by Eliphaz with the statement:

"I have not departed from the commands of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread" (23:12).

Job understood that God tried him and all the righteous for a purpose:

"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (23:10).

This is in the same vein that Peter, who once rebelled at the idea that Christ would suffer (Mt. 16:21-23), makes his statement:

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, 'If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will come of the ungodly and the sinner?' So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good" (1 Pet. 4:12-19).

Just as in the case of Job, the persecutions that believers during the time of Jesus were undergoing were divinely sent judgment intended to purify God's people. And Peter argues that if God brings judgment on His own people, how much more serious will the judgment be that he will bring on unbelievers!

Not only was Job disappointed with his "miserable comforters," but God was upset with them:

"After the Lord had said these things to Job, He said to Eliphaz the Temanite, 'I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as my servant Job has'" (Job 42:7).

Job, like the rest of us, was imperfect with the weaknesses of fallen humanity. His misfortunes led him to lament his birth (ch. 3); to vacillate between desiring God to crush him (6:8-9) and to heal him (7:7-10); to blame God for tormenting him (13:21,25) and treating him
unjustly (9:21-24); to question God's treatment of him (ch. 10); and to occasionally perceive God as his enemy (13:13-10). These are the reasons why Job is rebuked by God (chs. 38-42). And Job repents of such unbelief!

It is vital to recognize, however, that Job is rebuked for challenging God's wisdom and sovereignty and thus acting out of ignorance (38:2) and presumption (40:8), not for fear and unbelief by speaking "negative confessions."

In the last chapter of the book (42:7-9), despite Job's mistakes in word and attitude while he suffered (though he was the most upright person of his day, he was not perfect), he is now commended and the counselors are rebuked. Why? Because even in his rage, even when he challenged God, Job was determined to speak honestly and truthfully before Him.

The counselors, on the other hand, mouthed many correct and often beautiful creedal statements, but without living knowledge of the God they claimed to honor. Job spoke to God; they only spoke about God. Even worse, their *spiritual arrogance caused them to claim knowledge they did not possess*. They presumed to know why Job was suffering.

In the last section of the book (vv. 12-16) we see the cosmic battle with the Accuser to be over as Job is restored. No longer is there a reason for Job to experience suffering--unless he was sinful and deserved it, which is not the case.

God does not allow us to suffer for no reason, and even though the reason may be hidden in the mystery of His divine purpose (Isa. 55:8-9)—never for us to know in this life—*we must trust in Him as the God who always does only what is right*. 
10. HEALTH, MEDICINE & HEALING
Faith and science are not contradictory! Our understanding of faith and our understanding of science may be contradictory. But God is the source of all truth, whether in the natural or supernatural realms. Thus faith is not opposed to technology.

There is no need for opposition between prayer and medicine. In fact, such opposition is contrary to Scripture and common sense. Sometimes God cures directly through prayer and at other times through nature, assisted by doctors who have been trained in how the body can be assisted to throw off the sickness that oppresses it.

While it is true that the early church had a somewhat negative view of medicine, it did minister to the sick in other ways beside the exercise of the gifts of healings. And the primary reason the early church had a negative view was because the practice of medicine at that time was intertwined with occultic practices.

In the second century, Origen (A.D. 185-253) considered divine healing without the aid of medicine as being a superior way of healing:

“When one seeks help in illness it is possible to use the usual and simple method of medicine. It is also possible to use the higher and better way and seek blessing from Him who is God above, and seek Him in devotion and prayer."

Other church fathers protested a purely materialistic approach to medicine. Such a secular approach became so controversial that Justinian (A.D. 527-567) was pressured to close the medical schools at Athens and Alexandria. In the year 1215 Pope Innocent III condemned surgery, and in 1248 the church determined that the dissection of the human body was a sacrilege. The church’s controversy with the science of medicine continued until modern times.

Yet when Christianity became the official religion under Emperor Constantine a spiritual climate was created for the institutionalizing of healing. As a result

- Fabiola established the first hospital (hospice).
- Basil of Caesarea opened a leprosarium.
- Thalasias began an asylum for the blind.
- Apollonius provided the first free dispensary.

Since all truth is God’s truth, it should not surprise us if the God of nature is also the God of that which transcends nature—the realm of the spirit. Therefore the truth of science and the truth of Scripture—God’s Word—go hand in hand.

This became the understanding of many people as medicine was increasingly freed from occultic practices and became more of a scientific practice. At the time of the Renaissance, however, when Galileo contradicted the traditional belief that the sun circled around the earth,
which at that time was considered to be the center of the universe, medicine became more suspect again. Theologians wrongly declared that the Bible taught that the sun moved around the earth and thus the rupture between religion and science began. Since then evolution has gained speed as creationism has been relegated to "fundamentalists."

Yet in the last thirty-five years there has been a turn-around with spirituality and science moving toward each other into a renewed partnership. There are even courses in medical school on spirituality.

There has been a growing awareness that religion is good for our health. Several hundred studies have been completed to show people who are devoted to religion live longer and enjoy better health. Dr. Larry Dossey asks in 1996:

"Will we reach a point where physicians who ignore prayer will be judged guilty of malpractice? . . .

Prayer is a medical and scientific issue. Today over 130 controlled studies investigating the effects of intercessory prayer have been carried out, and over half of these show statistical evidence that prayer has a significant effect. In addition, more than 250 studies show that, on an average, religious practice that includes prayer promotes health."3

This is an astounding statement, especially since it comes from the medical community. If doctors can be sued for malpractice if they don’t provide an effective treatment of prayer, what about rabbis, ministers and priests who don’t pray for healing?

This is an amazing shift in the attitude of the medical profession toward spirituality and healing in the last thirty-five years.

What led to this rift is that some had witnessed patients become increasingly ill and even die because zealous fanatics within Pentecostal and other religious traditions claimed they had been cured through prayer with no regard for "lying symptoms." Thus many in the medical profession viewed religion as a "crutch," and a dangerous one at that, and had little use for God.

The Book of Sirach (also known as Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha), which was written in the second century B.C. when medicine was still in its early development, religion and medicine worked in tandem with high regard for each other. The Jewish people of this period of two centuries before the coming of Christ believed that the two can work together.

"Hold the physician in honor, for he is essential to you, and God it was who established his profession. From God the doctor has his wisdom, and the king provides for his sustenance. His knowledge makes the doctor distinguished, and
gives him access to those in authority. God makes the earth yield healing herbs which the prudent man should not neglect; Was not the water sweetened by a twig that men might learn his power?

He endows us with the knowledge to glory in his mighty works, through which the doctor eases pain and the druggist prepares his medicines; thus God’s creative work continues without cease in its efficacy on the surface of the earth.

My son, when you are ill, delay not, but pray to God, who will heal you: Flee wickedness; let your hands be just, cleanse your heart of every sin; Offer your sweet-smelling oblation and petition, a rich offering according to your means. Then give the doctor his place lest he leave; for you need him too. There are times that give him an advantage, and he too beseeches God. That his diagnosis may be correct and his treatment bring about a cure. He who is a sinner toward his Maker will be defiant toward the doctor” (Sirach 38:1-15, NAB).

Here is the combination of prayer for healing and the recognition that God also cures through the skill of the doctor and through drugs.

Two centuries later we still see this positive attitude toward the role of medicine in health and healing. Basil (A.D. 330-379) met his old friend Gregory of Nazianzus in a monastery in the desert and went on preaching missions together. In A.D. 370 he was appointed bishop of Caesarea where he founded and maintained a public hospital just outside the city. In his writings he considers whether turning to medicine is in keeping with piety and concludes that medical science has been given to us by God and that to reject entirely the benefits to be derived “shows a contentious spirit.”

God’s team for healing may include the doctor, the nurse, the pharmacist, church elders who pray for healing because of their position as spiritual leaders (Jas. 5:16), and the person with the gift of healing. Thus the natural and the supernatural can work together. The majesty, beauty and creative wisdom found in nature can be used for God’s creative purposes.

Medicine

In Egypt the priest-physician began to establish their traditions in the late 4th millennium B.C. Early evidences of their medical practices are fiber splints for fractures (ca. 2800 B.C.) And the engraved representations of surgery (circumcision and perhaps amputation) on a tomb near Memphis (ca. 2500 B.C.). Some ancient papyri deal with medical treatment and surgery (Ebers papyrus), pharmacy and medicine (Hearst papyrus) and the treatment of surgical cases (Edwin Smith papyrus). This material probably dates from the very early 3rd millennium B.C. In what is sometimes regarded as a “prescientific” age, the ancient Egyptians discovered the correct (and only) way of reducing a dislocated lower jaw and established the four basic elements of a compound prescription (basis, adjuvans, corrigens, exipient) used to prepare many modern
medicines. Although most of their therapeutic procedures used magic and superstition, the Edwin Smith papyrus, probably the earliest extant systematic record of surgical case histories, contains records of examination, diagnosis and treatment of conditions including hemiplegia, cranial traumata, fevers and spinal and other dislocations.

Apart from their reliance upon magic and sorcery, the Mesopotamians were in agreement with the Egyptians in their **use of a wide variety of therapeutic substances, especially herbs.** The Sumerians were the first to discover the antipyretic and analgesic qualities of acetylsalicylic acid (“aspirin”) the world’s most widely used drug), which they made either by infusion or decoction from the bark and leaves of willow trees (one of the species of Salicaceae, perhaps *Salix babylonica*). They were also familiar with the healing properties of many shrubs and plants, and among other achievements they have been credited with the discovery of the cathartic qualities of castor oil (*Oleum ricini*). During the period of Hammurabi (ca. 1792-1750 B.C.), patients were charged according to their means, and penalties were prescribed for malpractice.

There is little evidence that serious attention was given, either in Egypt or in Mesopotamia, to regulating diets in order to promote and maintain good health. All edible substances were potentially available as food. By contrast, the **restrictive dietary traditions of the Hebrews were unique in the ancient Near East.** Thus, methods to ensure health and healing in the ancient Near East were based on empirical and magical rather than preventive considerations. Despite their rational aspects, they were ultimately based upon superstition, magic and the fear of the gods.

One of the unique features of ancient Hebrew life was the way in which life was **regulated in terms of divine holiness.** Although other nations observed religious traditions that penetrated their daily lives to varying degrees, the Hebrews were distinctive in being bound to the one true living God by a covenant relationship intended to make the Israelites a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6). The physical, emotional and spiritual health of the nation was one important aspect of this relationship to the God of Sinai through whom all blessings were bestowed by obedience to His sovereign will.

Considerations of physical, psychological and spiritual health is the basis of the legislation in human relations, especially sexual relationships. **Certain sexual activity was legislated to preserve the spiritual distinctiveness of the chosen people.** Among contemporary pagan nations, abhorrent sexual perversions continually threatened the stability of the social fabric of society, especially the family. Such practices were also closely associated with cultic idol worship. The Decalogue (The Ten Commandments) prohibited adultery and lust (20:14,17) and the bestiality found among the Hittites, Egyptians and others was considered a capital offense (22:19). Homosexuality, which was common to most Near Eastern religions, was condemned as “an abomination” (Lev. 18:13,22).
The Hebrew concept of preventive medicine and **absolute repudiation of anything that resembled magic** also differed fundamentally from ancient medical and hygienic procedure.

Nathan (2 Sam. 12:14), Elijah (2 Kgs. 1:4), Ahijah (1 Kgs. 14:4-6) and Elisha (2 Kgs. 5:27; 8:10) predicted sickness and death. Prophetic intervention brought about healing of Naaman (5:3-14), the son of the Zarephath widow (1 Kgs. 17:19-23), the son of the Shunammite (2 Kgs. 4:18-37), a dead man who was cast into a grave containing Elisha’s bones (13:21) and Hezekiah (20:1-7).

There are several cases in the Hebrew Scriptures of God **healing through the use of medicine**. Many argue against the use of physicians by citing Asa who was criticized because he sought a physician and not the Lord (2 Chron. 16:12). This is not proof that we should not go to a doctor because physicians in those days frequently resorted to occultic practices.

Preexilic prophets neutralized the poisons in the impure waters of Jericho (2 Kgs. 2:20f.) and potage seasoned with lethal herbs (4:41). In the early days of the covenant it is possible that fractured limbs were left unset (Lev. 21:19), as happened periodically in Egypt, but by the exilic period they were apparently treated with some kind of pressure bandage (“roller”—Ezek. 30:21). Presumably splints were used to keep the fractured bones properly aligned and supported. Wounds and suppurating sores were treated with a variety of folk remedies, including balsamic resin and oil (Isa. 1:6). The resinous gums of Palestine and Arabia were mostly antiseptic and astringent in nature and could thus be used empirically for minor dressings.10

Hezekiah used "paste made of figs on his boil, and he would get well" (Isa. 38:21). A fig poultice removed the suppuration and promoted cutaneous healing. A Hippocratic prescription recovered from Ugaritic literature testified to the value of figs in treating certain ailments affecting horses.11

From early times certain substances were credited with therapeutic qualities, even though the association was of a purely superstitious nature. Folk medicine was widespread in the ancient Near East, and without a doubt the Hebrews employed some herbs and other substances empirically to restore and maintain health.

A famous therapeutic substance in Palestine was the Balm of Gilead, exported to Egypt and Phoenicia (Gen. 37:25; Ezek. 27:17). It has been thought to be the gummy exudate of more than one shrub in Gilead. The balm was renowned for its soothing qualities and for its ability to promote tissue repair. A less elaborate unguent was the mixture of oil and wine that the Good Samaritan used to treat the battered traveler from Jerusalem in Jesus’ story that undoubtedly drew upon real-life circumstances. The alcohol in the wine would act as an astringent and antiseptic; the oil would soothe and heal the tissues. Olive oil was boiled with sodium carbonate, or when more convenient, glasswort or saltwort plants, to make all-purpose soap.12
Herbs traditionally renowned for promoting health found their way into the diet of the Hebrews. They included gastric stimulants and tonics such as dill, cummin, garlic, the caper berry, coriander, and fennel. In addition to the “bitter herbs” of the Passover (Ex. 12:8), which probably were chicory, lettuce, watercress, dandelion, and endive, popular culinary herbs included anise, spelt, rosemary, thyme, mint, marjoram and sage. Some shrubs, flowers and gourds were poisonous (2 Kgs. 4:39; Hos. 10:4). It is believed that the “deadly thing” mentioned in Mark 16:18 was a drink into which some kind of poison, probably vegetable, had been put, but deliberate poisoning was not very common in Palestine during New Testament times.13

The New Testament also uses medicine in bringing about healing. Jesus used spittle (Jn. 9:6; Mk. 7:33; 8:33) and the disciples (Mk. 6:13) and elders used oil (Jas. 5:14). Both were considered to have healing qualities. Paul encouraged Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach because of its medicinal benefits (1 Tim. 5:23). There is nothing here of contradicting to Christian healing. Paul simply recommends a remedy of long standing. If one believes that God heals directly by contact with his Spirit, this in no way implies that he may not also heal by thoroughly physical and medical means. In the second letter Paul tells Timothy that he has left Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). There is no reason to suppose that he was not in the process of getting well.

However, the issue is not whether these elements had healing qualities or not, but that Jesus did not disassociate Himself from medicine. In fact, He seemed to sanction it. After all, the priests to whom He sent the ten lepers represented the health officials of the day (Lk. 17:14). God, then, is the source of all healing, but He uses various means to heal.

There are instances of people being sick but not healed (Paul: 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 12:7-10; Gal. 4:13-15; 6:11; Trophimus: 2 Tim. 4:20).

The Laws of Moses

Priests as well as prophets promoted health, but they were not so much healers as diagnosticians who supervised certain purification rituals to promote and ensure individual and communal health.

The laws given to Moses emphasized preventive medicine. As God revealed Himself to Israel as a God who heals (Ex. 15:26) His promise of healing was not unconditional: "If you will keep all the statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you" (v. 26).

Physical and moral cleanliness then was fundamental to the life of the Hebrew community. Leviticus prescribes purification procedures controlled by the priests:

1. Childbirth (Lev. 12)
2. Suspected and actual leprosy (ch. 13)
3. Venereal Disease (15:2-15)
Six Laws of Health

God's laws or statutes mention at least six laws of health: sanitation in order to prevent infection (Dt. 23:14); sterilization to guard against contagion (Lev. 11:32,39-40); quarantine to isolate infectious disease (Num. 5:4, 31:22-23); hygiene and dietetics for overall health (Lev. 11:19-20,23), and exercise as each Israelite, even the priest, worked his own plot of ground (Dt. 16:16).

Dietary Principles

Levitical legislation concerning foods, unique in the ancient Near East, embodied dietary principles that agree with modern scientific discoveries. Based on the distinction between “clean” and “unclean” which goes back at least to the Flood (Gen. 7:2), legislation protected individual and communal health and prevented infections or epidemic disease. Although the origin of the “clean” and “unclean” differentiation is unknown, there is no reason to associate it with primitive religions’ taboos which involved magical and superstitious concepts foreign to Hebrew covenantal life.15

“Clean” animals parted the hoof and chewed the cud (Lev. 11:3-8) whereas all other mammals were “unclean.” Although humans were not commanded to be vegetarian, Hebrew Scripture states that all the mammals permitted to be eaten were to be exclusively herbivores. While aquatic creatures with fins and scales were permitted for food, all other species, including edible crustaceans, were forbidden (vv. 9-12). Hebrews could not eat rapacious, aquatic, and predatory birds (vv. 13-19) because they could acquire infection from them. All insects except the locust were “unclean.”16

Blood, because it is the symbol of life, was strictly prohibited as food (Lev. 7:26). The flesh of “clean” animals that had not been slaughtered without being completely drained of the blood was also not to be eaten. Animals that had died from natural causes (Dt. 14:21) or that had been mutilated by other animals and left to die also could not be eaten. The fat of an animal was believed to belong to God and therefore could not be consumed at any time (Lev. 7:22). The rationale behind such strict prohibitions was the belief that has been borne out by science, that is, that blood sustains bodily health when its components are properly balanced, but can cause death when that balance is impaired. Therefore to digest whole blood except under the most carefully controlled clinical conditions is to run the risk of infection from any noxious elements it contains. Similarly, the fat of certain animal species contains parasitic organisms that can produce illness and death in humans.17
The “unclean” animals listed in Leviticus included the pig, which was reared quite widely in the Near East. Modern studies have shown that the pig is the intermediate host for the parasitic tapeworm *Taenia solium*, which if digested by humans, can cause small nodules under the skin and in the eyes and muscular tissue. When these swellings occur in the brain, epileptiform convulsions can occur. Humans readily develop trichiniasis (*trichinosis*), a nematode (roundworm) infestation frequently accompanied by gastrointestinal problems and severe muscular pain, by eating poorly cooked pork and pork products. A small tapeworm, the *Echinococcus granulosus*, which people can acquire by drinking water polluted by pigs, causes cysts to form in the brain, heart, liver and elsewhere in the body. Pigs which had eaten the flesh of dead or infected animals may transmit the protozoan causing toxoplasmosis, a disease damaging the tissues and central nervous systems of humans and animals.18

Carrion-eating birds and crabs, snails and other shellfish also could transmit infection and so were forbidden as food.

Even the Hebrew diet of “clean” species of birds, animals, and fish could be unhealthy. An example is poorly cooked beef which may contain a large tapeworm, *Taenia saginata*, and the *Echinococcus granulosus*, mentioned above. People digest the parasitic worm *Diphyllobothrium latum* in caviar or improperly cooked fish. Tularemia, an affliction whose symptoms resemble those of both bubonic plague and undulant (Malta) fever, usually results from being bitten by insects, especially the fly *Chrysops discalis*, but also from handling carcasses of animals that died from the disease. Thus it was essential for the people of the primitive, semi-tropical Near East to be extremely scrupulous to avoid the many sources of infections that often caused death. This is why the strictures of Leviticus are necessary and important guides to individual and communal health for since they are directed at preventing rather than curing the diseases.19

Sanitation & Hygiene

Usually semi-nomadic or nomadic communities are not concerned with sanitation practices, since they can move to a different environment if necessary. Desert nomads, unlike river-dwelling peoples, may have so little water that they must save it for their animals and cooking. Where water happens to be in more ample supply, as at an Oasis, the tradition of conservation still discourages the use of water for baths. Even among Arab Bedouin tribes, the women tend to use scents, ointment and rose water instead of washing themselves, while the men often contrive to dispense with washing altogether. Because of the lack of personal hygiene, such communities are open to various infections from sources of human pollution, especially during the heat of Near Eastern summers.20
Quarantine

In addition to minimizing the threats to health by regulating “clean” and “unclean” foods, Levitical law protected the sources of food and water from pollution by the carcasses of “unclean” species (Lev. 11:31-39). Observance of these rules would reduce the incidence of infectious fevers and diseases such as cholera, spirochetal jaundice, polioencephalitis and bubonic plague. The legislation was the first of its kind to recognize that infection could be transmitted by both food and water.21

The emphasis upon the burying of feces (Dt. 23:13) away from the camp in the wilderness period is an attempt to control the spread of such insect-borne diseases as ophthalmia and poliomyelitis. Yet until the eighteenth century, hygienic provisions were primitive, even in the great capitals of Europe where it was the rule for excrement to be dumped into the streets which were unpaved and filthy. Powerful stenches gripped villages and cities with flies which bred in the filth and spread the intestinal diseases that killed millions.

Leprosy was a greater threat than even the plague during the Dark Ages called the Black Death. In the fourteenth century alone, leprosy resulted in the death of one out of four persons, an estimated 60 million people. It was the greatest disaster ever recorded in human history. And it was the biblical procedure of quarantine set forth in Leviticus 13:46 that brought this dreaded disease under control, in fact, methodically eradicating it. As soon as nations of Europe saw that the application of quarantine brought leprosy under control, they applied the same principle to the Black Death. As a result millions of lives were spared.22

The Sabbath & Rest

Rest was also an important ingredient as the Israelites were encouraged to recuperate on the seventh day (Sabbath) and during the seventh month. The Hebrew Sabbath occurs every seventh day throughout the calendar year and was based upon the concept of the divine rest from creative activity on the seventh day (Gen. 2:3). The covenant nation was required to keep it holy by worshiping God and ceasing all normal work (Ex. 20:8). Three obvious purposes were served by the enactment of this observance:

1. It constantly reminded the Israelites of their moral responsibility to venerate regularly as a community the deity to whom they owe their very existence.

2. It legitimated the person’s important biological need to abstain from normal work one day each week so that the body’s cells might be renewed more easily.
3. Because the law of Sabbath rest applied also to domesticated animals (Ex. 23:12), it brought a significant humanitarian influence to bear upon an area of God’s creation that was otherwise subject to exploitation. Even the land on which the Israelites lived was required to remain fallow every seventh year after the harvest (Lev. 25:2-7), so that the mineral and nutrient reserve of the soil would not become unnecessarily impoverished.

Medical science has shown that the ideal rest period for the healthy operation of the human body and mind is that of one day in seven. Thus the biblical concept of the Sabbath has not merely positive and recuperative values for the individual, but also serves to guard against disease. Faithful observance of these laws, even in our day, would in very many cases dispense with the necessity for miraculous intervention.

By the second century B.C. the physician was more prominent than previously in Jewish life at the same time that there was a marked increase of superstition and magic in Palestine. Although Ben Sira taught that medicines were the gift of God because they were natural products intended for the wellbeing of His children (Sirach 38:1-15), contemporary physicians employed magical charms, incantations and spells to bolster the efficacy of the medications they administered.

The spiritual and physical wellbeing of people was so closely related that it was the priest who was the presiding health officer. This was also true in Jesus’ day. This is why He so often tells people to go and show themselves to the priest after they have been healed. He was to verify their healing. It is God’s will for His people to be whole—healthy as well as holy.
11. MENTAL HEALTH & HEALING
The History, Contributions and Critique of Freud and the Healing Professions

Christians in general have been suspicious of the healing professions until the last forty years. Part of the reason is that clinical psychology and psychiatry together form the youngest of the professions. These healing professions did not even begin until miraculous healing had ceased to be an accepted part of Western culture. Little interest was shown for the mentally troubled until the century in which Freud made his original far-reaching discovery. This is so recent that barely a hundred years before this discovery, the last beheading of a witch took place on the continent of Europe.

Until the nineteenth century the mentally ill were treated as animals. Most “mad” people were kept in chains, often in dungeons, and were beaten and left to those who practiced brutality based on the theory: “the more painful the restraint, the better the results.” Humane treatment was not tried until 1789 in Italy, at the Hospital of St. Boniface in Florence. Three years later in England, the recurring insanity of George III aroused questions and thus William Tuke, a Quaker, began the reform that finally changed hospitals in that country.

Ironically, it was during the reign of terror in Paris that psychiatry was born. In 1793 as Philippe Pinel undertook his duties at the institution for insane men at the Bicetre he was considered insane himself when he removed the chains from his patients and gave them real medical care. As a quiet thinker Pine planned to change the treatment. The results were so impressive that two years later he was asked to do the same thing for the women at the Salpetriere. There in 1817 Esquirol, who succeeded Pinel, established the first psychiatric clinic, giving physicians a chance to look at the psychotic patient as a medical problem.

Twenty years after the death of Esquirol, Jean Martin Charcot came to the Salpetriere as professor and physician-in-charge. It was in a lecture hall of that hospital, under a painting of Pinel striking off the chains of inmates, that Charcot had among his students the young man from Vienna, Sigmund Freud. Here Freud found a neurologist—the leading neurologist of the time—who looked with interest and objectivity at his difficult patients.

Hysteria was one of the main problems. Thus it is no wonder that the first successes of psychotherapy were with these patients. Charcot was not a superstitious ailment, but an illness to be studied and treated. He also followed an intuitive as well as objective approach to medical problems as he did not consider that, once the cause of a disease appeared to be known, this ruled out all other factors. Therefore he was not afraid to investigate hypnotism, or to recognize the psychic influences that affected so many people physically. Like Freud at that time, however, Charcot was interested in the physical causes of nervous diseases and did not comprehend the psychological problems he was raising. Instead it was Freud who, later in Vienna, began to discover that his patients did not fit the ideas of personality he saw expressed around him.
Freud, on the other hand, was trying to see what lay behind the illness and pain, the psychic distress, of his patients. His great contribution was to offer a theory of personality that takes these experiences into account and thus allows room for other things that happen to human beings which do not originate in rational consciousness. From the very first of his discoveries, Freud had to make room for healings that were anything but rational experiences.7

**Freud was the first to give careful, verifiable proof of the reality of the unconscious.** Knowing that he had means to deal with the illnesses that came to him, that “symptoms vanish with the acquisition of knowledge of their meaning,”8 he began to look at the ways people express an underlying conflict.

**His descriptions of the results of inner tension have stood the test of medical practice.** This conflict causes both compulsive actions and phobias, subjecting one person to foolish fetishes or extremes such as stealing, fighting, or emotional rage, and keeping another from things he does want to do because he is afraid such as studying, crowds, high places or closed-in ones. The tension may manifest itself in fleeting anxiety, depression, and despair, the very emotions that have the most devastating physiological responses. Finally, if it becomes intolerable, the individual ego is fragmented or dissolved and the result is schizophrenia, the most tragic of mental illnesses.9

As Freud realized that patients were driven by ideas, feelings, and emotions that had been repressed and buried since childhood, and that much of this conflict related to sexuality, it became clear why the resulting disturbances could so often be talked through. When a patient became aware of these drives and learned to deal with them consciously, his psyche no longer automatically compensated for his ignorance and innocence by destructive tension or neurotic and physical illness. As is even better understood today, once a conflict becomes conscious, there are other channels of discharge than through the autonomic or other central systems of the body.10

As we have seen, Freud realized not only the importance of very early experience, but also the fact that, whether originating in fantasy or in actuality, these experiences had a common ground somewhere in human history.8 But **Freud was essentially alone in being able to approach the sexual problems that were so disturbing to people.** Vienna was the last bastion of puritanical Catholic morality, and he found that the popular religious attitude only reinforced the repression of these ideas and feelings, rather than helping to make them conscious. Freud went ahead to formulate a theory of personality that would account for the facts he had found.11

**Critical Analysis**

Another reason why Christians have been suspicious of the healing professions is because of the strong influence of Freud. There is no doubt that Christians as a whole have overreacted to Freud and “thrown the baby out with the bathwater.” That is unfortunate. However, while we need to acknowledge the contributions Freud has made to the healing professions, we must also
recognize the damage he has done. Most of the psychological and psychiatric professions have
followed in Freud’s footsteps as they have pontificated liberation from guilt by avoidance of
conscience. Freud clearly pitted psychological health against morality.12

On the issue of guilt, which is so foundational to other psychological issues, the healing
professions have not only been inadequate but counterproductive. The have deepened the
pathology as they have attempted to solve the enigmas of guilt on a naturalistic basis without any
realism about the fallenness of man and thus the fallenness of freedom. They have advocated a
reductionist explanation of guilt by treating guilt essentially as a symptom to be happily
removed.13

Freud was very clear that there was a direct causal relation between “nervous illness” and
“civilized sexual morality.” He said, “We must therefore view all factors which impair sexual life,
suppress its activity, or distort its aims as being pathogenic.”14 He regarded the factor of sexual
repression “as the essential one in the causation of the neurosis proper.”15 His statement “all who
wish to be more nobleminded” tend to “fall victims of neurosis.” In his 1908 essay on “Civilized
Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness,” he wrote, “They would have been more healthy if
it could have been possible for them to be less good.”16

Freud’s attitude toward conscience is reflected in his famous quip from his New
Introductory Lectures (1933): “As regards conscience God has done an uneven and careless piece
of work.”18 Conscience is usually described by Freud under the category of “obsessional self-
reproach.” The superego (or parental surrogates) “represents the claim of morality.” “Our moral
sense of guilt is the expression of the tension between the ego and the super-ego.”19 According to
Freudian theory, “the super-ego is the representative for us of every moral restriction”20 out of
which comes the repression that results in neurosis. The superego is “the vehicle of tradition and
of all the time-resisting judgments of value which have propagated themselves in this
(representative) manner from generation to generation.”21 The Freudian dictum that “repression is
the work of the super-ego” explains the essential therapeutic intention of psychoanalysis: “to
strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the super-ego.”22 This is the basis on which
Freud is accused of pitting social morality against health.

In his essay on “Dostoevsky and Parricide,” Freud offered his own “explanation” of “the
mental origin of guilt and the need for expiation.”23

“The boy wants to be in his father’s place (but) . . . comes to understand that an
attempt to remove his father as a rival would be punished by him with castration.
So from fear of castration . . . he gives up his wish to possess his mother and get
rid of his father. In so far as this wish remains in the unconscious it forms the basis
of the sense of guilt.”24
Psychoanalysis views all human problems using the analogy of adolescent rebellion. Nowhere is this more dramatically illustrated than in Totem and Taboo (1913), where he argued that “the beginnings of religion, ethics, society, and art meet in the Oedipus complex.”25 All the problems of social ethics prove soluble on the basis of this one single point: “the relation to the father.” He concludes, therefore, that guilt is absurd and meaningless, since we have “let the sense of guilt for a deed survive for thousands of years, remaining effective absurdly for generations.”26

This primal guilt is based upon nothing morally real or objective. “Only psychic realities and not actual ones are the basis” of the “legacy of feelings” that result in the “sense of guilt.”27 Our guilts and inhibitions “go back to a merely psychic reality.”28

**The Boomerang Effect**

Here we see a wholesale mishandling of guilt in our society. The psychologists have set the pace by viewing guilt merely as a matter of guilt feelings. But the trouble is far deeper. It also extends to widely varied spheres of influence where the guilt-free ideology has tended to become dominant.

As Oden points out:

“What is important now is that we recognize the striking correlation between the economic theory that says debt is imaginary, the Freudian theory that says moral transgression is imaginary, the school system that views educational failure as imaginary, and the easy justices who see muggings and rape as mere social deprivation without guilt. All are pieces of the same theological puzzle.”29

Christianity in the West has bought into the theology of cheap grace. This is an antinomian (lawless) distortion of the true gospel. It emphasizes God’s mercy without human social effort, pardon without requirement, grace without covenant accountability, God’s unconditional love without any mention of justice.

The voice of classical Judeo-Christian psychology concerning guilt has been muted. Guilt for our misdeeds and forgiveness as God’s good deed have been toned down. Thus Christians have abrogated their responsibility.

The assumption of the secular healing community is that guilt is not real, but merely a curable psychological feeling resulting from ill-informed mores or customs” with no transcendent reference.”30 This is a contradiction of a biblical definition of guilt such as “an awareness of significant value loss for which I know myself to be responsible.”31 In other words, “guilt is the self-knowing of moral loss.”32
The Moral Law & Conscience

No one is exempt from conscience. Paul put it:

“When Gentiles who do not possess the law carry out its precepts by the light of nature, then, although they have no law, they are their own law, for they display the effect of the law inscribed on their hearts. Their conscience is called as witness, and their own thoughts argue the case on either side, against them or even for them” (Rom. 2:14-16).

This means every human being has

- The moral law written on his heart.

- A conscience, which serves as a moral monitor, telling us whether we are living up to the moral law.

This creates an internal dialogue which goes on as we try to see if we measure up to the law “inscribed in our hearts.” We argue within pro and con. Sometimes we feel acquitted, sometimes conflicted, sometimes judged. These judgments occur in an arena that Paul calls “the secrets of human hearts.” Conscience is the scene of divine judgment. It occurs now in our hearts, and it will occur fully at the end of time (vv. 12-16; 1 Cor. 4:1-5).

Paul applies this test of conscience to specific moral decisions such as whether one should eat certain foods considered to be unclean. “Everything is pure in itself,” Paul says, “but anything is bad for the person who by his eating causes another to fall” (Rom. 14:20). There is no harm in abstaining from eating meat or drinking wine, so long as one does so with a clear conscience:

“Happy is the man who can make his decision with a clear conscience! But a man who has doubts is guilty if he eats, because his action does not arise from his conviction” (vv. 22-23).

God’s good purpose in giving us both law and conscience is not only to bring us to an awareness of our sin (3:20), but also on this very basis to point us toward the announcement that we are freely acquitted by God’s grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ (v. 24) in “by the shedding of His blood, to be received and made effective in ourselves by faith” (v. 25, Phillips).

Conscience is the part of us that tells us what we ought to have been and done. If we had no word for conscience we would soon have to invent one, even in a highly permissive society, since human existence as we know it cannot be lived without reference to some sort of shared understanding of what is valued. These shared values become internalized through parenting,
schooling, church life and befriending as one grows up in a given culture. Although the specifics of these values and norms may differ widely from neighborhood to neighborhood, family to family, society to society, era to era, no human life proceeds without such moral imperatives.

In many languages the root word that we translate as “conscience” literally means “a knowledge I have with myself.” It is that which I know when I know myself morally. It is the ethical awareness which alone gives moral credibility and dignity to personhood. To imagine a person without conscience is to think of something less than a complete person. It is possible, at least temporarily, for us to avoid listening to our conscience. But when we refuse to hear our conscience we fail to recognize the claims of our own deeper self.

Guilt is the memory of any past action inconsistent with conscience and moral self-understanding. We experience guilt when we do something that is inconsistent with our picture of who we are.

**Biblical Psychology**

The awareness that God knows “the thoughts of our hearts” (1 Sam. 16:7; Job 21:27; Ps. 53:11, 94:11; 139:23; 1 Cor. 3:20) is a major premise of biblical psychology. The heart is the center of emotive energy. It is “out of the heart” that evil thought proceeds, according to Jesus (Mt. 15:19). Yet the heart was known to be “the most deceitful of all things” and “desperately sick” (Jer. 17:9). Who can fathom its depths? Who can understand the emotive life, the heart? God alone, according to Scripture. “I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins” (Jer. 17:10; Ps. 139:23).

“Keep your heart with diligence,” says the Proverb, “for out of (the heart) are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). It is from this inner center of passion that outer action comes. Some behavior modification strategies try to change outward acts first, hoping that in time basic drives and motivations will be shifted. But the Bible counsels us to keep the heart wise for then the outer self will reflect wisdom, because the body only expresses the heart’s desire. Accordingly, the highest psychological education is to apply our hearts to wisdom (2:2). But what is wisdom? Wisdom means seeing things in their proper proportion, sensing the accurate value of things. Through such counsel, we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and others (25:12).

Oden described biblical psychology as

“... a psychology informed by Scripture, a study of human behavior illuminated by the story the Bible tells. It views human passions from the vantage point of God’s compassionate self-disclosure in history.”33

Guilt is embraced by grace, yet grace summons us to comfort others as we have been comforted (2 Cor. 1:3-4).34
Thus Freud’s **bifurcation between health and morality** runs totally counter to what we find in the Bible. There health is closely tied to righteousness and goodness.

**The Secular View of Man**

As mentioned earlier, the healing professions base their view of man on the teachings of Plato, Socrates and Aristotle. This means that man is basically good and needs knowledge to do what is right. Where there is evil action it is the result of ill will, which can be changed only by punishment. If a person is punished enough, he will change. If he does not respond to punishment, then it is because his will is irredeemably bad and there is no way to reach him. The normally sane human being is understood to be a single integrated personality, knowing what he is doing and why, and capable of controlling himself at all times if he really wishes to. Thus it is the task of society to educate and to punish. So long as one is not psychotic to the point of being unable to perceive reality, he is responsible for his actions.

Modern legal practice is based on such a view. If it can be established that a person breaking the law was capable of “knowing” what he was doing, he then receives the full impact of the law’s retribution.

Socrates stressed the fact that **we must know before we can do**, and so assumed that if we really knew, we would do the right thing unless our will was wrong. Plato never came to grips with the question of how to change the basic core of human will. His theories apply only to the good will, which desired to do well. Eros or love which is capable of changing a person was seen by Plato to be an irrational gift which was given and not produced by the use of human will power. Hence the utter disillusionment of *The Laws*, where he relies only on law—almost dictatorship—to hold society together. Aristotle saw no basic change in the popular theory, which was also the personality theory of much of the Old Testament, reaching its ultimate expression in the book of Proverbs. Here wisdom is enough; if you get wisdom and exalt wisdom, then you shall be brought to honor.

**The Biblical View of Man**

In addition, however, Jesus clearly believed that men could be influenced by “spiritual powers”—i.e., by nonmaterial psychic realities. He was Himself driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. He repeatedly referred to the angels of God or to the Son of man and his angels. While Jesus understood that people could be helped or enlightened and directed by these positive spiritual powers, He also believed that they could be possessed by alien powers, unclean spirits, evil spirits, demons and satanic forces. Jesus was clear that demonic spirits made people sick physically, mentally, and morally. They could not be controlled by the conscious will of the individual, once it had been set aside by the alien power. And the person’s powers of knowing are not impaired for anyone who is demonized knows that he is possessed yet can do nothing about it. It is a matter of possessing the will, not knowledge alone.
Jesus also spoke of achieving the single eye, implying that human beings could be other than single-eyed, single-minded—that there might be **various centers of personality**, as well as more than one way of centering, of orienting the self. He spoke again and again—it is almost the keynote of the Gospels—of losing one’s life in order to find it. Whatever else this means, it certainly implies that **there are various levels of personality, and that to gain one of them another has to be sacrificed**. The importance of these concepts can hardly be overestimated in seeking an understanding of Jesus and the New Testament. One has to give up one’s own will so that God’s will, God’s Spirit, the Holy Spirit can become the center of one’s life and personality. The human will or ego cannot stand against demonic infiltration and possession unless one is endowed with the Holy Spirit. This again shows clearly the complexity Jesus saw in the human personality.

Man by his own humanity, his own will, cannot deal with the depth and complication of the psychic life in which he participates because humanity cannot stand against the demonic. One reason Jesus was so responsive to sickness and sin was His sense that they result from men’s domination by alien spirits, to which His whole being was antagonistic. The only way to drive them out—to bring health of body, mind, and soul—was through the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. This is characterized by love, by agape. Thus the injunction of Jesus that we love one another as He loved us is not just an ethical maxim. It also has healing implications. Only a life characterized by love can adequately deal with demons. As this Spirit resides in a man, he builds up defenses against alien forces so that they cannot attack and possess him. Love is the most important agent which helps to free men from alien domination and to bring healing to mind and body.

**Spiritual & Mental Illness**

A Puritan writer of three hundred years ago, Richard Baxter, reveals great insight into mental illness. Baxter gives the differential diagnosis between a spiritual and a mental case. He says,

“I do not call those melancholy who are rationally sorrowful for sin, and sensible of this misery, and solicitous about their recovery and salvation, though it be with as great seriousness as the faculties can bear. As long as they have sound reason, and the imagination, fantasy or thinking faculty is not crazed or diseased. But by **melancholy** (i.e. mental illness) I mean this diseased craziness, hurt or error of the imagination, and consequently of the understanding, which is known by these signs.”35

He then gives thirty-five points in the differential diagnosis between what may be called “mentally ill” cases as distinct from those who are in “spiritual” distress. The following are some of the points he makes concerning those mentally ill:
1. “They are commonly exceedingly fearful, causelessly or beyond what there is cause for. Everything which they hear is ready to increase their fears, especially if fear was the first cause, as ordinarily it is.

2. Their fantasy acts most in aggravating their sin or dangers or unhappiness.

3. They are still addicted to excess of sadness, some weeping they know not why, and some thinking it ought to be so, and if they should smile or speak merrily their hearts smite them, for it is as if they had done amiss.

4. They place most of their religion in sorrowing and austerities to the flesh.

5. They are continually self-accusers, turning all into matter of accusation against themselves, which they hear or read or see or think of.

6. They are still apprehending themselves forsaken of God and are prone to despair.

7. They are still thinking that the day of grace is past and that it is now too late to repent or to find mercy.

8. They are often tempted to gather despairing thoughts from the doctrine of predestination, and to think that if God had reprobated them or had not elected them, all they can do, or that the world can do, cannot save them.”36

He ends with the following analysis:

“Yet in all this distemper, few of them will believe that they are melancholy (melancholic, or mentally disturbed), but abhor to hear men tell them so, and say it is but the rational sense of their unhappiness, and for the forsakings and heavy wrath of God. And, therefore, they are hardly persuaded to take any physic or use any means for the cure of their bodies, saying they are well, and being confident that it is only their souls that are distressed. This is the miserable case of these poor people greatly to be pitied, and not to be despised by any. I have spoken nothing but what I have often seen and known, and let none despise such, for men of all sorts do fall into this misery, learned and unlearned, high and low, good and bad; yea some that have lived in greatest jollity and sensuality when God hath made them feel their folly.”37

Thomas Szasz and his popularizer Jay Adams basically follow such an approach.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a physician, summarizes Baxter’s thirty-five points in the following way:
“I think that you will find almost invariably that those who are mentally ill do not really listen to you. You quote Scripture, they do not listen. They keep repeating the same statements and give the impression that they are waiting for you to finish so that they can say their piece over again. This is almost invariable. You notice the difference as compared with those in spiritual trouble. The latter are anxious to have help. The others are not. I always feel with them that I am a kind of tangent to a circle. One never penetrates, they are almost impatient and go on repeating the same thing.

We can, therefore, reassure those who believe that it is sinful to take drugs which relate to brain function that, where clinical trial and proper use have shown them to be valuable, they should be received with thanksgiving. All things in nature and scientific knowledge are the gifts of God and should be used to his glory. We are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” Many things that God in his love and kindness has provided for our needs exist all around us for their due use. To accept and use them makes no difference to our faith and salvation.”38

**Mental attitude is vital to our wellbeing.** Kenneth Pargament, a psychology professor at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, studied the religious coping methods of almost 600 patients with diseases from gastrointestinal disorders to cancer. Those who believed God was punishing them or abandoning them were up to 30 percent more likely to die over the next two years.39 Thus religion can be a source of comfort or stress. Religion that is devoid of grace often lessens, rather than increases, a patients coping mechanisms.

**The Place for Psychology and Psychiatry**

Dr. Paul Tournier is a practicing psychiatrist who lives by his belief that God uses faith and technology to accomplish His purposes.

“People come to me for my help in ‘solving’ their problems. No one knows better than I do that all human effort is powerless to solve any problem. In fact, when I try to understand their difficulties, I discover nothing but insoluble vicious circles.

Our patients often tell us how unjustly hurt they feel when they are plied with exhortations and advice: ‘You only have to believe. All you need is willpower. Just love others and forget yourself. It’s only a matter of confidence.’

Psychiatry cures us of this oversimplified view of personal problems. It shows us that they are tenacious and terribly complicated. And these same people, who from the security of their faith and health, are so free with their ‘all you need is...’ (which always means: all you need is to do as I do’) would soon discover, if they themselves were assailed by doubt and depression, that things are not so simple... I believe that problems can be dissolved by grace, like a mist is dissipated by the
sunshine. . . . In the climate of faith, a life that has seemed to be nothing but a tangle of problems looks quite different. The problems disappear without anyone actually solving them. This process of dissolution is all the more definite if one does not try to find human solutions, but relies rather upon God’s grace. . . .

This is the way that, in my experience, technology and faith work together. Psychoanalysis explores the problems in order to bring them out into the daylight. Grace dissolves them without our ever knowing exactly how.40

**The Role of Faith**

Harold Koenig, professor and director of the Center for the Study of Religion/ Spirituality and Health at Duke University, has been studying the role of faith in healing for almost 20 years. A leading researcher in the field, he recently wrote “Spirituality in Patient Care.” He claims that in the area of mental health, especially, the role of religion in health is extremely crucial. He points out that

“So many studies have been done in so many different populations by so many investigators with the vast majority—two thirds—finding significant association between religious beliefs and wellbeing: life satisfaction, hope, purpose, meaning, lower rates of depression, less anxiety, lower suicide rates.”41

Healing of suffering people often takes place when medical treatment and prayer are combined.

When asked what his own religious beliefs are, Dr. Koenig responded:

“I’m a Christian, and Christianity is an important part of my life. It helps me to cope with my illness [a form of arthritis], raise my children and stay married.”42

Thus spiritual belief, though it may not necessarily remove a medical condition, does provide help—the grace—to “cope” with it.

This, of course, does not rule out miraculous healing for the mentally ill. There is no reason to limit God’s power to the physical realm. The God who created human beings surely is able to heal them, whether the illness has its roots in the psyche, the body or the spirit.

**Balance is Key**

As in all matters, balance is key. The apostle Paul instructs us to,

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).
The apostle John cautions that we should “try” or “test the spirits” (1 Jn. 4:1).

We need to assess accurately the need of each troubled soul who seeks our aid, diagnosing them in terms of the Scripture’s view of man, of man in sin and of man who has experienced the new birth.
12. FAITH & HEALING
“Every man lives by faith, the nonbeliever as well as the saint; the one by faith in natural laws and the other by faith in God.”

--A. W. Tozer

“Faith in faith is faith astray.”

--A. W. Tozer

“Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you cannot understand at the time.”

--Oswald Chambers

“Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is one element of faith.”

--Paul Tillich

“A man who has faith must be prepared not only to be a martyr, but to be a fool.”

--G. K. Chesterton

“Don’t be afraid to take a big step. You can’t cross a chasm in two small jumps.”

--David Lloyd George

“Faith is the daring of the soul to go farther than it can see.”

--William Newton Clarke

“Faith is not believing that God can, but that God will!”

--Abraham Lincoln

“A faith that hasn’t been tested can’t be trusted.”

--Adrian Rogers

"Faith hears the inaudible, sees the invisible, believes the incredible, and receives the impossible." 

--Corrie Ten Boom

“Faith has never yet outstripped the bounty of the Lord.”

--Pope Gregory the Great

**What is Faith?**

When Mary was asked what faith is, she answered,

"Faith is believing something you know isn't true."
Is biblical faith mere superstition? Or is it blind optimism? Or is it a manufactured "hope-so" feeling?

Definitely not! Neither is it mere intellectual assent to doctrine. But what is it?

The word "faith" appears only two times in the Old Testament (Hab. 2:4). Faith, however, is found 307 times in the New Testament with two basic ingredients in its definition:

1. **Intellectual Content**—Truth revealed by God. This has to do with facts.

2. **Acceptance and Trust**—Belief and Commitment to truth and to the God who is Truth.

Faith, then, is only as good as its object, and the object of our faith is God. Faith is not some "feeling" that we manufacture. It is our total response to what God has revealed in His Word. It is a thoughtful and confident trust in the trustworthiness of God.

**Objective Aspect: Intellectual Content (Facts & Truth)**

Faith is the belief that the evidence for Christianity is adequate. God has provided us with more than enough evidence to test the truthfulness of His revelation. Christianity is an historical religion and can, therefore, be tested in the same way any history can.

**The Object of Faith**

The issue at stake is also the **object of faith**. Faith is not only a matter of how much of it we may have, but what is the object of that faith. The writer of the book of Hebrews puts it:

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

The object of faith is the God of the Bible! True faith is not a matter of personal resolve, how much certainty we can muster, but it is dependence upon the Person in whom we believe. The key to a life of faith lies in focusing our attention on God, our Source. Biblical faith does not focus upon the Christian's ability to believe, but upon the grace and faithfulness of God.

**Subjective Aspect: Acceptance, Trust and Commitment**

In addition to the objective truth of who God is and what He has promised and done, is the subjective aspect of faith. This has to do with our acceptance and trust in the God of the Bible who has revealed Himself through Scripture, history and nature. The subjective aspect of faith, then
involves our response to God's revelation of Himself. It means belief in Jesus as Lord, with acknowledgment of His atoning death and resurrection. It means commitment to the Person of God and to doing His will above everything else.

The writer of the book of Hebrews gives us this biblical definition of faith which includes both objective and subjective aspects of faith:

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

(Heb. 11:1)

Here we find that faith is man's response to what God has said and done. Faith takes the message of God's revealed truth in Scripture seriously. The two aspects of faith here are assurance ("being sure") and certainty. The word assurance is also translated "substance" (hypostasis) which means literally "to stand under, to support." This word gives the sense of something foundational, basic, a concrete reality upon which other things are built. The root word stasis means the palace or setting, like a standing pillar upon which other stones are placed.

Faith then, is to a Christian what a foundation is to a house. It gives confidence and assurance that he will stand. Instead of faith being an imaginary product of the mind fabricated out of its own need, it is a solid assurance of that for which we hope because it is based upon reality. Faith is the basis, the substructure of all that the Christian life means, all that the Christian hopes for.

In this definition, faith anticipates the future ("what we hope for"). It does not place its reliance on that which is merely visible with our eyes. It is "being sure of what we hope for." "The heroes of the faith" portrayed in Hebrews 11 did not simply live for the passing moment for they realized that there was far more to life than the immediate and temporary. For them life was a pilgrimage. They believed that there were better things ahead because God had told them. They chose to believe God's Word, His promises, rather than the prospects of the world around them.

Certainty

Faith is also the "certainty of what we do not see." The word "certainty" (pragmatos elegchos) is also translated "evidence," "proof" or "conviction." The word gives the sense of something that has been tested and scrutinized and proven true and valid. Faith, then, is based upon that which has been tested and found real. It is the certainty of the inward conviction from God that what He has promised, He will provide. Faith, in addition to being the basis of all that we hope for, is that by which we test things that are unseen. Faith extends beyond what we learn from our senses. While the senses yield uncertainty, faith leads to certainty since it is placed in God Himself.
Faith, as we have seen, is based on objective evidence. God does not ask us to believe the ridiculous; He asks us to go **beyond the rational**. He does not ask us to believe the irrational, but He does ask us to believe the **supra-rational**.

**Courage**

Faith, however, is closer to courage than to intellectual assent. It is understood by the gambler, as Blaise Pascal knew, because the gambler stands to win or lose by his play.

Faith is not some "feeling" that we manufacture, but our **total response** to what God has revealed in His Word. It is that daring belief that casts itself on God for Life and eternity. Martin Luther put it:

"Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace. It is so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times."

**Unbelief or the Lack of Faith**

Unbelief or lack of faith keeps God’s people from experiencing all that God has for them. When they brought a boy with an evil spirit whom the disciples were unable to liberate, Jesus responded, **“O unbelieving generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to Me”** (Mt. 17:17; Mk. 9:19; Lk. 9:41). Unbelief stood in the way of this boy’s healing.

Matthew points out that Jesus “did not do many miracles there [Nazareth] because of their lack of faith” (Mt. 13:58). The unbelief of the people of Jesus’ hometown kept Him from performing many miracles. What an indictment!

Conservative Christians tend to emphasize God’s sovereignty to such an extent that they deemphasize the importance of faith in healing. The two are not mutually exclusive. Scripture is clear that it is extremely important. Positive expectancy is often crucial to whether healing takes place or not. This may be:

1. In the person ministering (Jn. 11:22—which is the gift of faith);

2. In the person being ministered to (Mk. 5:34; Lk. 7:9; 17:19);

3. In the friends or relatives who bring their afflicted (Mk. 2:5).

4. At some stage it is good to encourage some faith response in the person to whom ministry is being given. It seems important to encourage the person’s faith.

5. It may be necessary to remove obstacles which may hinder faith.
a) Jesus did not do many mighty works in Nazareth because of their unbelief. 
(Mk 6:5-6)

b) Jesus put out unbelieving mourners from the room of a dead girl and took in just the 
parents and his disciples (Mk. 5:40).

No Mention of Faith in Healing

In some healings the matter of faith on the part of the sick seems to have been ignored 
completely in the spontaneity of Christ’s response:

“As soon as they left the synagogue, they [Jesus and the disciples] went with James 
and John to the home of Simon and Andrew, Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed 
with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So He went to her, took her hand 
and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them” (Mk. 1:31).

“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” (Lk. 13:10-13).

Various disorders were caused by evil spirits such as bodily disease in this incident. Other 
disorders are also caused by demons such as mental disorders (Jn. 10:20), violent action (Lk. 8:26-
29) and rebellion against God (Rev. 16:14). The description of this woman’s infirmity suggests 
that the bones of her spine were rigidly fused together. Jesus cast out the evil spirit and the woman 
was freed from the bond of Satan and from her physical handicap.

“One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, He 
was being carefully watched. There in front of Him was a man suffering from 
dropsy. Jesus asked the Pharisee and experts in the law, ‘Is it lawful to heal on 
the Sabbath or not?’ But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, He 
healed him and sent him away” (Lk. 14:1-4).

“While He [Jesus] was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called 
Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss Him, 
but Jesus asked him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’

When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, ‘Lord, should 
we strike with our swords?’ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, 
cutting off his right ear.
But Jesus answered, ‘No more of this!’ And He touched the man’s ear and healed him” (22:47-51).

Jesus rectified the wrong done by his follower Peter, who in the heat of anger, took things into his own hands. No faith on the part of the wounded man (Malchus) was involved, but to allow such action would have been contrary to the teaching of Jesus.

The lack of mention of faith in these incidents may reveal that Christ’s absolute healing abilities do not depend on any human response. He brings healing to the person/personality damaged by sin, knowing that once the imbalance is corrected and the turmoil of the subconscious mind is calmed, the person will enjoy a new relationship with God characterized by health.2

The Place of Faith in the One Performing the Miracle

Jesus spoke to the condition of the sick. We are also encouraged to exercise our faith: “If anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him’” (Mk. 11:23). Note that he is not told to “pray,” but “say”—commanding the mountain to do something. Jesus points out here that a miracle is dependent upon the faith of the person performing the miracle.

The Place of Faith in the Friends of the One Being Healed

When Jesus saw the paralytic, lying on a mat, He “saw their faith” and said to him, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.... Then He said to the paralytic, ‘Get up, take your mat and go home.’ And the man got up and went home” (Mt. 9:1-7). It was the faith of the four friends that Jesus saw in this instance.

A man who was deaf and could hardly talk in the region of the Decapolis was brought to Jesus by some people who “begged [Jesus] to place His hand on the man” (Mk. 7:31). If it were not for their desperate faith in Jesus ability to heal this person probably would not have been healed by Jesus. Their faith played a part in this healing incident (vv. 31-37).

The Place of Faith in the One Being Healed

The man with leprosy who came to Jesus and begged Him to heal him, said, “If you are willing, You can make me clean” (Mk. 1:40). While he was not sure if Jesus was willing, he did have the faith that Jesus could heal him. This contradicts what many proponents of faith healing claim, that is, that faith does not have to do with whether we believe that God can heal, but that He will heal. Although there is an element of truth in this in that the belief that God can heal often is merely an intellectual assent, such a position overstates the case. The statement, “If You are willing” (v. 40) asks, “If it is God’s will.” This is a legitimate question since we do not always know what His will is in certain circumstances.
Luke points out that the man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked, while he listened to Paul as he was speaking, Paul looked directly at him, saw that “he had faith to be healed” (Acts 14:8-9).

Matthew points out the tremendous faith of the centurion by quoting Jesus: “I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith” (Mt. 8:8-10). In response to his faith, Jesus assured him, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would” (v. 13).

The woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, when she touched the edge of Jesus’ cloak, she said to herself, “If I only touch His cloak, I will be healed.” Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” He said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed from that moment” (Mt. 9:18-22; Mk. 5:34-35).

When the two blind men followed Jesus and called out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David,” Jesus asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they replied.” Then Jesus touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith will it be done to you”; and their sight was restored” (Mt. 9:27-30).

When Bartimaeus, the blind man, kept asking Jesus for mercy and threw his cloak aside as he jumped to his feet when Jesus invited him to speak with Him and expressed his desire to be able to see, Jesus responded, “Go, your faith has healed you” (Mk. 10:52).

It is helpful sometimes to encourage the sick person to visualize his disease on Jesus for “He took our infirmities and carried our diseases” (Mt. 8:17).

Jesus was specific in his requests for a faith response and said,

- “Stretch out your hand” (Mk. 3:5).
- “Get up, take your mat and go home” (Mt. 9:6).
- “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk” (Jn. 5:8).
- “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (9:7).
- “Go, show yourselves to the priests” (Lk. 17:14).
- “Stand up on your feet!” (Acts 14:10).

Although faith plays a central role in healing, it must not be overemphasized and demanded as a right since it is not always God's will to heal.

It is true that it is God's will for His people that they are to be healthy. The Hebrew word "shalom" captures God's wholistic view of man. "Shalom" ("peace") coexists with health in a natural way. The psalmist put it,

"May The Lord give strength to His people! May the Lord bless His people with peace!"
Biblical peace is more than the absence of conflict; it includes inner tranquility, health, wholeness, integration.

God promised His people shortly after the exodus in Egypt:

"I am the Lord, your healer" (Ex. 15:26).

Salvation and health are closely related. David testified that it is the Lord "who forgiving all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases" (Ps. 103:3). Jeremiah prays, "Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for You are the One I praise" (Jer. 17:14).

WHY FAITH HEALS

We have already seen the crucial role that faith plays in supernatural healing. But faith also plays a vital role in natural healing. Why? Why does faith help prevent and heal health problems? An increasing number of medical experts believe that the answer can be traced to a number of factors. These are 12 aspects of faith that are as vital to our emotional and physical health as certain foods, nutrients, and exercise.

According to psychiatrist and prayer researcher Dale A. Matthews, M.D., associate professor of medicine at Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C., and author of The Faith Factor, this is a package of “all-natural health boosters” that complement the medicine chest of prescription drugs. Among the faith factors that Dr. Matthews and others have identified are the following:

1. Social Support—Support from friends bringing over meals when we’ve lost a loved one, to strangers who pray for us when they hear that we’re in the hospital; it’s hard to match the social support that church membership provides. “People who have a strong religious commitment are more connected to each other,” says Dr. Matthews. “The Bible tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves. And we can’t really do that if we aren’t involved in other people’s lives.”

2. Temperance—Most faiths hold a negative view of drunkenness, sexual immorality, smoking, even overeating—all risk factors that contribute to illness and disease. The Bible, for example, encourages us to treat our bodies as a “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19) and even suggests that “physical training is of some value” (1 Tim. 4:8). While the main motivation of believers should be to glorify God by growing in godliness, there is a secondary benefit—better health—says Dr. Matthews.

3. Serenity—Incredible stress marks our society as we witness an increase in relationships that falter, jobs that are lost, and the hectic way of life. Trying to keep up makes us more subject to various diseases. Studies by Herbert Benson, M.D., associate
4. professor and president of the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Harvard Medical School, has found that forms of meditation, including prayer, create something called “the relaxation response,” which dramatically reduces the damaging effects of stress.

5. While Dr. Benson believes that we can meditate on just about any single word or phrase to reap the benefits, Christians can tap God’s promises from the Bible. Two examples and good places to start are the following:

- “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5).
- “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Mt. 11:28)

“The stress-buffering and immune-enhancing effects of meditative prayer techniques form one of the faith factor’s most powerful components,” claims Dr. Matthews.

6. **Appreciation of Beauty**—The beauty of nature can go a long way in ministering to our minds and bodies. A full moon, snowcapped mountains, falling autumn leaves, etc. have a way of bringing relaxation. The Bible encourages us to look up and enjoy the view God has provided:

“The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork.” (Ps. 19:1)

7. **Worship**—Worship services, though ultimately designed to give glory to God, also minister to our senses. An ornate cathedral certainly helps to engage our senses, yet simple architecture and other factors in a worship experience can still benefit us in worship, says Everett L. Worthington, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and co-author of *To Forgive Is Human*. Through song, dance, uplifted hands, or silent prayer, “worship bathes us in a variety of healing faith factors”: ritual, social support and beauty. Dr. Matthews has found that profound, uplifting hymns, stained glass windows, and candlelight services all serve as art therapy to help revive our spirits.

Dr. Worthington also points out that as we come to worship God, and only Him, the stress of striving for things like money, sex and power fade in importance.

8. **Confession and Starting Over**: Our Christian faith can drive us to follow through on our guilt since it encourages us to confess our sins—no matter how bad we think they are—to a holy and loving God who is eager to forgive. This is based upon the promise that once we confess our sins, He’ll forgive us (1 Jn. 1:9), remove our sins “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12) and restore our fellowship with Him.
Instead of beating ourselves up about our mistakes and sins and becoming preoccupied with our shortcomings, this enables us to move on, says Dr. Matthews.

9. **The power of Ritual**—Research shows that religious rituals in and of themselves have health benefits. This is so whether we’re taking communion, repeating a familiar favorite prayer or Scripture, such repetition, if nothing else, provides comfort. “Ritual can give us a sense of security, assuring us that we have reached a safe harbor in a stormy world,” observes Dr. Matthews.21

10. **Hope**—Doctors have talked about the placebo effect, that is, the idea that some people get better just because they believe they’re taking something that will make them better. Rather than putting hope in a pill, those with deep faith believe that God has their best interests at heart. In spite of their circumstances they believe the promise that “. . . in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).22

“We evoke the power of the placebo when we connect to a transcendent realm where our present worries pale in comparison to the wonder of God’s ultimate promises,”23 explains Dr. Matthews.

11. **Unity**—Life at a hectic pace and fear of crime, among other things, have all but made the idea of community seem out-of-reach. The Internet, without doubt one of the most isolating inventions of all time, is jammed with chat rooms. Though impersonal in many ways, yet cyber meeting places where people of shared interests type questions and answers to one another provide an opportunity to gather and communicate. This need for gathering and communicating is also what makes faith a healing activity. There is a natural longing to identify with others, to be with people like ourselves who like what we like.24

Dr. Matthews goes on to point out that faith provides at least one other benefit that most clubs and hobbies probably don’t: accountability. He puts it, “If my faith flags momentarily, my spiritual brothers and sisters will remind me of God’s promises and point me back to the tenets that we hold in common.”25

12. **Meaning**—Dr. Dana E. King, M.D. associate professor in the department of family medicine at East Carolina University School of Medicine in Greenville, North Carolina, points out that two patients suffering from cancer may have very different attitudes. While one may be listless, barely moving from the chair next to his bed the entire weekend and refusing to talk to anyone, the other may be just as happy, positive and alive as anyone has ever seen. The difference, according to Dr. King is “She has Jesus in her heart. Her life has meaning.”26
Then the logical question is posed, “If the severity of their illness is equal, who would you guess will live longer?” The answer is obvious. The power of meaning and purpose!

13. **Trust**—Anyone with a deep faith is a testimony to the fact that they have learned how to trust. This does not mean an empty type of trust which in what is outlandish and refuses to do what is practical, but it does mean that they recognize their limitations, that God is able to do what they cannot do. This frees them from anxiety and gives them a sense of peace that is positively “health-preserving,” according to Dr. King.27

14. **Love**—The healing power of love may be best illustrated by what happens when we lose it, according to Dr. King. She gives the example of the woman whose husband of 50 years dies where “she literally dies of a broken heart.” This is the conclusion in such a case since there are no real physical causes of death.28

While faith does not make us immune to the pain of such loss, it does protect us from some of the trauma as we are reminded that God is near and His love will never fail. Love shown by a neighbor or friend that reaches out to us, especially in time of need, is powerful. Such love brings encouragement and strength when otherwise we may weaken and eventually become depressed.29

These 13 factors can help bring healing, but to be most effective they need to be tied to an active faith that is motivated by love for God. As Dr. Matthews points out, “Mother Teresa was not religious because her greatest desire was to achieve better health.”30 Her greatest desire was to worship and serve God. Better health should be a byproduct then of seeking to serve God. Jesus put it,

“Seek first His Kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt. 6:33).
13. WORDS & HEALING
The tongue is so powerful it guides the rest of the personality. Long before Sigmund Freud taught us that slips of the tongue were clues to our inner feelings, Jesus and James perceived the intimate connection between what we say and what we are. Jesus said:

“For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned” (Mt. 12:34-37).

Words reveal the intent of the heart and the character of a person. Since our tongue is the billboard of our soul, what we say reflects who we are. We can produce through our lips only what we have in our hearts. We are continually revealing what we are by what we say. This is why words form a legitimate basis for God’s judgment.

Jesus makes the point that we will give an account for every “careless” word. These are the words that we speak without thinking, the words which we utter when the conventional restraints are removed, which really show what we are like. After all, the calculated spoken words may be a calculated hypocrisy. When we are consciously on our guard, we will be careful what we say and how we say it; but when we are off guard, our words reveal our character. This is why our private conversations rather than our public utterances are more telling. In public we typically choose carefully what we say, but in private we let our words fly. We may be a model of charm and courtesy in public when we know we are being watched, yet in our own home we may use words that show we are irritable and temperamental, words that are sarcastic, critical and cruel.

The words which show what we are the words we speak when our guard is down.

We need to examine ourselves—to examine our words—that we may discover the state of our hearts.

James shows that speech is key to our humanity:

“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.
When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts.

Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water” (Jas. 3:1-12).

“We all stumble in many ways” (v. 2) and sins of the tongue seem to head the list for most.

Our skeletal frame is not unlike other primates. Some mammals, like whales or dolphins, bear resemblances to us in size of brain. The instincts of many higher animals make them more sensitive to their environments and alert to danger than we are. But no research has yet revealed any system of communication as elaborate, as advanced, as effective as human speech. It is the spoken word that—for good or ill—most clearly expresses what we are and feel as human beings.

James connects sins of the tongue with sins committed by “the whole body.” Why? Because words usually lead to deeds. During World War II posters were everywhere which read Loose Lips Sink Ships! But loose lips also wreck lives. A person makes an unguarded statement and suddenly finds himself involved in a fight. His tongue has forced the rest of the body to defend itself.

James illustrated the power of the tongue with three graphic figures of speech. The tongue is powerful as

- A horse’s bit: “If we put bits into the mouths of horses that they may obey us, we guide their whole bodies” (v. 3).

- A ship’s rudder: “Look at the ships also; though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs” (v. 4).
• **A small fire:** “So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!” (v. 5).

In selecting the bit, the rudder and the spark, James presented three items that are small in themselves, yet exercise great power, just like the tongue. A small bit enables the rider to control the large horse, a small rudder enables the pilot to steer the huge ship, and a small spark causes a dangerous fire. The tongue is a small member in the body, and yet it has the power to cause great destruction or to accomplish great things.

Both the bit and the rudder must overcome opposing forces. The bit must overcome the wild nature of the horse and the rudder must fight the winds and currents that would drive the ship off its course. The human tongue also must overcome contrary forces. We have an old nature that wants to control us and make us sin. There are circumstances around us that would make us say things we ought not to say and do things we ought not to do. Sin on the inside and pressures on the outside are seeking to gain control of the tongue.

**The tongue is so wayward it is impossible to tame.** James used this argument to underscore his point: “let not many of you become teachers” (Jas. 3:1). Paul observed sternly that maturity in speech comes slowly, and mastery of the tongue is impossible. Then he concluded that no one should become a teacher unless God has given him the wisdom to deal with the dangers of the tongue: “And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell” (v. 6).

Scripture is clear that our whole personality has been stained by sin. Although it was not just Adam’s tongue that fell in the beginning since it was his whole person, nothing reveals our fallen nature so quickly and so consistently as our tongue. It stains the whole body as its thoughtless and ruthless comments bubble or spew out. It spreads its heat like a forest fire on the world, and especially the people around us. It smokes with the very cinders of hell because of its destructive tendencies: “For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison” (vv. 7-8).

A clear illustration of our untamable tongues is the fact that we speak out of both sides of it. We use it positively and negatively at once: “With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse people, who are made in the likeness of God” (v. 9). This hypocrisy shows how out of line we are with God’s purposes: His springs do not gush forth both fresh water and salt water; His sweet fig trees do not yield bitter olives; His tart grape vines do not yield sugary figs; the salt water of the Dead Sea does not give forth the sweet water of a mountain stream (vv. 11-12).

Wisdom is needed—wisdom to guard our tongues. We should daily dedicate our tongues to Christ’s loving service, realizing that He alone has the power to tame the untamable.
Do Words Bring our Desires to Reality?

The Faith Movement points to words—speech—as being key in bringing our desires to reality. How important are words? Although the speaking is important, the key is the condition of the heart ("not doubt in his heart but believes").

Are miracles waiting to be spoken into existence? Yes and no. "Yes," in that miracles are possible to those who believe, but "no" in that merely speaking does not guarantee them to happen.

The condition of the heart must be good—"believing." This is why it is possible to speak forth some things that have no relation to the heart as Isaiah shows in describing Israel's spiritual state:

"The Lord says: 'These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Isa. 29:13).

James warns of hypocrisy in saying one thing and doing another:

"Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (Jas. 2:15-17).

Merely using a positive confession: "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed" simply is not enough, says James. Unless this faith is expressed in action (rather than in mere words) it is "useless" or "dead." The point James makes is that genuine faith (saving faith) cannot exist independently of deeds.

According to some, the mere confession of well-being should have created the well-being. But this was sheer hypocrisy according to James.

Sham and nonsense can mark positive confession as well as spiritual power. What good is it if we call Jesus Lord and do not do what He demands of us? Such confession and behavior is a contradiction (Lk. 6:46). Hardly the stuff of "the force to words" that the Faith teachers would have us believe.

Are There Limitations to Prayer?

Are there any limitations of what God will do in answer to our prayers? According to some, the only limitation is lack of faith. But is this so?
Job & Old Testament Prophets

We have already seen that the Faith teachers hold that it was Job's negative confession, that of *fear* (Job 3:25), that caused his tragedies. If this were so, why did not God commend Job's followers who made this very claim? Instead they were sternly rebuked by God. And Job was commended as we have already seen in the last chapter (see also Jas. 5:10-11).

This argument of the Faith teachers also ignores the fact that Job's lamentation comes *after* his trials (Job 1:6-2:13), not before. Thus his lament was a *product* of his suffering, not its *cause*.

There is no record that Job uttered a negative confession before his trials. Even after Job had suffered two major trials, God asserts that "in all this, Job did not sin in what he said" (2:10).

If Job unleashed forces hostile to God by his negative confession, then why did God judge Job to be "blameless and upright" after he had suffered his first calamity? Rather, the fact that God chose Job above all others to be tested so fiercely speaks volumes for his character, integrity, and devotion to God (1:1,8).

If Job's negative confession was the cause of his suffering, then why didn't David experience the same since he testified:

"But David thought to himself, 'One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul'" (1 Sam. 27:1).

David did not perish by the hand of Saul! His negative confession did not result in what he feared: death.

James commends the sufferings of the prophets along with the sufferings of Job:

"Brothers, as *an example of patience in the face of suffering*, take the prophets *who spoke in the name of the Lord.* As you know, we consider *blessed* those who have *persevered*. You have heard of *Job's perseverance* and have seen what *the Lord finally brought about.* The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

(Jas. 5:10-11)

The prophets were *known for their pronouncements of doom* as they carried forth God's message ("who spoke in the name of the Lord"—v. 10) which often included judgment as well as commendation. They are used by James as "examples of patience in the face of suffering" (v. 10) and are considered "blessed" because they "persevered" (v. 11).
James also makes reference to Job and commends him for his perseverance and makes reference to their having "seen what the Lord finally brought about" (Jas. 5:11) in his life—the purifying work as clearly evidenced in the last section of the book (Job 42).

If Job's negative confession was so serious, why is he commended as an example of perseverance?

When Ahab and Jezebel threatened Elijah he "was afraid and ran for his life" (1 Kgs. 19:3). But what Elijah the prophet feared did not take place. Why not? If negative confessions and actions are so powerful, why don't they typically come to pass? Only a very small percentage of our fears actually happen.

Jesus

Jesus' prayers were not always answered. When He wept (literally "sobbed" or "wailed loudly") over Jerusalem He wanted His people to know God's righteousness and peace. He said He would gather His people as a hen does her chicks, but "they would not" (Mt. 23:37). Jesus' prayer—His "longing" was not fulfilled.

God the Father

Peter points out that God is patient with His people "... not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Although it is God's desire to see everyone "come to repentance" this does not mean that they will. We know from other Scriptures that "narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Mt. 7:13). Does this mean that this is so because of God's negative confession, "Not wanting anyone to perish"?

Paul

Paul's prayers were not always answered. Demas, Phygelus and Hermogenes deserted him. Surely Paul and Luke must have had intense prayer sessions for their fellow workers and for the believers in Asia, yet some of such prayers were not answered.

Paul testifies that when he came to Macedonia he had had no rest and that he had been "harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within" (2 Cor. 7:5). On reaching Macedonia Paul, instead of having his fears realized, was at last comforted by the arrival of Titus, who brought the news he most wanted to hear concerning the situation in Corinth.

Titus himself had been well received in that city and was able to assure Paul (2 Cor. 7:7) of the "longing" and "ardent concern" of the Corinthian Christians for him and of the "deep sorrow" they had expressed for grief they had caused him. Consequently, his "joy was greater than ever" (v. 7).
What is Failure?

Some state categorically that "God will not let me fail!" But what is failure? How do we as finite human beings measure it?

Sometimes failure is the backdoor to success. Human "failure" can provide perspective on eternal realities that we would not see otherwise.

Failure is often God's discipline to keep us from going astray (Ps. 119:71). At times it drives us back to a deeper commitment than we would otherwise make. It also serves as a motivation for us to get our priorities straight—in line with God's.

What are the Desires of the Heart?

One of the favorite verses used by proponents of faith healing is Psalm 37:4:

"Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."

What are "the desires of the heart"? Are they not the desires that come from "delighting in Him"? And what does the Lord delight in? Material health, wealth and prosperity? Hardly! In fact just a few verses later the Lord says:

"Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked; for the power of the wicked will be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous."  
(Ps. 37:16-17)

This whole psalm emphasizes God's protection and deliverance, His eternal rewards, and man's righteousness and faithfulness as God's blessings.

Confession of Sin

One of the most serious implications of this doctrine is their teaching on the confession of sin. Although Jesus taught His followers to pray daily for the forgiveness of sin (Mt. 6:12), some argued that when we confess our weakness and disease we are openly confessing that the Word of God is not true, in the sense that it liberates us, and those who are always confessing their sins and weaknesses are building weakness, failure and sin into their consciousness.

The argument is that God requires a positive confession since Christians are not only clothed in the righteousness of Christ but actually partakers of His Righteousness.
Some, therefore, hold that it is wrong to confess our sins in church. Because we are in Christ, we know instantly when we have sinned and can ask for forgiveness on the spot. To confess our sins corporately in church is not only unnecessary but also negative since it focuses attention on the devil's power in our lives. Such focus thus hinders the work of the Spirit.

If this were true, why is Scripture replete with corporate confession of sin (Dan. 9:4-19)?

If we take negative or wrong confessions literally, then Jesus was mistaken when He asked the blind man what he wanted, because in so doing, He elicited a "negative" confession. The blind man did negatively confess his blindness to Jesus who did heal him.

**Words**, though descriptive (Western thinking) and creative (Eastern thinking), are **not magical**. Even though words have power to create, they do not in and of themselves, create. Therefore they are **not a force in and of themselves**.

**The Meaning of Words**

Does "everything," "anything," "whatever" always mean that? The doctrine of positive confession claims this. Its adherents confidently pontificate that John 14:13-14 teaches that we can ask God for everything, anything, and whatever and it will be done. Jesus put it:

"And **I will do whatever you ask in My name**, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. **You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it**" (vv. 13-14).

This is not simply prayer that mentions Jesus' name, but prayer in accordance with all that the person who bears the name is.

How do we know that? Because in ancient times an individual's "name" summed up his whole person, his character and personality.

This prayer, therefore, is prayer aimed at carrying forward the work Jesus did—prayer that He Himself will answer.

Some claim that anything can be named, claimed and even demanded, whether it is good weather, a new car (expensive car, that is), financial success, the recovery of lost property, or the salvation of a loved one.

As in most languages other than English, "everything" does not always mean "everything" in an absolute sense. It is often used as a simple and common expression such as, "Is everything all right?" **The context is key in understanding what is meant.**
If you are a customer about to pay for your dinner it means something related to the food, the service, the seating, the atmosphere, etc. It is not an expression in which "everything" means "everything in general," but "everything in context." Although the meaning is not explicitly expressed, the context dictates the limitations of the expression.

In reference to Jesus' promise in John 15:13-14 it is clear then that for a request to be honored by Jesus, it must be based upon His Word, whether it is a promise, an injunction, a prohibition, or a universal principle. Conversely, if a request is not in conformity to God's Word, it is illegitimate.

"Everything" does not mean "everything" indiscriminately. "Everything" means "everything" in conformity to the kind of person Jesus is and thus what His Word says since His Word is an expression of who He is. This precludes a man-centered and happiness-centered approach which reveals human nature at its worst—selfishness, self-centeredness and pride.

When faith is more important than grace, lack of faith becomes a gospel of condemnation as it easily, but unbiblically, explains why things happen and why they don't. This is true whether in the realm of material abundance, health, or anything else. Thus the confidence of many lies in man's faith or lack of it, rather than the God of grace.

Words are Key to a Positive Mental Attitude

"Life and death are in the power of the tongue," warned Solomon (Prov. 18:21). A good, positive mental attitude has a lot to do with our health. And words have the power of life and death, power to bring pain or healing:

"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." (12:18)

"The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit" (15:4).

"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones." (16:24)

The tongue has the power to direct, to affect our own lives and the lives of others. A judge says “Guilty!” or “Not Guilty!” and those words affect the destiny of the prisoner, his family and his friends.

David, the psalmist, prayed:

“Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3).
A plea that God will keep him from speaking, desiring or doing what is evil. A plea we all should emulate.

Positive Affirmations

Methodist and Reformed Church of America minister, the late Norman Vincent Peale, author of The Power of Positive Thinking, firmly believed in the power of affirmations and taught that we should use positive Bible verses to bolster our confidence. He found support from psychologists for his ideas of replacing destructive thinking and destructive self-talk with positive thinking and positive self-talk. A couple of his favorite verses include

- “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).
- “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31)

Peale also liked to advise people to spend several minutes daily sensing or imagining, the presence of God and repeating to themselves, “God is with me; God is helping me; God is guiding me.” He based much of his teachings on the Bible verse: “. . . as he thinks in his heart, so is he . . .” (Prov. 23:7).

The concept of affirming positive faith, thoughts and Scripture is found all across the Christian spectrum.

In effect, adopting positive affirmations as a spiritual exercise carries out Paul’s instruction:

“. . . be filled with the Spirit; speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .”

(Eph. 5:18-20)

William Backus, Ph.D., a Christian-licensed psychologist, founder and director of the Center for Christian Psychological Services in St. Paul, Minnesota and author of Telling Yourself the Truth and The Healing Power of a Healthy Mind emphasizes allowing truth to set us free. He provides some helpful guidelines in the best use of affirmations.

1. The first and most crucial point is that “affirmations need to be set in the context of the chief affirmation, Thy will be done.” God’s will must always be central to any affirmations. All other affirmations stem from that affirmation. This means that not everything we ask for will be granted because it doesn’t all fit within God’s plan.
2. Our affirmations should reflect God’s teachings in the Bible. For example, if we feel nervous about something, instead of saying, “I’m a nervous wreck; I’m going to make an idiot of myself,” we should say, “Thank you, Lord, for your peace, because your Word says: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.” (Jn. 14:27).

3. We should understand that while some prayers of affirmation seem to get answered immediately, others take time. Therefore we need to be patient, diligent, and hopeful in our affirming. Repeating prayer affirmations until we believe that we have God’s answer is essential. This is like planting a seed and watering it. Repetition is watering the seed and it is not reasonable to expect a full-grown plant the next day. We should not focus too much on whether God’s specific answer is coming. Rather we should move on with life believing and trusting that God is at work in our lives.
14. PRAYER, MEDITATION & HEALING
“A prayer in its simplest definition is merely a wish turned Godward.”
--Phillips Brooks

“Prayer is more than a wish turned heavenward, it is the voice of faith directed God-ward.”
--Anonymous

“Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of sins, and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.”
--Westminster Shorter Catechism

“Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, for such things as God has promised.”
--Paul Bunyan

“Prayer is not a mechanical monologue, but communion with God.”
--Anonymous

“Prayer is not an occasional exercise to which we turn now and then; it is a life attitude.”
--Anonymous

“God will not do apart from prayer what He has promised to do in answer to prayer. Prayer moves the hand that moves the world.”
--Anonymous

“When we work, we work; when we pray, God works.”
--Anonymous

“Thou art coming to a King
Large petitions with thee bring
For His grace and power are such
None can ever ask too much!”
--John Newton

Prayer works by the mechanism called “faith.” As Christians who have faith—who believe—there is only one God, we are free to pray to any aspect of representation of the Divine that we choose. We may find God in the beauty of nature. We may simply recognize God’s presence everywhere and allow that recognition to be a prayer in itself.
This teaching has been addressed for centuries by Christian mystics and by some of the great Catholic theologians. And it is biblical; the Bible teaches that God is omnipresent and almighty and holds all things together, as shown in the following verses:

“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things . . .” (Rom. 11:36).

“And He is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col. 1:17).

PRAYER: A DECLARATION OF DEPENDENCE

Yet most of us find prayer difficult. Why? Because we all have both a deep desire to pray and a deep resistance against it. We want to be close to God, but also want to keep some distance.

These tensions come from the awareness of who God is. There is faith and fear, hope and anxiety. For on the one hand we believe and hope that God is love and that all He does is with our best interest in mind and on the other hand we are afraid that if God gets to know us very well He might not love us.

There is also tension because we also know from Scripture that God is holy and sovereign and therefore demands total allegiance. He is a jealous lover who asks for our total, undivided attention. And that is very demanding for people who want help, but not too much interference.

As long as we reduce prayer to occasional piety where we pray only when we feel like it (which isn’t very often) we never come to grips with the mystery of God’s love. Of course we love God, but there are some areas we would rather keep away from him.

Many have seen the statement, “Prayer changes things.” And while that is true, a greater truth is that prayer changes people.” We want to grow, but we don’t want to change.

Prayer is a two-way communication between an infinite God and finite man. Through prayer we gain access to the mind and heart of God. Through prayer we also gain insight into our own hearts. Knowledge of God leads to knowledge of self. And this throws us back on the mercy of God.

Prayer leads us to humility as we realize our sinfulness and thus our dependence upon God. Prayer is a declaration of dependence. It is the recognition that what Jesus said is true,

“Apart from Me, you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

Jesus did not say, “Apart from Me, you can do a few things.”
Jesus did not say, “Apart from Me, you can do something.”

Jesus did say, “Apart from Me, you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

Nothing!

This is hard for us to believe. After all, God has made us in His image and likeness so we should be able to do all kinds of things apart from Him. The problem is that although we have been made in the image and likeness of God, we are fallen creatures. The fall of man has rendered us helpless spiritually so that even our righteous acts are but filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).

We are dependent creatures! And prayer is the primary way by which we live in dependence. Prayer is a natural way that we show our recognition that God is our Source for everything. Our lack of prayer shows our unbelief, pride, arrogance, and independence.

I would like to illustrate our dependence in the area of work and money. Why? Because it is the most practical thing I can think of. After all, work and money are central to our lives. Unless we are already retired, our money is the result of our work (including our work in investing). Work and money are tied to each other to a certain extent. Try to not work and yet receive wages. It doesn’t work. Because wages are the benefits we receive from work.

Many of us would argue that we have our money because we earned it the old fashion way: we worked for it. But that is not the whole story. We do not have what we have only because we worked for it or because someone gave us some money. We have what we have because God allowed us to have it, possibly because God blessed us with it.

Just as Jesus, God’s Son, was dependent upon His heavenly Father, so must we, His creatures, be dependent upon Him for everything.

PRAYER AND PASSION

If we are to be passionate about God we must understand who we are passionate about—the God revealed to us in Scripture. Not the god of our imagination, the god we would like him to be, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The God revealed to us in Scripture, and specifically in Isaiah 40, is a God who is compassionate, holy, just, glorious, sovereign, self-sufficient and wise, incomparable, eternal, and immutable. Such a God, and only such a God, is worthy of our passion.

The first step in learning to become passionate about God is to know who this God is. Another essential step in learning to become passionate about God is knowing this God in a personal way. This is the difference between knowing things about God—who God is—and knowing Him.
Such personal knowledge implies communication. Communication between man and God. And God has provided different means of communication to make this possible. The first one we’ll look at is prayer.

William Carey, the Father of Modern Missions, said,

“Prayer—secret, fervent, believing prayer—lies at the root of all personal godliness.”3

How does prayer open us to this personal godliness and passion for God?

Mother Teresa put it:

“Prayer enlarges our heart until it is capable of containing God’s gift of Himself.”4

How?

By providing an avenue of communication with God. For prayer is simply talking to God and listening to God. It is a two-way communication between an infinite God and finite man. Through prayer we gain access to the mind and heart of God. Through prayer we also gain insight into our own hearts. Knowledge of God leads to knowledge of self. And this throws us back on the mercy of God.

Prayer is not only communication, but communion, which is defined by the dictionary as “intimate communication.”

Prayer leads us to humility as we realize our sinfulness and thus our dependence upon God. Prayer is a declaration of dependence. It is the recognition that what Jesus said is true,

“Apart from Me, you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

Jesus our Model

As a man, how did Jesus enjoy such an intimate relationship with God, the Father? Through prayer. At His baptism it says:

“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased’” (Lk. 3:21-22).

When we pray heaven opens and God speaks!
Lifestyle

Is it any wonder Jesus “told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (Lk. 18:1). But is it realistic to pray all the time? It is if prayer is regarded as a lifestyle. Otherwise we could not always pray. To pray at all times is to practice the presence of God, to be aware of God’s presence and to respond to that presence with thanksgiving and joy.

Bring Everything to God

Paul tells us to bring everything to God in prayer:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).

Paul says here: Don’t worry, pray! About everything! Then God’s peace will be our comfort and protection.

In prayer we don’t have to worry about what to say or how to say it. We can just speak to Him naturally out of our heart. It is important that we talk to Him about the various things we are going to do that day. To ask for His help and His guidance! Then, as we move along through the day remember that He is always with us (Heb. 13:5). So we should share with Him the thoughts and concerns that come into our mind throughout the day. To ask Him for direction, and be sure and thank Him for His answers. There is nothing too little or too large for us to tell God.

Vance Havner, the Southern Baptist preacher warned that if we do not come apart, we will come apart. Prayer is essential if we are to live a sane life. It brings peace and serenity in a turbulent world.

Persistence

In this verse we also see the importance of persistence as Jesus showed the disciples through the means of a parable that they should not give up (Lk. 11:5-8; 18:2-8). He told them:

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened” (11:9-10).

To drive this home even further Jesus says:
“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (vv. 11-13).

The reason we are to be persistent is not because God’s will has to be overcome, for God is ready and willing to hear and answer prayer. Rather, persistence is necessary in order to show wholeheartedness. In our persistence we grow in sincerity as we come to realize that prayer is serious business and should not be entered into lightly. Prayer is not putting our spiritual coins in a heavenly slot machine expecting God to answer in kind. Prayer is zealously bringing our concerns to God for Him to answer according to His will.

**God-Ordained Means**

During His busy ministry Jesus prayed. He was **never too busy to pray**. Luther expressed, “I have so much work to do today that I must spend the first three hours in prayer.”

He then said,

“Prayer is a powerful thing, for God has bound and tied Himself thereto.”

Prayer is ordained by God to be **the means whereby He accomplishes His purpose**. Therefore, if we do not pray, we will not experience all that God has for us. Prayer is His way! James put it, “You do not have because you do not ask God” (Jas. 4:2). If we do not pray we will miss out.

**Hindrances**

James also says that our prayers are not answered because of **wrong motives**:

“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with **wrong motives**, that you may spend what you get on **your pleasures**” (4:3).

God does not bother to answer such selfish prayers.

Peter also warns us of **inconsideration** toward our spouses:

“Husbands, in the same way be **considerate** as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that **nothing will hinder your prayers**” (1 Pet. 3:7).
Isaiah speaks of sin in general and says that it separates us from God and that God even hides His face from us:

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:2).

We cannot live sinful lives and expect God to answer our prayers.

On the other hand God is ready and willing to answer those who live righteous lives:

“For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears attentive to their prayer . . .” (1 Pet. 3:12; see also Ps. 34:15; 1 Chron. 5:20; Prov. 15:8,29).

James similarly points out, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (Jas. 5:16).

Our prayer life is not greater than our walk with God. The book of Hebrews points out that Jesus was heard because of His desperation and obedience:

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverent submission” (Heb. 5:7).

How Not To Pray and How to Pray

Jesus refers to prayer, along with fasting and giving to the poor, as “acts of righteousness” (Mt. 6:1). But acts of righteousness can easily degenerate into sheer hypocrisy.

Private

Because of man’s tendency toward hypocrisy, Jesus points out that such acts are to be done in private. So He says that real prayer is to begin in private, in secret, and only then be offered in public:

“But when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Mt. 6:5-6).

Private prayer is crucial for it guards us against spiritual pride in that it protects us from praying to be noticed by people. Only prayer that is done in humility will be rewarded by God.
Sincere

We also see in this passage that real prayer is sincere rather than hypocritical for it is offered to God and not people. The fault of the people whom Jesus was criticizing was that they were praying to people and not to God. A certain great preacher once described an ornate and elaborate prayer offered in a Boston Church as “the most eloquent prayer ever offered to a Boston audience.” The purpose of prayer is to make contact with God, not to impress people.

Thoughtful

Real prayer is also to be thoughtful rather than mechanical:

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him” (Mt. 6:7-8).

Basic to any kind of praying is that our minds and hearts are involved in what we are saying. Meaningless repetition of words will never qualify for true prayer. When we begin to think more of how we are praying than to whom and of what we are praying, our prayer dies upon our lips.

Our Model: The Lord’s Prayer

It is noteworthy that Jesus said, “My house will be called a house of prayer” (21:13; Isa. 56:7). Not a house of preaching, a house of teaching, a house of counseling, a house of programs, but a house of prayer.

It is also interesting that the disciples who had seen Jesus preach with power, teach with authority, and perform various kinds of miracles, did not ask Him to show them how to preach, teach, heal, and perform other miracles, but they did ask Him, “Lord teach us to pray . . .” (Lk. 11:1). So Jesus gave them a model, a pattern of prayer. We have come to call it “The Lord’s Prayer” since it was given in response to their request. The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer which only a disciple (a follower of Jesus) can pray since only one who is committed to Jesus Christ can pray this prayer with any meaning.

Jesus informed His disciples:

“This is how you should pray:
‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.  
Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one’” (Mt. 6:9-13).

Notice the order of the petitions in the Lord’s Prayer. The first three petitions have to do with God and with the glory of God; the second three petitions have to do with our needs and our necessities. That is to say, God is first given His proper place that all other things fall into their proper places.

Prayer must never be an attempt to bend the will of God to our desires; prayer ought always to be an attempt to submit our wills to the will of God.

The second part of the prayer, the part which deals with our needs and our necessities, deals with the three essential needs of man and the three spheres of time within which man moves. First, it asks for bread, for that which is necessary for the maintenance of life, and thereby brings the needs of the present to the throne of God. Second, it asks for forgiveness and thereby brings the past into the presence of God. Third, it asks for help in temptation and thereby commits all the future into the hands of God.

Notice the important ingredients in this prayer.

● It is reverent as it expresses a respectful and loving devotion to a God who is both holy and loving, righteous and compassionate, majestic and merciful.

● It is brief as a vast range of truth and instruction is compressed into a mere 52 words (57 words in the original language—Greek).

● It is also simple as the petitions are swiftly driven to the heart of the desire and need of the disciple.

● It is universal in that the petitions relate to the concerns of a human being at the deepest level. These petitions are not superficial and selfish demands.

● It is childlike as the approach in prayer is that of childlike trust.

● It is a prayer of commitment since the attitude is not that of being a spectator but a participant.

● And it is a humble prayer in that it is prayed in an attitude of need.
Although prayer is merely talking to God, it is always a learning experience in that you will want to learn how to better talk to Him, how to enter into a deeper level of communication and communion with Him. This is a life-long process.

**Centering Prayer**

According to Herbert Benson, M.D., associate professor of medicine and president of the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Harvard Medical School, daily meditative prayer has been shown by medical scientists to substantially reduce physical and mental stress and, consequently, render many health benefits.6

Father Kempis seemed to know this back in the 1400s. He writes that the man who practices contemplative prayer “quickly recollects himself because he has never wasted his attention” on external distractions. “No outside work, no business that cannot wait stands in his way. He adjusts himself to things as they happen.”7

In his classic *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas Kempis writes:

> “Turn, then, to God . . . devote yourself to those (things) that are within, and you will see the Kingdom of God come unto you, that Kingdom which is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”8

How do we do this? Father Keating, who has been teaching contemplative prayer since the 1970's, suggests trying the following method.

1. Choose a sacred word, such as *Abba* or *love*. Gently repeat this word silently, symbolizing the intent to commune with God within.

2. Sit comfortably, eyes closed, quiet the mind, and “introduce the sacred word inwardly and as gently as laying a feather on a piece of cotton.”

3. When we find our attention drifting from our sacred word, gently guide it back. “During the course of our prayers, the sacred word may become vague or even disappear,” which is perfectly normal.

4. At the end of the prayer session, sit in silence for a few minutes, allowing yourself to slowly emerge from the experience into your customary thinking pattern.9

Father Keating recommends two periods of centering prayer daily. He suggests that they be at least 20 minutes long each.

What can we expect during the prayer period? Father Keating suggests:
“Normal memories; wanderings of the imagination; ‘thoughts that give rise to attractions or aversions; insights and psychological breakthroughs; self reflections such as “How am I doing?” or “This peace is just great!” and thoughts that arise from the unloading of the unconscious,” such as insights into past behaviors and events.”10

PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT
Romans 8:27

"The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil . . . mocks our wisdom . . . but trembles when we pray."11

--Samuel Chadwick

Because we are still human and are subject to our sinful human nature, after we become Christians, we desperately need the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us by teaching us what it means to pray and reminding us what Jesus has said since He promised to teach us “all things” (Jn. 14:26) and He comes alongside us and helps us in our "weakness" (Rom. 8:27). Weakness here probably refers to our human condition in general. The psalmist said, "for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103:14). As human beings we are in need of the Holy Spirit to work in and through us as we are still subject to our human limitations.

Divine Provision

Throughout this letter to the Philippians Paul beautifully pictures that divine-human relationship. Speaking of his own needs, he said,

"I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19).

The Spirit supplies us with all we need to be faithful, effective, and protected children of God. In the following chapter he admonishes,

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose” (Phil. 2:12-13).

The Spirit of God works unrelentingly in us to do what we could never do alone—bring about the perfect will of God.
We Don’t Know How To Pray

To make clear how the Spirit works, Paul turns to the subject of prayer. Although we are redeemed and secure in our adoption as God's children, nevertheless "we do not know what we ought to pray for" (Rom. 8:26). Paul does not elaborate on our inability to pray as we ought, but his statement is all-encompassing. Because of our imperfect perspectives, finite minds, human frailties, and spiritual limitations, we are not able to pray in absolute consistency with God's will. Many times we are not even aware that spiritual needs exist, much less know how best they should be met. Even when we pray sincerely, faithfully, and regularly we cannot possibly know God's purposes concerning all of our own needs or the needs of others for whom we pray.

Jesus told Peter,

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (Lk. 22:31-32).

Fortunately for Peter, Jesus kept His word despite the apostle's foolish bravado as he promised, "Lord, I am ready to go with You to prison and to death" (v. 33). Not only was Peter no match for Satan but he soon proved that his devotion to Christ could not even withstand the taunts of a few strangers (vv. 54-60).

How glorious that our spiritual security rests in the Lord's faithfulness rather than in our feeble faith and our vacillating commitment!

Even the apostle Paul, who lived so near to God and so faithfully and sacrificially proclaimed His gospel, did not always know how best to pray. He knew, for example, that God had allowed Satan to inflict him with an unspecified "thorn in the flesh." That affliction guarded Paul against pride over being "caught up into Paradise." But after a while Paul became weary of the infirmity, which doubtless was severe, and he prayed earnestly that it might be removed. After three entreaties, the Lord told Paul that he should be satisfied with the abundance of divine grace by which he was already sustained in the trial (2 Cor. 12:3-9). Paul's request did not correspond to the Lord's will for him at that time. Even when we do not know what God wants, the indwelling Spirit Himself intercedes for us, brings our needs before God, even when we do not know what they are or when we pray about them unwisely.

Groans Too Deep For Words

Paul emphasizes that our help is from the Spirit Himself. His divine help not only is personal but direct. The Spirit does not simply provide our security, but is Himself our security. The Spirit intercedes on our behalf in a way, Paul says, that is totally beyond human compre-
hension, "with groans that words cannot express" or "with groans too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26). The Holy Spirit unites with us in our desire to be freed from our corrupted earthly bodies and to be with God forever in our glorified heavenly bodies:

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (vv. 22-23).

Contrary to the interpretation of most charismatics, the groans of the Spirit are not utterances in unknown tongues which have no rational content. Although "praying in the Spirit" in 1 Corinthians 14:13-19 does refer to praying in tongues, here it does not. As Paul says explicitly, the groans are not even audible but are "inexpressible in words." Yet those groans carry profound content, namely divine appears for the spiritual welfare of each believer.

Hannah provides us an example of this. In I Samuel we read

"As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard.”

(1 Sam. 1:12)

Eli thought she was drunk. But she explained:

"Not so, my lord. I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for-a-wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief” (vv. 15-16).

God answered her prayer:

“. . . and the Lord remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, 'Because I asked the Lord for him’ (vv. 19-20).

In a way infinitely beyond our understanding, these groans represent what might be called intertrinitarian communication, divine articulations by the Holy Spirit to the Father. Paul affirmed this truth to the Corinthians when he declared:

"For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11).

It is the prayer that God the Holy Spirit inspires, that God the Father answers.
Praying in the Spirit

The expressions praying in the Spirit occurs twice in the New Testament:

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18).

"But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20).

To pray "in the Spirit" means praying according to the Spirit's promptings and with the power of the Spirit. Closely related to this is Galatians 4:6:

"Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'"

The "Spirit of His Son" refers to a new "guardian" (Gal. 4:2) identified as "the Spirit of God" in Romans 8:9 (v. 2; Eph. 1:13-14). The phrase "calls out" is a vivid Greek verb expressing deep emotion, often used of an inarticulate cry. In Matthew 27:50 it is used of Jesus' final cry. The cry "Abba, Father" is expressive of a special close relationship to God.

Divine Intercessors

We remain justified and righteous before God the Father only because the Son and the Holy Spirit, as our constant advocates and intercessors, represent us before Him. It is only because of that joint and unceasing divine work on our behalf that we will enter heaven. Christ . . . is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them" (Heb. 7:25).

Jesus' divine work of redemption in our hearts begins at the time of conversion, but it does not end until we are in heaven, glorified and made righteous as God is righteous--for Christ is His righteousness. That is guaranteed by the heavenly high priestly work of our Lord and by the earthly indwelling Holy Spirit, who also makes secure the divine adoption and heavenly destiny of every believer.

If it were not for the sustaining power of the Spirit within us and Christ's continual mediation for us as high Priest (Heb. 7:25-26), our remaining humanness would have immediately engulfed us again in sin the moment we were justified. If, for an instant, Christ and the Holy Spirit were to stop their sustaining intercession for us, we would, in that instant, fall back into our sinful, damnable state of separation from God, for in us, that is, in our sinful human nature, we are no good (Rom. 3:10-12; 7:7-25,*18). Even our righteousness, as Isaiah points out, is but "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6).
Were it not for the sustaining and intercessory work of the Son and the Spirit on behalf of believers, Satan and his false teachers could easily deceive God's elect (Mt. 24:24) and could undermine the completion of their salvation.

**We Do Not Know Our Own Hearts**

We need the ministry of the Holy Spirit not only because the Holy Spirit knows God, but also because only God knows our hearts. Jeremiah, the prophet said:

"**The heart is deceitful** above all things and **beyond cure, who can understand it.**"

(Jer. 17:9)

In the process of selecting a successor to King Saul, the Lord told Samuel,

"God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but **the Lord looks at the heart**" (1 Sam. 16:7).

At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prayed,

"... then hear from heaven, Your dwelling place. Forgive and act; deal with man according to all he does; since You know his heart (for You alone know the hearts of all men), so that they will fear You all the time they live in the land You gave our fathers" (1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chron. 28:9; Ps. 139:1-2; Prov. 15:11).

Paul continues to address the ministry of the Holy Spirit in prayer with these words:

"And He who **searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit**, because the **Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will**" (Rom. 8:27).

God the Father knows the hearts of people and the mind of the Spirit. The Father understands exactly what the Spirit is thinking because He and the Holy Spirit intercede for the saints according to the will of God. Because the Spirit's will and the Father's will are identical, and because God is one, Paul's statement seems unnecessary. But he is pointing out the truth in order to give encouragement to believers. Because the three persons of the Godhead have always been one in essence and will, the very idea of communication among them seems superfluous to us. It is a great mystery to our finite minds, but it is a divine reality that God expects His children to acknowledge by faith.

In this passage Paul emphasizes the divine intercession that is necessary for the preservation of believers to their eternal hope. We can no more fathom that marvelous truth than we can fathom any other aspect of God's plan of redemption. But we know that, were not Christ and the Holy Spirit continually on guard in our behalf, our inheritance in heaven would be reserved for us in vain.
We have been given everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

We have two intercessors: one in heaven—our Lord Jesus who intercedes for our sins (Rom. 8:34) and one in our hearts—the Holy Spirit.

To benefit from the Spirit's work we must be clean of all that is contrary to Him so we do not grieve Him and we must learn to wait on Him. This takes time, for we must be focused. This requires undivided attention—singleness of heart. It means giving Him our best. Then, and only then, will God by His Spirit work in and through us as He wishes.

DEVOTIONS
How to have a Meaningful Time with God

“It is impossible for a believer, no matter what his experience, to keep right with God if he will not take the trouble to spend time with God. . . . Spend plenty of time with God; let other things go, but don’t neglect Him.” 12

--Oswald J. Chambers

“Satan rocks the cradle when we sleep at our devotions.” 13

--Joseph Hall

If we hope to experience healing and maintain health in our lives and grow in our walk with God it is essential that we develop a devotional life. This means setting aside a quiet time to spend with God. If we are too busy to maintain a quiet time, we are too busy. I have found that we have time for just about anything that is really important to us. We do that which we really want to do. If we don’t maintain a quiet time each day, it’s not really because we are too busy; it’s because we do not feel it is important enough.

Maintaining a daily quiet time is basically a matter of priorities, of putting first things first. We must take time for fellowship with our heavenly Father. We organize for everything else, so why not organize for a quiet time? Putting God first brings pleasure to Him and helps us to experience Him in a deep way: “I love those who love Me; and those who diligently seek Me will find Me” (Prov. 8:17; see also 8:35).

Be expectant. Since God has invited us to come to Him we should do so with anticipation. It is only logical that we should expect a meaningful time with the God who has called us to be His children and part of His family.

Be quiet. The prophet Isaiah and the psalmist David knew the importance of solitude: “In quietness and trust is your strength” (Isa. 30:15). “Cease striving and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). We must make our quiet time a quiet time.
We need to decide where we can find a quiet spot. If we cannot find a quiet place, then we will have to close the door of our mind to all surrounding distractions. But more important than finding a quiet spot is a quiet spirit. We must open ourselves to all that God has for us.

**Be alert.** It was said of the Berean Christians that they “received the word with great eagerness” (Acts 17:11). The time we choose for our quiet time is up to each one of us. The great missionary Hudson Taylor used to say, “Whatever is your best time in the day, give that to communion with God.” Some people wake up quickly while others wake up slowly. Alertness is the important thing.

While we may choose a later time in the day for devotions, it is good to speak first to God when we wake up. This way we can commit the day to God. Jesus began the day alone talking with God (Mk. 1:35). The Psalmist wrote, “In the morning, O Lord, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch” (Ps. 5:3).

Most people are more alert in the morning than just before bedtime. But in order to regularly meet God in the morning we must get to bed at a reasonable time. We may have to set our priorities in order. We may have to put down that book or magazine a little earlier. We may have to switch off the TV or radio.

**Be regular.** Meet the Lord at the same time and same place each day. The Bible indicates that Abraham had a regular place where he met with God (Gen. 19:27) and Jesus prayed regularly in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives (Lk. 22:39). A definite time and place will help a great deal in developing regularity.

**Be consistent.** Consistency requires faithfulness. The apostle Paul wrote, “It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy” (1 Cor. 4:2). Each one of us is a steward. We have twenty-four hours in every day to spend as we wish. How are we using our time?

In order to be consistent it is important that you have a realistic goal in how much time you spend in your devotional time. Do not attempt too much to start with; it can lead to discouragement and failure. We need to grow in the amount of time spent in our devotional life as in other areas of our lives. Determine to do that which you honestly feel you can accomplish each day. Begin with about 10 minutes: 7 minutes in Scripture reading and 3 minutes in prayer. Ten minutes each day of the week is much healthier than an hour or two a couple of times during the week. Just as we take in physical nourishment on a daily basis, so we should take in spiritual nourishment on a daily basis.

After we have spent about ten minutes each day for about six weeks, we should increase it another 5 or 10 minutes. We need to be careful, however, that we do not get legalistic (preoccupied with rules and regulations) and watch the clock. Sometimes it will take longer than you have set aside for quiet time, and sometimes less time. It is primarily the quality of the time spent with God that matters.
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Determine to maintain the quiet time. The maintenance of a successful quiet time requires determination and discipline. Seek to avoid all interruptions. Don’t let the telephone rob you of your time with God. Arrange your schedule so that you can be alone—totally alone—with God for a specific length of time each day.

Be obedient. Our attitude is all-important. Since we are spending time with the Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Redeemer and Lord, it is vital that we come with an attitude of submission and affirmation of the will of God. This means that we come willing to do anything and everything God wants us to do (Mt. 7:21-23).

Don’t give in to defeat and guilt. If we miss a day of devotions once in a while, don’t worry and go on a guilt trip. As Paul put it, “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). Although carelessness is a problem for many of us, legalism may also be a problem for some of us as we focus on man-made rules and regulations. If we miss a day, just get right back on track. After all, when we miss a meal we don’t give up eating because we’re inconsistent. Rather, we simply eat a little more at the next meal. Such an attitude will help us not to give in to defeat and guilt, but to depend on God’s grace and strength to be consistent in our time with Him.

How to Establish A Habit

Psychologists tell us that it usually takes us three weeks to get familiar with some new task or habit and another three weeks before it becomes a habit. The reason why so many people fail in their quiet times is because they have never made it past that six week barrier. We must have had one daily devotional time for at least six weeks in order that your quiet time becomes a habit.

1. Make a Strong Resolution (Vow). A strong, decided initiative is a must if we are to be successful in establishing a new habit. A halfhearted attempt will never succeed. In order to ensure this happens it is important that we make a public declaration by telling others about our decision.

2. Don’t Allow for Exceptions. For the first six weeks in the development of a habit it is vital that we do not become careless and allow exceptions to occur until the new habit is securely rooted in our life. A habit is like a ball of twine in that every time we drop it, many strands unwind. So we must not allow the “just this once” to occur. For when we yield to exceptions we weaken the will and strengthen our lack of self-control.

3. Seize Every Opportunity and Inclination to Practice your New Habit. It is crucial for us to practice your new habit immediately whenever we get the slightest urge. Instead of waiting, use every opportunity to reinforce your habit. There is no harm in overdoing a new habit when we are first starting. Once it is established we can afford to be a little more relaxed.
4. **Rely on the Power of God.** As a Christian we must realize that we are in a *spiritual battle*, and we can only succeed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore essential that we humbly depend on Him to help us as we resolutely pray that God will strengthen us so we can, by His grace, develop this habit for His glory.
15. GOD’S WILL & HEALING
“I asked for strength that I might achieve;
   I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for health that I might do greater things;
   I was given infirmity that I might do better things.
I asked for riches that I might be happy;
   I was given poverty that I might be wise.
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men;
   I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;
   I was given life that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I had asked for,
   but everything that I had hoped for.

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered;
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.”

--Prayer composed by an unknown Confederate soldier between 1861 and 1865.
WRITING OUR OWN TICKET

Can we really "write our own ticket with God"? Can we get God to do anything if we have the right kind of faith or human effort?

The Babylonians believed in the fertility gods who would act if enough of the right offering was made in the proper fashion.

Isn't this "I confess and You (God) have to move" just another form of the old pagan practice of the Babylonians? Is the God of the Bible obligated to act when His people pray? Are the acts of God to be subordinated (held hostage) to the offerings, even the offering of faith, of His creatures?

While it is true that as God's people we are promised God's blessings and that we can expect them, we are never told to claim them.

THE BURDEN OF UNANSWERED PRAYER

John 14:13-14

Huckleberry Finn was disillusioned regarding prayer. He said:

“Miss Watson she took me in the closet and prayed, but nothing come of it. She told me to pray every day and whatever I asked for I would get it. But it wasn’t so. I tried for the hooks three or four times, but somehow I couldn’t make it work. By and by, one day, I asked Miss Watson to try for me, but she said I was a fool. She never told me why, and I couldn’t make it out no way.

I set down one time back in the woods, and had a long think about it. I says to myself, if a body can get anything they pray for, why don’t Deacon Winn get back the money he lost on the pork? Why can’t the widow get back her silver snuffbox that was stole? Why can’t Miss Watson fat up? No, says I to myself, there ain’t nothing in it.”

Too many of us have had similar experiences with prayer. If we were honest we all would have to admit that many of our prayers have not been answered. In fact, we have prayed for peace, and war continued on and on. We have prayed for success in a job and instead gotten fired. We have prayed for ability to pass an examination only to have failed. We have prayed for healing only to see someone get worse and eventually die.

Why?
**God’s Great Promise**

We have the promise in Scripture that God answers prayer:

“...I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it” (Jn. 14:13-14).

Jesus gave this great promise to the disciples in preparing them for His departure. He was going to leave them to go back to His Father in heaven to prepare a place for His followers (Jn. 14:1-3). He promises them that His leaving will not mean the end of His work on earth for they—His disciples—will continue it through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit (v. 12). And He promises His followers that His departure will not mean the end of the communion, the fellowship, they have enjoyed with Him (vs. 13-14). Although Jesus will be in heaven they will be on earth, through the medium of prayer, they will remain in contact and thus will be able to accomplish God’s work on earth.

Such a promise provided great comfort for the disciples. But the astounding thing about this promise is not that Jesus would sometimes answer their prayers, but that He would do so always:

“...I will do whatever you ask in My name... You ask Me anything in My name and I will do it” (vs. 13-14).

Jesus’ promise is that He would hear their prayers and grant their requests always. What an astounding promise! How could this be? How could Jesus make such an all-encompassing, all-inclusive promise?

**Jesus’ Name**

I believe the key is found in the phrase, “in My name.” In both of these verses where He promises to do “whatever” we ask He points out that it must be “in His name” (verses 13b,14).

But what does this mean? Does it mean that all we do is make a list of the things we want and then tack on the name of Jesus?

Of course not!

**Prayer is not an Aladdin lamp that we rub and force our God to do our bidding.**

A “name” represents the character or nature of a thing or person. The names of the people of the Bible each had a particular meaning. This is why so often as a person changed in character, his name was changed. Abram’s name was changed to Abraham, Jacob’s name was changed to
Israel, etc. Jesus was given His particular name for it meant, “One who would save His people” or “God is my salvation.” The Hebrew equivalent is Joshua whom God used to “save” the nation Israel.

Therefore, to ask anything in the name of Jesus, is to ask for that which is conformity to His nature, character or saving purpose. To pray in Jesus’ name is to pray in a way that is consistent with who Jesus is and what His purpose is. To pray in Jesus name, therefore, is not simply using the name as a formula, reducing it to a simplistic code, i.e. “Name it, claim it.” It is a prayer proceeding from faith in Christ that expresses itself in unity, in harmony with all that Christ stands for.

It is the purpose of Jesus to save mankind from their sins. It is His intention that His people will be a holy, separate—unique people. It is His will that we grow in maturity in Him. It is His desire that we bear fruit by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. These are the clear purposes and mandates of Holy Writ. Thus to pray in the name of Jesus is to pray that above everything else, these purposes and mandates, will be fulfilled by God’s answering our specific prayer.

Abiding in God’s Word

Other Scriptures make this point clear. In the next chapter Jesus says:

“If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you” (Jn. 15:7).

The promise again is all-encompassing:

“. . . Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”

But notice the qualification:

“If you remain in Me and My words remain in you...”

God’s word is clear that there are hindrances to prayer. God does not unconditionally and automatically answer our prayers. The following are hindrances to answered prayer clearly taught in Scripture:

1. Known sin (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:13)—Secret empathy with sin
2. Insincerity (Mt. 6:5-8)
3. Half-heartedness (Jer. 29:13; Lk.18:1)
4. Carnal motives (Jas. 4:3)
5. Unbelief (1:6-7)
6. Domestic problems (inconsideration to one’s mate—1 Pet. 3:7)
7. Pride (Lk. 18:10-14)
8. Robbing God by withholding resources (Mal. 3:8-10)
9. Refusing to help the needy (Prov. 21:13; 1 Jn. 3:16-17)
10. Refusing to submit to God and His instructions (Prov. 1:24-31; Zech. 7:11-14; Isa. 1:13-15; Dtn. 1:45)
11. Refusing to forgive or to be forgiven (Mt. 5:23-24; 6:12,14; Mk. 11:24-25)
12. Satanic activity (Dtn. 1:13ff.)

Qualifications

Similarly the Bible makes it very plain that there are qualifications to prayer. He tells us how we ought to pray. Prayer should be:

1. Humble (Ps. 10:17)
2. Reverent—"fearful" (Mal. 3:16)
3. Bold (Heb. 4:14,16; 1 Jn. 5:13-15)
4. Simple (Eccles. 5:2; Mt. 6:7; 23:14)
5. Definite (Ps. 27:4; Acts 12:5)
6. Persistent (Gen. 32:26; Dtn. 9:18; Lk. 11:5-10; 18:7; Jas. 5:16; 1 Jn. 3:22)
7. In faith (Mt. 11:24; 21:22; Heb. 11:6)
8. Come from a pure and obedient heart (Ps. 24:3-4; Jn. 15:7; Jas. 5:16; 1 Jn. 3:22)

When we remain or abide in Christ and allow His words to become a part of the very fiber of our being, God’s will becomes our will, God’s desires become our desires. Therefore we can pray “whatever” since the “whatever” will be in harmony with God’s will and desires.

God’s Will

But after meeting all the conditions as far as we know, why do we still experience unanswered prayer? Didn’t Jesus promise that He would do whatever we would ask of Him? And if we have met all these conditions for effective praying, why has He not answered us?

John, in his first epistle, put it:

“This is the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 Jn. 5:14).

The phrase, “according to His will” means the same thing as “in My name.” Remember Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane? He prayed:

“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Mt. 26:39).
He prayed a second time,

“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done” (Mt. 24:42)

God’s will was more important than Jesus’ own personal desires. Is it any wonder that the writer to the Hebrew Christians wrote:

“Therefore, when Christ came into the world He said: . . . ‘I have come to do Your will, O God’” (Heb. 10:7).

God’s Overarching Will

While it is true that God wants us to experience health, happiness and some of us even wealth, there is an **overriding will** that these things must submit to and that is: the salvation of mankind, our own personal growth in grace, and our corporate growth in unity.

Anything and everything else in life becomes secondary. This is why Jesus went to the Cross. If God the Father would have answered Jesus’ prayer in the affirmative there would be no salvation. This is why Paul often experienced poverty, imprisonment, persecution. This is why his repeated prayer for God to remove his thorn or “stake” in the flesh was not answered. God was more concerned that Paul would grow in grace than that he would be rid of his thorn--no matter how troubling it was. Paul testified:

“There three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power made perfect in weakness.’”

(2 Cor. 12:8-9)

Paul needed to learn a deeper reliance on the Lord. And don’t we all! Paul needed to learn that God did not need his ability, genius, strength. What God was looking for was Paul’s dependence upon the grace of God. Thus Paul testified:

“Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Cor. 9).

Notice the contrast: “**my weaknesses** . . . **Christ’s power**! Thus Paul continued:

“That is why for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (12:10).

**Holiness, not happiness, is God’s main concern.** And any prayers that will not contribute to our holiness, God will not answer.
Exceptions

Now there are exceptions. Israel’s badgering God for a king is a good example. Even though it was not God’s desire and will that Israel should have an earthly king like their pagan neighbors, He finally gave in to their requests. And this was to their own undoing. This is why it is dangerous to pray. Dangerous to pray selfish prayers, that is, because sometimes God answers them. Repeatedly the Jews sought for things instead of God. At times God gave them things but sent “leaniness into their souls” (Ps. 106:15). They became rich in things and poor in soul and spirit.

Thus the continued sorrow of denial may be better than possession.

For the most part, however, God does not always answer such prayers if we are serious at all about pleasing Him. The Jews, as a whole, were not, and so God answered their selfish prayers.

Telling God What We Want

A text often used to prove that we are to tell God what we want and be able to expect the answer is Isaiah 45:11:

"This is what the Lord says—the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question Me about My children, or give Me orders about the work of My hands?"

Does this mean that all we have to do is speak our minds and God will make it happen? Is it saying that we just need to tell God what we want, and He will do it? Not only that, but is it even saying that God is not going to do anything for us unless we speak out the command?

The context makes it clear that as Israel is in exile in Babylon God promises to raise up a heathen king who will deliver them. Rather than God encouraging us to command Him to do anything, the prophet Isaiah is actually saying, "How dare anyone order God around?" To make this emphasis clear God continues by showing His sovereign wisdom and power (not man's) in the next verse:

"It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts" (Isa. 45:12).

The meaning has been turned upside down. These verses warn against man's audacity to command God much less encourage it.

Isaiah also uses the analogies of the potter and the clay and the parents and the child to make this point:
"Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'? Woe to him who says to his father, 'What have you begotten?' or to his mother, 'What have you brought to birth?" (Isa. 45:9-10)

Such thoughts are ludicrous!

God’s Glory

With Jesus’ promise that we can ask “whatever” we want and have that prayer answered as long as it is “in His name” there is another qualifier. For He says:

“And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father” (Jn. 15:13).

After having shown us that we are to pray for that which is consistent with God’s name, nature, character and will, we now are told what that will is. It is that God the Father may be glorified. This is difficult for many of us to comprehend because our prayers tend to be so man-centered. We have come to look upon prayer as a way of getting something from God. Like the little girl who prayed: “Lord, please make Boston the capital of Vermont, because I said so on my examination paper.”

But prayer is not the cunning art of using God, subjecting Him to one’s selfish ends in an effort to get out of Him what you want.

Humbly praying means that we recognize that God is sovereign and surrendering everything to Him.

Prayer that is Christian is not, “Please do for me what I want.” It is, “Please do with me what You want.”

As E. Stanley Jones put it:

“Prayer is not bending God to my will, but it is a bringing of my will into conformity with God’s will, so that His work may work in and through me.”

Thus prayer is “stretching the soul” to seek the will of God and seek for grace and strength to accomplish that will. In this way God is glorified.
Prayer then is not so much a matter of what we get, but what we become. For in the process of seeking God’s will, God is glorified. The goal of prayer is not the fulfilling of our own requests, but the glorification of God. Jesus testified:

“Father, the time has come. Glorify Your son, that Your son may glorify You. . . . I have brought glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do” (Jn. 17:1,4).

Jesus glorified the Father by completing the work He was given to do. But this work was anything but glorious. It meant poverty, misunderstanding, ridicule, betrayal, desertion, a mock trial, cruel beatings and finally a criminal’s execution. Such a scenario was the Father’s will for His one and only Son. And only by obedience to such a plan and purpose could Jesus bring honor and glory to the Father.

**God’s Four Responses**

When God does hear our prayers, He responds in one of four ways. He says, “*Yes, and I thought you’d never ask.*” James put it, “You have not because you do not ask” (Jas. 4:2). We miss out on a lot of God’s blessings simply because we do not ask.

God also answers, “*Yes, and here’s more.*” The evangelist D. L. Moody took his young daughter to a store to buy a doll. She chose one that she liked and Mr. Moody bought it for her. On the way home he said, “I am surprised that you chose that doll. I was going to buy a much larger one.” After that, whenever the two went shopping, the little girl would always say to her father, “You choose, Papa, you choose.”

The saintly Fenelon had learned this lesson with God. He prayed:

“Lord, I know not what I ought to ask of Thee; Thou only knowest what I need; Thou lovest me better than I know how to love myself. O Father! Give to Thy child that which he himself knows not how to ask.”

**God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him!**

A third reply to prayer by God is, “*No, not yet.*” Unanswered prayer does not necessarily mean that God does not intend to answer it at all. It may be just a *matter of timing.* Immaturity, a lack of readiness to receive, is often the reason for delay in prayer. Like the young boy who asks his parents for a razor-sharp knife as a toy. The knife is an excellent instrument, but in the hands of a five-year-old boy it could be lethal. The answer to the request, therefore, is not necessarily “No,” but “*No, not yet.*” When you are old enough to handle it as an instrument, then I will give it to you.”
Phillips Brooks, the preacher, though he was known for his serenity and poise to outsiders, his intimate friends knew he could get very frustrated and irritable. One day a visiting friend saw him pacing up and down his room like a caged lion. “What’s the matter?” he asked Brooks. “The trouble is,” he replied, “that I’m in a hurry, and God isn’t.”

How often we get puzzled and disappointed when we do not receive prompt answers to our sincere prayers!

Another reason for delay in answer to our prayers is satanic activity. Daniel’s prayers were not answered for 21 days because of satanic resistance (Dan. 10:12-13). We are in spiritual warfare and the opposition of the devil and his demonic cohorts must be prayed through (Eph. 6). And sometimes that takes a long time. Thus answers to our prayers are delayed.

Even though we have known times when God has answered our prayers before we scarcely finished praying (as the prophet Isaiah points out—Isa., 65:24), we have also experienced delays in getting replies from God.

Finally, God’s reply to some prayers is, “No, I love you too much to answer your prayer.” And here is where faith comes in. Faith is trusting God no matter what. Faith is trusting God, for it believes that God knows what He is doing and that He has a loving purpose for doing what He does.

Prayer is mysterious. Thomas Edison wrote in 1921:

“We don’t know what water is. We don’t know what life is. We don’t know what gravitation is. . . . We don’t know what electricity is. We don’t know what heat is. We don’t know anything about magnetism. We have a lot of hypotheses about these things, but that is all. But we do not let our ignorance about all these things deprive us of their use.”

We have found out much since Edison wrote these words, many of these hypotheses remain unsolved and thus we have not resolved the mystery in creation. We cannot resolve the mystery in prayer. But we can discover and experience reality in prayer.

God’s promises must never be thought of or claimed as though God were under obligation to us. God is and remains sovereign. He is not our servant, we are His.

God’s glory, not our needs, must be the focus of our prayers. Jesus’ name, not our desires, must be our chief concern. God’s will, not ours, must be our consuming interest. God’s plan and purpose, not our agenda, must be our ultimate desire.

When God says, “No!” He always has something better in mind for us. Not more convenient, more gratifying, but more fruitful and fulfilling ultimately.
GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

Although Joshua witnessed the walls of Jericho tumble down by the power of a positive shout, he did not experience the crossing of the Jordan River the same way. The priests were to march into the Jordan first.

- Joshua did not take over the other cities by shouting.
- Moses did not cross the Red Sea by a shout. Instead he held his staff.
- Naaman would never have been healed of his leprosy if he would have made a positive confession instead of dipping in the Jordan River seven times.
- Peter would have sunk, as he eventually did, if he would have made a positive confession instead of keeping his eyes on Jesus.

Just because Daniel was able to walk into a lion's den and demand their mouths be shut does not mean that we are to do the same thing. Unless we are specifically told by God to do so, as Daniel was, such an action would mean instant death.

God's ways are different for different times and for different people and for different circumstances. No one formula works at all times!
16. IS HEALING IN THE ATONEMENT?
Isaiah, the prophet, said, "Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows . . . and by His wounds we are healed" (Isa. 53:4). Such a vision certainly transcended the prophet’s own understanding as he pictured the substitutionary suffering of Christ as if it had already occurred. It was voluntary suffering. Apart from this voluntary character it would have had no atoning value. The context makes it clear that Isaiah is thinking of the Servant’s taking the diseases of others upon Himself through His suffering and death for their sin.

How are we to view Isaiah 53:4f.? Some see only spiritual healing in this passage. The context of Peter's reference to this verse shows that this is how Peter applies this verse: "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

But is that how Matthew also applied his statement?

"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 up our infirmities and carried our diseases'" (Mt. 8:16-17).

The Servant “took up” our infirmities and “carried” our diseases. The context is deliverance and physical healing. Matthew uses the word "this" to refer back to such ministry as applying to the atonement of Christ. There is no doubt but that this stresses that physical healing is in the atonement.

Jesus took our infirmities and diseases by means of His deep sympathy or compassion, thus entering fully and personally into the sorrows of those whom He came to rescue. That Jesus healed because of His compassion is repeated again and again (Mt. 9:36; 14:14; 20:34; Mk. 1:41; 5:19; 6:34; Lk. 7:13). This theme of compassion also is seen in His parables (Mt. 18:27; Lk. 10:33; 15:20-24,31-32).

Jesus also took our infirmities and diseases by means of His vicarious suffering for sin, which was the root problem of humanity and which dishonored His Father. Thus whenever he saw sickness or distress he experienced Calvary, His own Calvary, His own bitter, vicarious suffering throughout His life on earth, especially on the cross. That is why it was not easy for Him to heal (Mt. 9:5; Mk. 2:9).

Healing and forgiveness are tied together by the fact that the consummated Kingdom, in which there is no sickness, is made possible by Jesus’ death and the new covenant that His death enacted (Mt. 26:27-29). Thus the healings during Jesus’ ministry can be understood not only as the foretaste of the Kingdom but also as the fruit of Jesus’ death. Thus Jesus’ healing miracles pointed beyond themselves to the Cross.
The New Testament is clear that the cross is the focus of God's redemptive activity. And since sickness is ultimately a result of the fall, healing finds its focal point in the atonement. Healing, therefore, is part of the work of the atonement carried out by Jesus on the cross. His healing ministry is itself a function of His substitutionary death, by which He lays the foundation for destroying sickness.

But does that mean that healing is as automatic as the forgiveness of sin? Biblical scholar Donald Carson, while convinced that healing is in the atonement, is not as convinced that healing is therefore the automatic benefit to all believers:

"From the perspective of the New Testament writers, the Cross is the basis for all benefits that accrue to believers; but this does not mean that all such benefits can be secured at the present time on demand, any more than we have the right and power to demand our resurrection bodies."1 (Emphasis added)

This does not justify healing on demand. Although there is healing in the atonement, the promise of the resurrection body is also in the atonement, even if believers do not inherit it until the return of Christ.

A. J. Gordon, the founder of Gordon College, Boston, saw the atonement as a foundation for faith in healing.

“In the atonement of Christ there seems to be a foundation laid for faith in bodily healing, seems—we say, for the passage to which we refer is so profound and unsearchable in its meaning that one would be very careful not to speak dogmatically in regard to it. But it is at least a deep and suggestive truth that we have Christ set before us as the sickness bearer as well as the sin bearer of His people. In the Gospel it is written, ‘And he cast out devils and healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet saying, Himself took on our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.’ Something more than sympathetic fellowship with our suffering is evidently referred to here. The yoke of his cross by which he lifted our inequities took hold also of our diseases; so that it is in some sense true that as God ‘made him to be sin for us who knew no sin,’ so he made him to be sick for us who knew no sickness. He who entered the mysterious sympathy with our pain which is the fruit of sin, also put himself underneath our pain which is the penalty of sin. In other words the passage seems to teach that Christ endured vicariously our diseases as well as our inequities.2

We hold that in its ultimate consequences the atonement affects the body, as well as the soul of a man. Sanctification is the consummation of Christ's redemptive work for the soul, and the resurrection is the consummation of His redemptive work for the body.”3
As Keith Bailey in his book, *Divine Healing The Children’s Bread*, points out:

“The benefit of healing in the atonement does not demand that all who exercise faith must have perfect health any more than the benefit of salvation in the atonement demands that all who believe must manifest complete sinlessness.”4

R. A. Torrey also taught healing in the atonement, but cautions believers about their conclusion they may draw from that fact:

“It is often said that this verse teaches that the atoning death of Jesus Christ avails for our sicknesses as well as for our sins; or in other words, that physical healing is in the atonement. I think this is a fair inference from these verses taken in their context.

But while we do get the full benefits for the body secured for us by the atoning death of Jesus Christ in the life that now is but when Jesus comes again, nevertheless, just as one gets the first fruits of his spiritual salvation in the life that now is, so we get the first fruits of our physical salvation in that life that now is. We do get in many, many, many cases of physical healing through the atoning death of Jesus Christ even in the life that now is.”5

A. A. Hodge, professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton from 1877 to 1886, pointed out the error of making the “bearing” that Matthew refers to (8:17) to be anything less than atonement:

“Bushnell says that Matthew’s reference (Matt. VIII:17) to Isaiah LIII:4 “is the scripture citation that gives beyond question the exact *usu loquendi* of all vicarious and sacrificial language of the New Testament.” the passage in Isaiah is as follows: “Surely he hath borne (Hebrew *nasa*; Septuagint *phero*) our griefs, and carried (Hebrew *sabal*) our sorrows.” The reference in Matthew is: And he cast out our spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esais the prophet, saying, himself took (*elaben*) our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.” from this datum Bushnell draws two amazing conclusions: (1) That the exact *usus loquendi* of all vicarious and sacrificial language in the New Testament is to be derived from this single passage. (2) That the only sense in which Christ bore either our sins, our sorrows, or our diseases was that he took them on his feelings—had his heart burdened with the sense of them.6

To the first assumption we answer that the *usus loquendi* of the words can be determined only by a careful analysis and comparison of all passages in which they severally occur in the original Hebrew, in the Septuagint, and in the New Testament itself.7
To the second assumption, we answer that it is a notorious fact, admitted by all scholars, that the New Testament writers quote the Old Testament freely, accommodating the sense to a present purpose. Isaiah affirms that Christ bore our sorrows, that is, bore them on himself in order to remove them. Isaiah uses the technical words nasa and sabal; the Septuagint translates phero, but Matthew substitutes elaben. There is no contradiction, only Isaiah emphasized the carried, and Matthew emphasized the removed. The first pointed out the means, the other, the result effected. The fact is he endured visible sorrows, which made men believe that he was under divine chastisement; hence it is said, “We thought Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted . . . but he was wounded for our transgression, the punishment of our peace was upon him.”8

Franz Delitzsch, Hebrew scholar at the University of Leipzig, Germany, wrote the following on the necessity of vicarious atonement in Matthew 8:17:

“Matthew’s Gospel (in chap. VIII. 17) here corrects the LXX by translating thus: autos astheneias hemon elaben kai tas nosous ebastasen; and the relief which Jesus afforded to all kinds of bodily ailments is regarded as fulfillment of these words . . . Matthew appropriately renders nasa by elaben and nabal by eastasen; for, while nabal signifies the toilsome bearing of a burden that has been taken up, nasa combines in itself the idea presented by tollere and ferre. Constrained with the accusative of the sin, it means to take on one’s self the guilt of sin as one’s own, and to bear it, i.e. to recognize and feel it as such, as in Lev. V. 1, 17; more frequently it means to bear the punishment incurred through sin, i.e. to some to make atonement for it, as in Lev. V. 1, 17; more frequently it means to bear the punishment incurred through sin, i.e. to come to make atonement for it, as in Lev. XVII. 16, XX. 19f, XXIV. 15, and wherever the bearer himself is not the guilty one, to bear the sin as a mediator, in order to atone for it, Lev. X. 17 . . . In the LXX this nasa is rendered, both in the Pentateuch and in Ezekiel, by labein harnartian, once by anapherein; this labein and anapherein are meant to be understood as referring to expository bearing, and not merely, as had been affirmed, in opposition to vicarious satisfaction, in the sense of taking away, is abundantly shown in Ezekiel IV. 4-8 where the seh aow is represented by the prophet in symbolic action. Even here, where it is not the sins, but “our sicknesses”—and “our pains” that form the object, the meaning is that the Servant of God took upon himself the suffering which we had to bear, and deserve to bear, and endured them in his own person, in order to deliver us from them.”9

Another scholar who addressed the mediatorial aspect of Matthew 8:17 was Joseph A. Alexander, Hebrew and Oriental scholar of Princeton Theological Seminary. Alexander’s work on Isaiah first appeared in print in 1847 and has remained a classic on the writings of the prophet. He says of Isaiah 53:
“The application of these words by Matthew (viii:17) to the removal of bodily diseases cannot involve a denial of the doctrine of vicarious atonement, which is clearly recognized in Matt. XX 28, nor is it an exposition of the passage quoted in it’s full sense, but as Calvin well explains it, an intimation that the prediction had begun to be fulfilled, because already its effects were visible, the Scriptures always representing sorrow as the fruit of sin.”

Bailey correctly points out that “The doctrine of healing in the atonement says not that universal healing is therefore available, but rather that physical healing is available to believers on the grounds of the blood atonement.”

Although forgiveness is instant in the present time, the fact that healing is not always granted can be explained in that while we are the new covenant people of God, we still possess our earthly and sinful bodies.

We must be careful not to demand blessings that may not be ours till the end of the age.

When healing does take place, it is a reminder that as Christians we are a part of a new kingdom, a new creation, and that such healing is a foretaste of what is to come in the eschaton.

When healing does not take place, it shows that the new kingdom will not finally arrive until the Second Coming, and that until then, even Christians must face having to live in the domain of the evil one who is "the god of this world" (1 Jn. 5:19).

Paul and His Lack of Healing

Healing is not always God's will in this life. Paul's own body was weak, or sickly (2 Cor. 10:10). He confesses that he always carried in his body "the death of Jesus" (4:10-11), and the context makes it clear that he is referring to his physical weaknesses.

The frailty of the "clay jar" of Paul's humanity (v. 7) is plainly seen in the constant hardships and persecutions with which he is buffeted for the sake of the gospel and through which he shares in Christ's sufferings (2 Cor. 1:5; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24). Outwardly Paul groaned (2 Cor. 4:16) as he longed to replace his present "earthly tent" with the "heavenly dwelling" (5:1-2).

Many biblical scholars believe Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was malaria (probably Asian Malaria) because it had the effect of the feeling of a "thorn" or "stake" as described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 and affected the eyes which likely explains why Paul wrote with such large letters (Gal. 6:11). In fact, Paul preached in Galatia as a direct result of illness (4:12-15).
Whether Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was malaria or not we cannot be sure. But that it was physical is clear. Some claim that the "flesh" here refers to Paul's sinful nature and that "the messenger" that Paul refers to is a "person" (most probably a demon) from Satan who is attacking his sinful tendencies. The context makes such a meaning highly unlikely.

Proponents of this view get around difficult passages by making a distinction between "suffering" and "sickness." Suffering is seen as something external and results from following Jesus, and this is what Paul is suffering from in this incident. Sickness and disease, however, are a part of the Fall and the curse, and these have now been overcome by God in Christ.

Can such a clear distinction be biblically sustained? No! The biblical writers did not make such distinctions as clearly seen in both the Old and New Testaments. In both testaments the most common word for sickness is in fact the word "weakness." This means that frequently only the context tells us what kind of "weakness" is involved.

**All evil, not just sickness, is the result of the fall.** While God can deliver from all evil, He does not always choose to do so.

Just as Satan was responsible for Paul's "thorn in the flesh" similarly he was hindered by Satan from returning to Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:18). Yet in neither case is there any indication that he "failed." Therefore sickness is not to be considered some unique part of the Fall that can be exorcised at will. Rather it is part and parcel of the whole of fallenness.

Although we are promised healing, yet somehow there is at the same time—in this present age—a place for "a little wine" for one's ailments.
17. HEALING: IS IT PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL OR SPIRITUAL?
Healing as a Totally Spiritual Phenomena

Some also teach that healing is **totally a spiritual phenomenon**. This is why faith alone, without medicine, is so important. After all, what can medicine do for the spirit of man?

When Jesus healed the ten lepers (Lk. 17:11-19), did He heal them physically or spiritually? If spiritually, then why did only one come back to show appreciation? Not a very spiritual response from those supposedly healed spiritually!

This simplistic faith formula is not only unbiblical, it is also dangerous physically and spiritually.

M. Kurt Goedelman tells about the death of his daughter.

"When our daughter was three months old her doctor requested tests because of her continued jaundiced condition. After an agonizing week, we were informed she had been born with a birth defect, namely that neither a gall bladder nor common bile ducts from the liver (which are essential for life) had formed. Since her pediatrician earlier was lax in his call for tests, her liver had continued to damage so that surgery was unperformable. She was taken home to be with the Lord Jesus, June 14, when she was ten months, eleven days old.

During the course of the tests we relied fully on the Lord, praying earnestly that her illness was not serious. It was a time when everything we prayed and cried for was answered opposite to our requests. When we were informed Michele only had a few months to live, we continued to seek the Lord's will, praying his will would hold in store a healing for Michele. We asked for two signs to signify a healing: that her eyes would clear of the yellow coloring (from jaundice) and that the scar (from an unsuccessful surgery) would vanish. These signs never took place, and little by little God supplied the grace for us to accept this.

At that time, we were approached by friends who supported the "positive confession" doctrine and informed us that we should stop praying for a healing, claim it, and use our prayers to thank God that it had taken place in her life despite contrary signs. I know if my wife, Angela, and I had endorsed this type of doctrine, fully placing our trust in it, and then had watched the life of our only child slowly being snuffed out, it would have destroyed us spiritually. How cruel can Christians be who endorse this type of teaching and then go further to state that because of some sin in our lives or because of a lack of faith we (or our child) are not healed.
We did not wish our daughter to die; however, our priority was for the will of God to be manifested. Everything we as Christians are given is on loan from God, and I believe we must be open to accept this in all cases. Throughout Michele's situation a passage from the Book of Job has become special to me: 'The Lord gives and the Lord takes, blessed be the name of the Lord' (Job 1:21).

Michele was so special to us. . . . Although she was here only ten months, her life was a great joy to us, and we do bless the name of the Lord for her. We do not yet see the reason why she was taken from us so soon nor why she was not healed, but we knew her life was in the hands of her maker. We know that good will come from it. We remain in prayer that Christ's name will be greatly glorified through her.

I think our colleague Walter Martin stated it the best (in responding to the belief that God wants everyone well) when he said, 'There is one illness that God will not heal you from—the last one!'"1 (Emphasis added)

Similarly Larry Parker and his wife believed the "positive confession" teaching and stopped medical treatment for their son (who also believed the doctrine), believing in "faith" that he was healed. Instead, he died. Their tragic story is written in the book, We Let Our Son Die.2

Are We Ever Asked to Deny Reality?

Never are we asked in Scripture to deny reality! Never are we told to deny the testimony of our five senses. In fact, it was Jesus custom to send people to the priests of the Synagogue to verify that their healings were authentic. In the same way, we should always have our "healings" verified by the medical profession so we do not live by presumption but by biblical faith.

Tragic Results

Churches have been recipients of people who have been shocked and who have ended up in disbelief as they have found that this simple gospel of positive confession simply does not work in a real world.

Many have come to testify that though they have genuinely and thoroughly believed they have fulfilled the conditions for healing, that such healing did not always come. Yet because of their commitment to a "faith formula," some have been left with guilt feelings as they have suspected that they had not believed hard enough.

Others are not found in any church because they know better and are mad at God for betraying them.
Still others have become so demoralized that they have **given up any semblance of hope for healing of any kind**. Tragically they have stopped praying for healing *carte blanche*. They reason that since they did not have enough faith for healing, they certainly would never have enough for anyone else's healing.

Such an **absolute causality** between faith and healing or faith and whatever the particular issue is, is erroneous and dangerous.

John Wimber, whom God has used to heal thousands, shares about a man whose five-year-old son died of a blood disease. After the boy's death, the father suffered tremendous guilt because he believed his faith had not been strong enough to heal his son. Eight months later, the man himself died of a stress-induced disease.3

Bad theology is a terrible taskmaster! In the end such emphasis on faith becomes a gospel of condemnation.

**What god?**

Not only does the "faith formula" doctrine fail the normal test of reality, but its view of God is quite different from what we find in the Bible.

This god can heal sickness but has to await for some specific quantity or quality of faith to be offered up to him before healing is released.

Doesn't such a relationship between man and his Maker become **contractual** rather than covenantal? Isn't this just another **form of works/righteousness** since it is required of man that he has a certain amount of faith before God's blessings can be released? Could this be why there is so much **noise and emotionalism** at many of these healing meetings?

Often a frenzy is whipped up to get the people, and thus God, moving. Rather than a God who moves according to His grace, we see here a god who moves according to man's work.28

**Various Healings**

In Scripture there is also a case of "**partial**" or "**progressive healing**" (Mk. 8:22-26). The blind man first saw men "like trees" walking about until Jesus touched him a second time. Then his sight was totally clear.

**Physical healing may sometimes be delayed** because other matters need to be dealt with first. As a person's spiritual health improves, so it beneficially affects his physical state (3 Jn. 2).
The teachings of the great Greek physician Hippocrates (ca. 430 B.C.) dominated Western medicine for almost two thousand years. He believed that health results from accord with nature. He put it: "Nature heals; the physician is only nature's assistant."

While at times healing comes through prayer alone, at other times the disease requires medicine or even surgery. Longstanding emotional illness and fractured relationships may require counseling over a period of time. However it may come, we accept the healing as God's gift. The great French surgeon Ambroise Pare insightfully declared:

"I care for the wound; God cures it."

God, then, is the source of all healing, but He uses various means to heal.

"Healing" Is Not Necessarily God's Work

We also need to keep in mind that healing is not necessarily God's work. It can be performed by the power of Satan. Magicians in Moses' day were able to duplicate virtually every miracle performed by Moses (Ex. 7:10-12; 8:5-7).

At the Judgment Day many who performed miracles will be told by Jesus, "I never knew you. Get away from Me, you wicked people!" (Mt. 7:21-23). False Messiahs and false prophets will appear in the last days and "perform great miracles and wonders in order to deceive even God's chosen people, if possible" (24:23-24). Simon, the sorcerer, "astounded the Samaritans with his magic" (Acts 8:9-11). The antichrist ("the beast") will draw attention and confidence to himself through the working of the miraculous (2 Thess. 2:9-10; Rev. 13:12-14).
18. THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES
Words and Acts of Power

The Greek word for power or ability is *dunamis*, from which “dynamite” and “dynamic” are both derived. Any kind of power may be implied by this word, from the power of money to that of medicine or of mathematical exponents. It refers to that essential force or energy which can effectively accomplish some result. The English word “dynamics” conveys the same idea. It is also commonly used in the phrase “the power of God” (or of Christ, or the Holy Spirit), and in this sense it refers to divine or spiritual power, as in the doxology of the Lord’s Prayer.1

*Dunamis* may also refer to an action that is accomplished. Therefore it often means “miracle.” Miracle typically refers to the action or deed that has been accomplished by some extraordinary power (e.g. Paul uses the words “by the power of God,” or of Christ or the Holy Spirit). This means that the miracle is the concrete expression of the particular power. The Gospels, Acts, and Paul’s letters all utilize this word in the same way in reference to extraordinary happenings—“mighty works” or signs and wonders, particularly healings, by which divine power manifests itself.2

The Greek word *semeion* is translated “sign” in English and refers to a distinguishing mark. It is used almost exclusively in the New Testament when speaking of unusual events that display divine, or at times demonic, power. In the Gospel of John the healing miracles are typically spoken of as signs of Jesus’ divine calling and mission. In these passages in addition to passages throughout Acts the word is used to refer to healings as the significant evidence of divine power breaking through into the human realm. It was also used to describe unusual manifestations in the heavens as (e.g. Lk. 21:11) or in the plain sense of an ordinary sign, like the kiss given by Judas as a sign for the soldiers to act (Mt. 26:48).3

To the Greeks an event in nature—a thunderbolt, a snake, the wind—rightly timed, was often considered to be a prodigy in itself. The interpretation would be that a god had caused the wind to rise before their ship, a thunderbolt to dash in the sky or a serpent to drop onto the altar at the time of sacrifice. To Christians “wonders” were spoken of, not as wonders in themselves, but in conjunction with the signs and evidence that Jesus gave, and those the apostles continued to perform in his Spirit. And the wonders described were all miracles of healing except for two references to Old Testament events and those to false christs.4

The Greek word *iama* is one of the common words for healing often used by Paul. It means remedy and is found in medical literature as well as other writings. Paul also spoke of gifts (*charismata*) of healing in much the same way that Luke wrote about miracles or signs of healing, using the word *seneuia* with *iasis*, a word from the same root as *iama* (Acts 4:22). In Paul’s writing the word *charismata* (*xapisuara*) was used to refer divine gifts which give Christians special powers beyond ordinary human capabilities. All these words were used in a similar way throughout the Gospels and Acts.5
The Greek word *iaomai* (iaouai) means to heal or cure and was almost exclusively used as a medical term in Greece and also included the healing of moral wounds or sickness.

*Therapeuo* is the Greek word from which our English word therapy is derived. It was another common word for medical treatment and healing. Even the original meaning was to give care or service of various kinds, including serving the gods and came to mean heal, restore, or cure.6

The Greek word *hugiaino* is the word from which we get the English word hygiene, which means to be well, to be in good health, to be sound in mind and body. It was taken from the name of the goddess of health, Hygeia. This word was a basic word in Greek medical usage and was used to refer to a healthy or sound state either of the human body or of political or religious affairs.7

*Sozo* is the Greek word which means to preserve or keep from harm, to rescue, save from death and was used in a variety of senses, including the medical, in classical Greek.

**Signs, Wonders and Almighty Works**

The emphasis of many of the proponents of faith healing shows a tremendous naivete about the purpose of miracles as revealed in Scripture.

1. We see in Scripture that they **demonstrated Jesus’ compassion**. The surprising thing is that such accounts are fairly rare (Mt. 14:14; 20:34). The broader testimony of Scripture is that God’s power may be demonstrated at least as dramatically through people’s suffering as through their health. In the Gospels the classic example is the passion and crucifixion of Christ and authentic discipleship also embraces the way of the cross (Mk. 8:31-35).

2. Jesus’s miracles also **show a concern to break down social barriers** (1:41; 7:24-30; Lk. 17:11-19) as He often shows unconcern for the ritual taboos that separated classes of people and thus paved the way for the establishment of a broadly inclusive religious movement not bound by barriers of race, sex or nationality.

3. Jesus’ miracles **challenged the Jewish Sabbath laws** (Mk. 3:1-6; Lk. 13:10-17); 14:1-6), **and exposed Israel’s faithful** (Mt. 8:10-11; 17:17).

4. **Miracles sometimes occur in response to faith and sometimes to instill faith.** The “faith formula” doctrine holds that the function of faith is to get results. Faith is assumed to precede and produce miracles. In many New Testament instance faith in Jesus did not precede healings (Mt. 8:10; 9:18; 14:31; Mk. 2:4; 5:36; Lk. 7:50; 17:6). In other instances miracles did precede and serve to produce faith (Mt. 11:4; Lk. 24:13-35; Jn. 9:1-38; 10:37; 20:31).
5. Jesus’ miracles were **revelatory**. Miracles do not occur evenly throughout the course of history as recounted in Scripture, but they come in batches at times selected by God. We see clusters of miracles during pivotal times in the history of God’s people:

- **The Exodus** and wilderness wanderings.
- **The crucial days of Elijah and Elisha** when the purity of Israel’s worship was at stake.
- **The introduction of the Kingdom** in the life and ministry of Jesus.
- **The expansion of the church** in the stories of Acts.

Jesus’ miracles supported His teaching that the **kingdom of God was arriving with His ministry and that He Himself was God’s unique Son** (Mt. 12:28; 4:23; 9:35; 11:4-6-6,25; 21:14; Mk. 1:15; 2:10-11; 7:32=Isa. 35:6; Lk. 7:11-17=2 Kgs. 4:8-37; 7:16=Dt. 18; Jn. 9:5).

Thus the primary motive for divine miracles is not compassion but **revelation**. If it were compassion, and since we can assume something like a consistent level of pain and suffering in the world this side of our human fall, we would expect a consistent level of miracles to relieve that pain and suffering. The need of compassion is, then, a virtual constant. Yet the exercise of that compassion to heal is sporadic in Scripture and apparently in the centuries that have followed.

John testifies to the revelatory purpose of miracles when he claimed:

“Jesus did many other **miraculous signs** in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But **these are written that you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may **have life in His name**.”

(Jn. 20:30-31)

The miraculous signs witness to the fact that **God has acted, and that His action is seen supremely in Jesus Christ**. The specific miraculous signs written about (since there were many others that John and other writers did not include in their writings), in fact, the whole gospel, is written to show the truth of Jesus’ Messiahship and to present Him as the Son of God, so that the readers may believe in Him and have eternal life.

6. The ultimate purpose of healing is not merely to meet a human need. It is ultimately **to bring glory to God**. When healing comes, it is not simply because someone has a need. The ultimate purpose of healing is to bring the person into a closer, a more intimate relationship to God and fellow human beings. Healing is not an end in itself, but a means to an end—to be a better person and to do good in the world in which he lives.
19. REASONS WHY PEOPLE ARE NOT HEALED
I am heavily indebted to Francis MacNutt and his bestselling classic, *Healing*, for the outline of this chapter.

People fail to experience healing for various reasons. To attribute simplistic answers to such disappointing experience is doubly difficult. The following are some of the reasons people are not healed.

1. SIN. If there is sin connected to sickness no healing is likely to take place until the sin is dealt with. There are many Scriptures that tie sickness and sin:

   “Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

   So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment” (1 Cor. 11:27-32).

   A person should test the attitude of his own heart and actions and his awareness of the significance of the Lord’s Supper. Otherwise God will bring disciplinary judgment such as physical weakness, sickness, and even death.

   There is also a “sin unto death” that John warns about:

   “If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death” (1 Jn. 5:16-17).

   Since this letter was directed against Gnostic teaching, which denied the incarnation and disregarded all moral restraints, it is probable that the “sin that leads to death” refers to the Gnostics’ adamant and persistent denial of the truth and to their shameless immorality. This kind of unrepentant sin leads to spiritual death.

   Another view is that this is sin that results in physical death when a believer continues to sin until God in judgment takes his life (as in the case of those who partake of the Lord’s Supper unworthily—1 Cor. 11:30). In either case, “sin that does not lead to death” is of a less serious nature and thus can be prayed for.
James says:

“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. **If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective**” (Jas. 5:13-16).

If there is sin, it has to be confessed for it is the prayer of a “righteous man” that is effective. Unconfessed sin blocks the pathway of prayer to God and at the same time is a formidable obstacle in interpersonal relations. That means we need to confess our sins not only to God, but also to the persons who have been injured by our sins. We must ask them for forgiveness!

Confession is a mark of repentance and a plea for forgiveness on our part as sinners. When we confess our sin and ask for and receive remission, we experience freedom from the burden of guilt.

There is to be mutual confession on a one-to-one basis within a circle of believers. Some sins concern all believers in the church and thus these sins ought to be confessed publicly. Other sins are private and need not be made known except to persons who are directly involved. Discretion and boundaries, therefore, must guide us when we confess our personal sins.

While the Roman Catholic Church has interpreted confession too narrowly—to the confessional with a priest—the Protestant Church has interpreted it too broadly—to God alone or a general confession to all that all are sinful.

The forgiven sinner prays for the spiritual welfare of his fellow believer, who in turn commends him to the mercies of God. And James states the purpose for confessing sin and praying for each other by saying, “. . . So that you may be healed.” When believers confess their sins to each other and pray for one another, a healing process takes place.

2. **FAILURE TO PRAY.**

James points out that we do not have because we do not pray:

“You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (Jas. 4:2-3).
Failure to ask God in prayer results in failure to receive. Believers too often fail to “carry everything to God in prayer.” But we fail to receive not only because we fail to pray, but also because we pray with the wrong motives.

God refuses to listen to us if we eagerly pursue selfish pleasures. The context for wrong motives is primarily greed, which is idolatry and thus repugnant to God. God does not listen to prayers that come from a heart filled with selfish motives. Covetousness and selfishness are insults to God.

We must ask and we must ask for the right reasons. When we pray we need to ask ourselves whether our request will hallow God’s name, further the cause of God’s Kingdom, be in harmony with God’s will (Mt. 6:9-10), and that God will be glorified.

In Jesus’ instruction on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount He promises that we will be heard if we pray. Unless this takes place prayer becomes a mere mental exercise. And so He states:

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, you give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!” (7:7-11)

“All those who persevere in prayer.” While this challenge is specifically focused on these difficult matters, it is not limited to this. For it is much greater than that. Here is a principle that pertains to all of life.

To make a strong point Jesus uses repetition. His promises are attached to three direct commands: “Ask . . . seek . . . knock . . .” (Mt. 7:7). These commands may be in an ascending scale of intensity. “Asking” implies humility and a consciousness of need. The verb is used with regard to a petition of lowly position to someone who is considered superior or more important. In the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in the Temple, the Pharisee asks nothing (Lk. 18:10-13). He tells God how good he is. The tax collector asks, that is, pleads, “God be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.”

Seeking is “asking plus acting.” It implies “earnest petitioning” combined with active endeavoring to obtain fulfillment of his needs. It is not enough to pray for deep knowledge of the Bible; one must be ready and willing to diligently search and examine the Scriptures (Jn. 5:39; Acts 17:11).
Knocking is asking combined with acting and persevering. This means knocking is implied in all three of these verbs since they are all present imperatives literally meaning: “ask and keep seeking, knock and keep knocking.”

To ask is to be desirous, to seek is to be urgent, and to knock is to be desperate.

For each command there is a promise. “Ask” is followed by “given”; “seek” by “find”; “knock” by “opened.” And these first three promises (Mt. 7:7) are virtually repeated in verse eight and underlined by the introductory word “whoever.” The force of this is that **those who obey the command will never be disappointed**.

Is it really necessary to bring the same request to God over and over gain? Isn’t such repetition a lack of faith? Does it really make sense to come before the all-knowing, all-powerful God with the same petitions time and time again?

In the Parable of the Persistent Widow, Jesus clearly emphasizes the necessity of dogged persistence:

“Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show that they should always pray and not give up. He said:

‘In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with a plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this woman keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets her justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’

And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?”’ (Lk. 18:2-8).

Notice that Luke introduces this parable by pointing to the reason for it:

“Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (18:1).

The word “should” indicates that persistence is not just nice or a duty, but a necessity to effective prayer. The word “always” implies that we should pray continually in spite of the temptation to give up because of what we consider delayed answers.
Two persons provide the focus of this parable: a corrupt judge and a needy widow. The corrupt judge is described as a person “who neither feared God nor cared about men” (v. 2). It was therefore unlikely that anyone would receive any consideration and fairness from him.

The person who came to make the plea was the most unlikely prospect to gain favors from anyone in that culture: a widow (considered utterly helpless in the East). However, this particular widow had a powerful weapon: persistent prayer.

Luke, in describing her actions points out that she “kept coming.” She did not just make one appearance before the judge but many. And the judge’s attitude is highlighted as Jesus points out that “For some time he refused” (v. 4). The woman kept coming and the judge kept refusing. In the end, it was the woman’s dogged persistence that overcame the judge’s reluctance. Determination, and determination only, was the cause of this reversal. Luke points out the judge’s reason for granting her request: “so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming” (v. 5).

“Because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice” says the unjust judge. The merciless judge gives in to this lowly, helpless woman’s request through her persistent praying.

Then Jesus applies this lesson to the listeners. Even though God and that unjust judge are different in virtually every way, yet they are similar at one point: they both respond slowly. Like the judge, God at times delays answering the cries of His children. Jesus points out that God brings about justice for those “who cry out to Him all day and night” (v. 7). Prayer is answered by God in response to a continual crying out to Him in prayer.

The same point is illustrated by the Parable of the Reluctant Neighbor (Lk. 11:5-13).

“Then He said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’

Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him bread because he is a friend, yet because of the man’s persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.”

(vv. 5-8)

When the man was first rebuffed, he did not return home empty handed. He persisted and it was only as he persisted that the man gave him the loaves so he in turn could give them to the needy friend.
Why? Why delay? In the case of the judge it was because of selfish indifference. In the case of the friend, it was because of convenience. In the case of God, however, such a motive would be unworthy of Him. Why doesn’t God always answer prayer immediately? Because of His love for us. And sometimes that love is tough. God sees whole issues from an eternal perspective. He knows what we need at any given time and how to make us into the kind of people He wants us to be. **He is more concerned about the development of character than He is about immediate gratification.**

While it may be true that “prayer changes things,” it is more accurate to say that “prayer changes people.” God is in the business of changing us, conforming us to the very image of His Son Jesus (Rom. 8:29). And it is in this context of making us to be like Jesus that Paul says:

“And we know that in **all things God works for the good** of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (v. 28).

What is more difficult than delayed answers? For us busy Westerners waiting on God to catch up with us is probably the most agonizing part of living the Christian life. And so we see that this waiting is always part of the “all things” that God is causing to work together for good since His aim is our likeness to the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

There is no question about God answering persistent prayer. Jesus assures us:

“I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and **quickly**” (Lk. 18:8).

Persistent prayers will get results. And those results will come “quickly.” This may see to contradict what Jesus has already said about delay in answering prayer. But the point that Jesus is making is that when it comes time—God’s perfect time—He will respond swiftly without hesitation.

**3. FAILURE TO PRAY SPECIFICALLY.**

As Francis MacNutt points out, praying specifically is especially important when it comes to dealing with psychological problems and the need for inner healing.1 It is usually important to uncover the underlying cause or causes of a problem. In most cases, the cause of emotional suffering and the initial harmful memory needs to be found to pave the way for healing. Bringing Jesus into the difficult, and often forgotten moments of life, is crucial for healing to take place. Traumatic experiences often need to be looked at realistically. By opening up the festering sore that may be hidden in the subconscious, we expose it to consciousness and to the light of God’s grace.
4. LACK OF FAITH.

A whole chapter (ch. 8. FAITH & HEALING) addresses the role of faith in healing. Therefore it will only be treated in a summary way here.

Lack of faith is another reason why we miss experiencing divine healing. When the disciples could not cure the epileptic demoniac, Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith (Mt. 17:14-20). The Bible points out that Jesus was not able to do many miracles in His hometown of Nazareth “because of their unbelief” (Mk. 6:4-5). In fact Mark points out that Jesus was “amazed at their lack of faith” (v. 6).

Paul says, “Everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). And the writer of Hebrews is even more to the point:

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

The writer is specifically referring to Enoch and pointing out that Enoch could live a life that pleased God only by his acceptance of the reality of God, that is, that God exists (Ex. 3:14), and the conviction that God would reward him. But this orientation involves faith, since it involves what is not directly apparent to the senses (Heb. 11:27).

The father who came to Jesus with his boy who had an evil spirit, said to Jesus, “... if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us” (Mk. 9:22). Jesus responded, “Everything is possible for him who believes” (v. 23). The question was not whether Jesus had the power to heal the boy but whether the father had faith to believe it. A person who truly believes will set no limits on what God can do.

Since faith is never perfect, belief and unbelief are often mixed. Therefore we can identify with the father who had a boy with an evil spirit who exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (v. 24)

4. FAULTY DIAGNOSIS.

Like physicians, psychiatrists and psychologists who sometimes fail to correctly diagnose problems and thus fail to prescribe the right course of treatment, so those who minister in divine healing will fail at times. It is relatively easy to pray for physical healing when the real need is inner healing, to pray for deliverance from demonic spirits when the basic need is inner healing, or to pray for inner healing when deliverance is the correct course of action. And sometimes the need may be a combination of these spiritual treatments.
Like good practitioners we need to carefully discern what the cause is behind the symptoms that we are dealing with. Otherwise we will end up guessing and leave people as they were—sick.

5. FAULTY ATTITUDE TOWARD MEDICINE.

If we believe that faith and technology are contradictory we will not likely benefit from the medical technology that is now available to us. Since God is the God of nature as well as of the spirit, He can use the discoveries of nature to benefit man. Not to avail ourselves of such knowledge is foolish. In fact, it makes sense to see the medical profession as God’s ordinary instrument to bring about healing. Hospitals, nursing homes, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, medicines—all testify to God’s natural means of bringing healing to the people of our society.

I have observed through the years that the very people who strongly (and often arrogantly) pit prayer against medicine are quick to run to the doctor’s office or hospital when they really get sick. They can afford to have strong opinions at the theoretical level, but where the rubber meets the road they look to the escape route of medicine. While it is good that they seek help when they need it, it is hypocritical to disparage the medical profession and claim faith only in God’s supernatural intervention, when, in fact, that is not so.

What is even worse is the case of those who recklessly ignore the warnings of serious symptoms and persist in their delusional course of action. Tragically, it is not uncommon to hear of reports of those who have died of diabetes because parents or ministers encouraged them to stop taking their insulin as a sign of faith.

Unless God makes it extremely clear to us that we are only to rely on prayer and not seek medical help, we must get the assistance needed to avert disaster.

6. FAULTY UNDERSTANDING OF HUMANITY AND FAULTY VALUE TOWARD SUFFERING.

Because so many of the Early Church Fathers were Gentiles, Christianity was heavily influenced by Greek philosophy which resulted in a distorted view of humanity. The Platonic, the Stoic, and the Manichean views (gnostic views—and in recent centuries Cartesian and Jansenist often found in French and Irish churches) have all influenced Christian spirituality and have stressed a dualism—a separation of body and soul—with spirit and mind being part of the soul and thus seen as noble while the body is, at best, a burden and hindrance to the soul, a necessary evil.

In the second century Early Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr and St. Irenaeus believed wholeheartedly in healing but by the fifth century St. Gregory the Great was influential in teaching that suffering is preferable for the sake of the soul.
During the Middle Ages as spirituality waned and worldliness flourished in the churches, the power and gifts of the Spirit were withdrawn. With the loss of that inward power people could only cling to what they had left—its outward accompaniment. More and more emphasis was placed upon the outward religious acts (e.g. fasting), though lacking in the inward spirit that alone could give it value. Asceticism became the mark of piety and spirituality. Thus Paul's prediction about people who would have a "form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Tim. 3:5) became fulfilled.

The body was often treated as an enemy by our religious forefathers. Saint Abraham, the hermit who lived for fifty years after his conversion, adamantly refused from that date to wash either his face or his feet. Saint Euphraxia belonged to a convent of 130 nuns who never washed their feet and shuddered at the mention of a bath. Abbott Alexander shamefully looked back upon his life because although he and his contemporaries never washed their faces they did "frequent the public baths." Saint Athanasius bragged about how his friend Saint Antony, the patriarch of Monachism, had never been guilty of washing his feet even though he lived to a very old age. A nun by the name of Silvia who was famous as a saint resolutely refused on religious principles to wash any part of her body except her fingers even though she was constantly in bad health because of her religious habit.

With such a mentality it was not likely that people would seek healing. When suffering becomes a virtue in and of itself there is little room for healing.

The Bible is clear that God’s calling for all His people is to alleviate suffering as much as possible. The emphasis on healing that we find throughout Scripture, and especially in the ministry of Jesus and the Early Church, is evidence that God wants His people to be whole—spiritually, psychologically (mentally and emotionally) and physically. This means that most suffering is not redemptive and therefore it is right to seek healing, whether through natural or supernatural means.

7. PREFER SUFFERING.

In one of the stories where Jesus comes to the holy city of Jerusalem on a religious holiday, instead of going into the Temple to worship and to seek out the wise men of the town for discourse, He goes immediately to the place where the blind, the lame, or paralyzed hang out (Jn. 5:1-15). It was not exactly a nice place. The odors of illness and unkept bodies were obvious and there were uncared, broken bodies—people in pain—everywhere.

As Jesus walks into Jerusalem, He looks around the five gates by a large pool, and sees people in varying degrees of illness. He selects this person who had obviously been there for a long time. He turns His attention to this paralyzed person on a mat, walking over to him, and asking, "Do you want to get well?"
When I first read this story I thought Jesus’ question was silly. After all, isn't it obvious that a person lying on a mat, who has been sick for 38 years, wants to be healed? Yet Jesus asked him the obvious question, "Do you want to get well?"

Is it possible that some sick people do not want to be healed? Might it not be an appropriate question for us with regard to our spiritual, physical, and psychological conditions?

Most of us know what is wrong with us. We know what needs to be done in our lives.

In most of my pastoral counseling, I have found that those who come to me have already pretty well diagnosed the problem. Many of them already know the solution. They come looking for a less threatening diagnosis, an easy remedy.

We have physical, spiritual and emotional problems, of which we are fully aware, but we do not do anything about them. Some of us are part of a sick marriage. We know there is a problem in the relationship. We know that our relationship as husband and wife is not what it ought to be. Some of us live in sick families where relationships between parents and children are not what they ought to be. On the job we know there are relational problems with people with whom we spend hours every day, a sickness in some of those relationships, yet we do nothing to change our attitude and pattern of behavior. We do nothing to face the problem, let alone solve it. **We cling to the security of the known—even when it is sick.**

There are reasons why we do not turn loose of our illness. Look back at the man who had been ill for 38 years. For him, as for us, sickness can become a way of life. All of us have known people who have illnesses, sometimes physical illnesses, who have learned to manipulate and use those illnesses to satisfy some psychological need or maintain a hold on another person. Many parents hold on to children long after they should have set them free. The parents control their life with a constant threat that "If you are not here continually to take care of me, to watch over me, or if you do not build your whole life around me, then you will be contributing to my illness and even death."

Some children learn that the only way they can get their parent's attention is by being sick. If they simply develop a little temperature or have a bit of a sore throat, then the parent who does not have time to talk with them or time to deal with them in ordinary circumstances will find time if it's nothing more than to put them in the car and drive with them to the doctor's office. We learn to use our illnesses, whether they are physical, psychological or spiritual to manipulate other people and attempt to control our circumstances. Illness then may be a hiding place from responsibility.

Do you realize that in Jerusalem in Jesus’ day this sick man had as good a way of earning a living as was to be found? As long as he lay each day on this mat, people would pass by, pity him, and throw a few coins his way. No one expected much of him. He was thus able to live off his illness.
It is not uncommon to resist healing in order to **avoid responsibility**. After all healing would mean an assumption of responsibility for our lives. For this man to be healed would mean that no longer would people look at him as an invalid, no longer would they have pity on him and expect nothing of him. They would demand that he assume a normal role in his society. He would be expected to go to work and earn his own bread. He would be expected to care for others rather than be cared for. So it is with us. There is always some threat, some change called for on our part when we accept healing.

A while back I read a newspaper account of a bizarre parole board meeting. A 70 year old man who had spent most of his life in prison was offered a parole. In tears, he rejected the offer, explaining that he had lived so long in prison that he would not know how to live in freedom in the outside world. He did not want responsibility for his life.

Is it possible that a person can be a prisoner of a lifestyle that is self-destructive? Are there those who are so religiously institutionalized (like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day) that they reject the liberation of the grace of God? Are there not those who prefer the security of ignorance, daily routine, things as they are, unexamined values, and theology to the challenge of change and choice?

Illness may be **self-indulgence**. A while back I read about trapping monkeys in India. One technique is to drill a hole in a coconut and place rice in it. A monkey will come along and stick a paw into the coconut, grab a fistful of rice, and then be unable to pull its paw back from the coconut. He is trapped by his **greed**. All he would have to do is turn loose of the rice. Then his hand would be free so he could draw it out of the coconut. The problem is that he places greater value on the rice that he is holding than he does on his freedom. Some of us place greater value on our weaknesses, our dependencies, our sins than we do on knowing God. We place greater value on our immorality, our materialistic way of life, our status and success, than we do upon the freedom that would be possible for us if we would turn loose of a certain way of life, a certain illness that binds us.

The problem is that we want it both ways. We want to be forgiven of our sin. We want to be cleansed. We want to be made whole again. But we are unwilling, like the monkey, to turn loose of those things that have brought us into this condition of weakness. Our choices leave us physically, emotionally/ psychologically, and spiritually paralyzed. We are left in a state of darkness and lostness.

Notice that the man does not answer the question directly but offers instead excuses for not having been healed (Jn. 5:7). Jesus does not get bogged down in analysis or debate but gives an invitation. In other words: "No excuses!" Rather Jesus presents an opportunity for this sick man. He says, "Act now! Get up, Pick up your mat and walk" (v. 8).
Some people who do not want to get well have **serious psychological problems**. Many of them suffer from guilt, that is, false guilt and thus feel they do not deserve to be made whole. Subconsciously they may block any attempt to bring about healing. They may need psychological help before they can be brought into the freedom of forgiveness and healing.

It is so easy to get so preoccupied with excuses for our problems that we have no energy left to solve them. Christ calls for action. When we are set free from sin, free from those things that make us less than we ought to be, we have placed upon us the responsibility to respond to the gift of God. Freedom is freedom to act to follow Jesus. It is a call for us to take responsibility to do that which God has called us to do—to be His servants in the church and in the world. It is a life away from self-centeredness to God-centeredness, from self-orientation to living for others. Paul put it:

"And He [Christ] died for all, that those who live **should no longer live for themselves** but for Him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Cor. 5:15).

This healing differs from most of the healing in the New Testament where faith is emphasized (e.g. Mk. 5:24). This paralyzed man did not take the initiative to seek out Jesus. Jesus sought him out. Even after Jesus had healed him he did not have the opportunity to ask who it was who had healed him for Jesus "slipped away into the crowd that was there" (Mk. 5:13). He didn't know without asking who it was who had healed him.

He didn't know who Jesus was. When the Jews attacked him for carrying his mat, he said, "**That man** told me to do so." And they said to him, "Who is that man?" And he responded in bewilderment, "I don't know."

There is so much in our lives that God has done for us that we don't know about. So much that He has done in healing us, in setting us free, in providing for us to become the whole people created in the image of God that He intended for us to become. This man did not care who healed him or how, but he knew that he had been made whole!

Later, Jesus encounters the man in the Temple. Having been healed, without any direction from Jesus, without even knowing who Jesus is, he went to the Temple, in all probability, to give thanks. While it was the custom for people to go to the Temple to be examined to make sure the healing was genuine, in this case it is doubtful. In the Temple, Jesus encounters him. And He says to him, "Go and sin no more, that nothing worse than your **physical illness** will happen to you" (Jn. 5:14).

Jesus warns him that the eternal consequences of sin are more serious than any physical ailment. It seems that out of that healing experience this man became a disciple of Jesus.
God offers healing physically, emotionally/psychologically, and spiritually. But we must be **willing to give up those things that cause us to be less than what God calls us to be.** We must let go of the rice in the coconut!

8. DEMONIC INTERFERENCE.

Demonic interference may sound outlandish to some in considering reasons why people are not healed. But it is a very real possibility, especially where a person may have been involved in the occult. Some even have curses upon them. MacNutt shares one incident:

“One of the more remarkable instances of this occurred in England when our team was praying for a minister who had ringing in both ears (tinnitus) and pain in his right ear; we had prayed for about ten minutes, and nothing had changed. Then, one of the team members, who had the gift of discernment, whispered to me that he was oppressed by a spirit of infirmity. When he prayed to free him there was an immediate reaction. It turned out he and his family had come home from Africa a few years earlier after being struck down with a medically unexplained illness.

What had happened, apparently, was that the local witch doctor had cursed them. After several hours of ministry to the minister and his entire family, in which several spirits departed, all the ringing in his ears and the pain in his right ear ceased.”

Medical doctors such as Dr. Larry Dossey has written about the so-called “evil-eye” and about Hawaiian witch doctors (“kahunas”) and their death prayers in which they curse those they believe deserve death. To write this off as mere power of suggestion flies in the face of the fact that the victims are not aware of their sentence of death. Yet they typically experience a creeping paralysis going up their legs which eventually leads to their death.

People in many cultures are very aware of the power of the curse and expect Christians to know how to break curses that lead to illness and death.

While there are illnesses that continue from one generation to another that have a physical basis, that are purely genetic (due to our DNA), such as sickle-cell anemia, and in such cases we should pray not only for the disease, but also to break the genetic predisposition to that disease not only in the life of the ill person but in his children and descendants.

There are other “generational sins” which seem to have a spiritual basis. This commonly happens when someone in the family have had some experience with the occult. MacNutt gives two examples. One was a case in which a woman was freed of severe emotional problems when they prayed to free her of the influence of a druidic priest in her family’s ancient past. Another was the case of a woman whose problems stemmed from a Black Mass performed by an ancestor in seventeenth-century England.
These things should not surprise us. Daniel 10 shows us that demonic interference can keep people from experiencing God’s blessings.

“Then he [an angel] continued, ‘Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.’”  
(Dan. 10:12-13)

“The prince of the Persian kingdom” is apparently a demon exercising influence over the Persian realm in the interests of Satan. His resistance was finally overcome by the archangel Michael, “the great prince who protects” the people of God (12:1).

In this passage we see that although God heard Daniel’s prayer immediately, He did not answer it for twenty-one days because of demonic interference.

9. NOT THE RIGHT TIME.

Timing is everything! And now is not always the right time. MacNutt points to four basic time sequences in praying for healing:

- Some healings are **instantaneous**.
- In some healings there is a **delay**. We may pray for someone one day and they experience healing a few days later. This was true in my own case in one of my healings.
- Some healings occur in a process, **gradually**.
- Others do **not seem to occur**, at least on the physical level, at all.5

The fact that we do not experience instantaneous healing does not mean that God is not answering our prayer. It may only mean that the time is later.

10. DISCIPLINARY SUFFERING.

Scripture is clear that God does not take delight in suffering. In fact God is very reluctant to bring suffering to anyone. In the Book of Lamentations God says:

“For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. **Though He brings grief, He will show compassion**, so great is His unfailing love. For He does **not willingly bring affliction or grief** to the children of men” (Lam. 4:31-33).
God “does not willingly bring suffering.” Like a surgeon, God only brings suffering to the extent it is needed so that healing can take place.

Hosea similarly points out:

“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within Me; all My compassion is aroused. I will not carry out My fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man—the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath” (Hos. 11:8).

The Lord’s compassion overcame His wrath and He refused to destroy Ephraim (Israel). Although Israel has been as unreliable as man, God will not be untrue to the love He has shown toward Israel (vv. 1-4; see also 1 Sam. 15:29 and Mal. 3:6).

Both Ezekiel and Peter point to God’s goodness and patience and the importance of repentance:

“Do take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? Declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live? . . . For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!” (Ezek. 18:23,32)

“With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Repentance, not destruction, is God’s will always for people! God is a long-suffering God. God’s delay is so people have an opportunity to repent.

C. S. Lewis, in his book The Problem of Pain, addresses the mystery and anguish of suffering. Shortly after he wrote the book, his wife passed away. In facing his horrific loss he found that his reasoned reflections were of little comfort and found himself angry toward God. During this time he wrote a journal describing his daily battle with despair. Once he found spiritual equilibrium he published his journal in which he reveals his struggle with personal suffering and unbelief.

“. . . But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. You may as well turn away. The longer you wait, the more emphatic the silence will become. There are no lights in the windows.
Not that I am (I think) in much danger of ceasing to believe in God. The real danger is of coming to believe such dreadful things about Him. The conclusion I dread is not ‘So there’s no God after all,’ but ‘So this is what God’s really like. Deceive yourself no longer.’

There is no answer. Only the locked door, the iron curtain, the vacuum, absolute zero. ‘Them as asks don’t get.’ I was a fool to ask.

An overdose of sleeping pills would do it. I am more afraid that we are really rats in a trap. Or, worse still, rats in a laboratory. . . . Sooner or later I must face the question in plain language. What reason have we, except our own desperate wishes, to believe that God is, by any standard we can conceive, ‘good’? Doesn’t all the prima facie evidence suggest exactly the opposite?

But what if He were mistaken? Almost His last words have a perfectly clear meaning. He had found that the Being He called Father was horribly and infinitely different from what he had supposed. The trap, so long and carefully prepared and so subtly baited, was at last sprung, on the cross. The vile practical joke had succeeded.

I wrote that last night. It was a yell rather than a thought. Let me try it over again. Is it rational to believe in a bad God? Anyway, is a God so bad as all that? The Cosmic Sadist, the spiteful imbecile?”

The terrible thing is that a perfectly good God is in this matter hardly less formidable than a Cosmic Sadist. The more we believe that God hurts only to heal, the less we can believe that there is any use in begging for tenderness. A cruel man might be bribed--might grow tired of his vile sport—might have a temporary fit of mercy, as alcoholics have fits of sobriety. But suppose that what you are up against is a surgeon whose intentions are wholly good. The kinder and more conscientious he is, the more inexorably he will go on cutting.”

11. REDEMPTIVE SUFFERING.

God takes no delight in suffering, even redemptive suffering. For redemptive suffering is still suffering. Although it is necessary for the benefit of mankind, it is not God’s final state.

Yet redemptive suffering may serve a higher purpose than healing and health. Paul became ill in Galatia:
“You have never treated me in an unfriendly manner before; even at the beginning when that illness gave me the opportunity to preach the Good News to you, you never showed the least sign of being revolted or disgusted by my disease that was such a trial to you. . . .” (Gal. 4:13-14).

Christianity has a strong tradition of saints who, throughout history, have suffered redemptively by sharing in Christ’s cross as a special privilege. The problem is that such a truth has at times obscured the good news of the Gospel. The advice, “Accept this sickness as a blessing from the Lord” may not always be accurate.

Healing and health is normative in Scripture. Redemptive suffering is the exception, not the rule.

In Paul’s instance at Galatia we find that his “illness gave [him] the opportunity to preach the good news” (v. 13).

In the case of some, they suffer redemptively for a time and then are healed. Others such as Joni Erickson Tada find that illness lasts a lifetime (there seems to be no indication that God intends to heal her) as a testimony to God’s grace. Who would question but that Joni is much more influential because of her illness than if she were not ill?

12. NOT GOD’S WILL.

In the case of elderly people we need to ask the Lord how we should pray for them. Since “. . . man is destined to die and after that face the judgment” (Heb. 9:27), it may not be right to pray for healing. We must ask God to reveal His will. It may be that we should pray for courage and grace to face death and the wisdom to see the opportunity of passing into a deeper life with God. Agnes Sanford speaks of the need for guidance in praying for the elderly. The following story tells of her decision concerning the final period in her husband’s life:

“But complete healing did not come. So I asked for guidance. There is a time for everyone to depart, that I know, and he was approaching seventy. I said, ‘Lord, how long does he have?’ And the answer came, ‘Three years.’

His days were lengthened a little bit by continual prayer. He had three years and six months. But the last year and a half, after he was threescore years and ten, were truly, as Solomon said they would be, labor and sorrow. He had a massive stroke. . . . I did not pray for healing this time, for I knew that if Ted’s life were prolonged it would be only labor and sorrow. I prayed only for whatever was best, trusting God to take him at the right time.
However, others—all his people who loved him—did not consider these matters, but prayed definitely for healing. In all my books I counsel people to ask guidance before leaping into healing prayers, but few pay any attention. Ted did make a recovery, but indeed and truly he was not himself.”7

As MacNutt points out,

“...It is normal for an apple to drop to the ground in the autumn after it has spend the summer ripening to its full richness and growth. But if a green apple falls off the tree in July because a worm has gotten into it, something has gone wrong. Similarly, we can ordinarily assume that we should pray for desperately sick young people (for example, a young mother dying of leukemia) that they might live.”8

There is a season for everything . . . a time to die and a time to heal.
20. GOD MUST BE GOD!
The church of Jesus Christ is rich in other saints who also understood what the essence of the Christian faith was all about. Their statements below illustrate this same passion as they understood that the innermost nature of prayer is the search of the soul for God rather than for His gifts.

". . . all my fountains are in You" (Ps. 87:7).

"I said to the Lord, You are my Lord: apart from You I have no good thing" (16:2).

--Psalmist David

"Give me Thine own Self, without whom, though Thou shouldest give me all that ever Thou hadst made, yet could not my desires be satisfied."

--St. Augustine

"No other reward do we desire, O Lord, than Thee thyself."

--St. Thomas Aquinas

"My God and my all."

--St. Francis of Assisi

"It is too small and unsatisfactory, whatsoever Thou bestowest on me, apart from Thyself."

--St. Thomas a Kempis

"If you want God only, you may have all else beside."

--Meister Eckhart

"Thou O Christ art all I want, more than all in Thee I find."

--Charles Wesley

"My need and Thy great fullness meet, And I have all in Thee."

--H. C. G. Moule

"I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are Yourself the answer."

--C. S. Lewis

"Whether Thou comest in sunshine or rain, I would take Thee into my heart joyfully. Thou art Thyself more than the sunshine; Thou art thyself compensation for the rain. It is Thee and not Thy gifts I crave."

--George Matheson
God must be God! He remains sovereign. Healing, like any other benefits, is a gracious manifestation of God's goodness.

Therefore God is under no obligation to heal. As an act of grace healing is never deserved, it is only given. **It is a gift of grace, not a reward for faith.**

We pray, not because we can twist the arm of God by our faith, but because prayer is God's method of accomplishing His purpose in this world. God answers prayer, not because He must, but because He is good.

**No Formulas**

**There are no neat formulas to healing.** No cut-and-dried solutions. Oral Roberts who has been used of God to heal thousands testifies:

“There are many things about healing we do not know. In my brief experience I have prayed for some people with all the faith that I possessed and the person was not healed. In other instances, my faith was not as strong as I thought it should be and still the person was healed. I don’t know how to explain that except to say there is only One who knows what is inside you and me and what it takes to really bring out a miracle. A doctor works with all the skill and compassion and faith at his command: some he helps, some he does not. It is the same way with prayer. Just as you have to draw strength from those you help and refuse to be discouraged when you fail, so must we continue our work in the face of both success and failure. There’s no way to make praying for the sick easy. If the people who came only had minor afflictions—headaches, hay fever, or a cold--there would be no great risk. But when you say, ‘I believe God heals,’ and you’re willing to be an instrument of God for healings, then you have to risk facing the worst possible cases—and failures. We’ve even had three people die during our crusades.”

Michael Green gives the following analysis:

“God does not always choose to heal us physically, and perhaps it is as well that he does not. How people would rush to Christianity (and for all the wrong motives) if it carried with it automatic exemption from sickness! What a nonsense it would make of Christian virtues like longsuffering, patience, endurance if instant wholeness were available for all the Christian sick! What a wrong impression it would give of salvation if physical wholeness were perfectly realized on earth while spiritual wholeness were partly reserved for heaven! What a very curious thing it would be if God were to decree death for all His children while not allowing illness for any of them!”
In the 1960s the most celebrated minister of healing in the United States was Kathryn Kuhlman. She says she often asked herself why some people were healed in her healing services while others were not. This is the conclusion she came to:

“‘I have decided that God doesn’t have preferences in theology,’ she told me with a chuckle. ‘We are the one who try to put a fence around God, to bring him down to our level. But it doesn’t work. God is too big for us to confine.

I’ve never written a book on the how and why of divine healing—even though I’ve been besieged with requests to do so—simply because I don’t know the how and why. You see, just about the time the book was about to be published, the Holy Spirit would do something absolutely contrary to what I said. I’m still learning the mysterious ways in which God moves. I’ll tell you one thing—I’m sure God has a sense of humor!’

Some of her own theological presuppositions have been shattered, the evangelist allows: ‘There was a day, when I was very young and knew a great deal more than I do now, that I said, ‘You must do thus and so, to be healed. There are certain conditions that have to be met.’ I thought, for example, that faith on the part of the seeker was absolutely necessary.

Then one day I got the shock of my life. A man said his deaf ear had just been opened in the service, but he had no faith at all. ‘I don’t believe in it,’ he said, ‘I never go to church.’ Well, there went my theology out the window. . . .

Take another example. Twenty years ago I believed that absolutely, come hell or high water, it was God’s will for everybody, without exception, to be healed. But I’ve watched this thing very carefully. Now I see that we can’t demand or command that God do anything. In general, I definitely believe that it is God’s will to heal. But I can’t say absolutely what is or is not his will in a particular case. There are some things I’ve learned just not to touch.”

Because of having seen so many people hurt and feeling guilty when they were not healed, Kathryn made a disclaimer at all her healing services, that is, an announcement that she did not know why some people would be healed and some would not. Even more mysterious than that, why some who came to a service with complete faith would go away not healed while some skeptics were healed during that same service.

An overemphasis on the importance of faith leads to faith in faith. Christianity teaches that our faith is to be in God, not in our own faith.

My faith in God’s faithfulness means I bank upon His promises and that I have absolute confidence that God is good and answers my prayers whether I see the results or not.
My faith in His wisdom enables me to trust Him that He knows what He is doing even when to our finite minds it doesn’t seem that way.

My faith in His power means that nothing can thwart His plans. Scripture declares that nothing is too hard for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Jer. 32:17,27) since with Him all things are possible (Mt. 19:26).

My faith in His love means I believe He has my wellbeing in mind and that whatever comes my way has passed through the filter of His goodness.

Nebuchadnezzar, after daring to exalt himself and paying the price for it for seven years, testifies to God’s eternal dominion:

"[God's] dominion is an eternal dominion; His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: What have You done?" (Dan. 4:34-35).

The fundamental problem of the church is her concept of God. The concept of God's majesty has been lost from the popular religious mind. As A. W. Tozer laments,

"The church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshiping men." 4

Our view of God affects everything. "It is impossible to keep our moral practices sound and our inward attitudes right while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate." 5

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." 24 For our attitude toward God is based upon our concept of Him.

What we conceive God to be like controls our thoughts and actions.

Our worship and service is pure or base depending upon whether we entertain high or low thoughts of God. As Paul points out, the soul tends to move toward its mental image of God (2 Cor. 3:18).

It is of immense importance then, that our idea of God corresponds as nearly as possible to the true being of God. A right conception of God is basic not only to theology, but also to practical Christian living.
The second commandment not only forbids us to manufacture physical images of God; it also forbids us to dream up mental images of Him. Imagining God in our heads can be just as real a breach of the second commandment as imagining Him by the work of our hands. To freely think of God as we like guarantees breaking the second commandment. For idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him.

To assume that God is other than He is, is idolatry. This leads to substituting for the true God one made after man's own likeness. And this begins in the mind.

The Bible is clear that God is sovereign.

- "The Lord does whatever pleases Him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths" (Ps. 135:6).

- "But our God is in the heavens, He has done whatever He pleased" (115:3).

- "Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. From the east summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill My purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do" (Isa. 46:9-11).

- "He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven . . . and none can hold back His hand or say to Him, 'What have you done'" (Dan. 4:35).

- "In Him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will" (Eph. 1:11; see also Isa. 24:1; 45:9; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 9:14-24; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 4:11).

To denigrate God's sovereignty is to deny that he has absolute right to govern all His creatures according to His own good pleasure. God's sovereignty means that He keeps the reigns of government in His own hands. He has total freedom, power, knowledge, wisdom, determination to carry out a predetermined ("predestined") course of action. Because God possesses all His character qualities in infinite measure He is sovereign.

God's sovereignty is universal in that it extends to all His creatures. It is absolute by not being divided between Himself and someone or something else. His sovereignty is also immutable in that it is unchangeable and final.
In His sovereignty God has established laws, both physical and moral, by which His creatures are to be governed. He determines the nature and powers of the different orders of created beings and assigns each its appropriate sphere. He appoints to each individual and nation their position and distributes His favor as He sees best.

God, however, is not capricious in that He randomly does whatever He pleases. His sovereignty is always exercised in conformity with His character as a holy, wise and loving God.

It is tempting to see Christianity as a means of opening up the windows of health, wealth, and prosperity. Such perversion of truth is a form of hedonism as it panders to the flesh. Thus Almighty God is reduced to a celestial Genie who does our bidding.

God is sovereign and mysterious. Therefore He cannot be fully known nor programmed. Rather we must bow in humility before the mystery that is God. Only when God chooses to reveal His mind can we act with assurance. Thus we cannot demand that He operate in a certain way or that He operates the same way in every case. God’s ultimate purpose in this universe and in our lives in the final analysis determines how He chooses to work in any given situation.

God has redeemed us to make us holy and to restore us to the image of God. To accomplish this He disengages us from earthly ambitions and draws us away from the cheap, tawdry, and unworthy prizes that people of the world set their hearts upon.

God will not use His sacred power to further our worldly interests. Such a notion is unworthy of our Lord and injurious to our own souls.

The sovereignty of God and the lordship of Christ must be kept in the forefront as we contemplate what Christianity is all about. Otherwise we will end up by following a Christ who is merely a christ of convenience and not the true Lord of glory.

A. B. Simpson, the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance provides a stark contrast to the worldly prosperity gospel as he emphasizes the person of Christ. This is perhaps captured best by his pointing out that the followers of Jesus were not to talk so much about doctrine as about the person who motivated the doctrine: Jesus Christ. He put it:

"Do not talk so much about salvation, but the Savior;
healing, but the Healer;
sanctification, but the Sanctifier;
the second coming, but the coming King."
He put this emphasis in the form of a song entitled, "Himself."

"Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord;  
Once it was the feeling, not it is His Word.  
Once His gifts I wanted, now the Giver own;  
Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone.

Once 'twas painful trying, now 'tis perfect trust;  
Once a half salvation, now the uttermost;  
Once 'twas ceaseless holding, now He holds me fast;  
Once 'twas constant drifting, now my anchor's cast.

Once 'twas busy planning, now 'tis trustful prayer;  
Once 'twas anxious caring, now He has the care.  
Once 'twas what I wanted, now what Jesus says;  
Once 'twas constant asking, now 'tis ceaseless praise.

Once it was my working, His it hence shall be;  
**Once I tried to use Him, now He uses me.**  
Once the power I wanted, now the Mighty One;  
Once for self I labored, now for Him alone.

Once I hoped in Jesus, now I know He's mine;  
Once my lamps were dying, now they brightly shine.  
Once for death I waited, now His coming hail;  
And my hopes are anchored, safe within the vail."7

Job shows the way in how to respond to God and His mysterious ways:

“Then Job replied to the Lord:

'I know that you can do all things;  
no plan of yours can be thwarted.  
You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?  
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,  
things too wonderful for me to know'  
You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.'  
My ears had heard of You but now my eyes have seen You" (Job 42:1-5).

Job finally sees that God and His purposes are supreme!
21. THE GIFTS OF HEALINGS
“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.
There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.
And there are different kinds of working, but it is the same God
who works all in all.
But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one
for the common good.

To one is given through the Spirit, the message of wisdom,
to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,
to another faith by the same Spirit,
to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,
to another miraculous powers,
to another prophecy,
to another distinguishing between spirits,
to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,
and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit,
and He gives them to each one, just as He determines.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts;
and though all its parts are many, they form one body.

So it is with Christ.

For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body—
whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—
and we were all given the one Spirit to drink”

--I Corinthians 12:4-13
**Purpose:** Restoration & Health

**Description:** The capacity to heal the sick, by the power of God, in response to Holy Spirit-given faith.

The “gifts” of healings is a spiritual gift that is given to various members of the body of Christ and may be manifested in many ways. This is different from faith that any believer may exercise. For instance, James 5 speaks about calling the elders of the church to anoint and pray for someone who is sick. The elders do not need to have the special “gifts” of healings to be used by God to bring about healing. Their obedience to the responsibility of their God-given position, as leaders of a local church, will bring healing. After all, their obedience is a manifestation of faith, that is, the faith that God can heal. Otherwise, why would they bother praying for someone? Gifts of healings, on the other hand, is a special gift given to certain members of the body of Christ to minister healing.

The gifts of healings and miracles are closely related to the gift of faith. They could be considered special or different ways of expressing the gift of faith. A special exercise of faith is an essential element in the functioning of the gifts of healings and miracles.

“Gifts of healings” (plural) may refer to spiritual and emotional healing as well as physical healing. There is strong scriptural evidence for this. **Spiritual healing** is indicated in Matthew 13:15 and possibly 1 Peter 2:24. **Emotional healing** is indicated in Luke 4:18. It has been estimated that 75% of our hospital beds are occupied by those who have emotional problems. One out of every ten babies today, it is estimated, will be confined to a hospital with some form of mental illness at some time during his lifetime.

The phrase, “gifts of healings” may also refer to different healings for different diseases. The plural may indicate that a Christian might have a gift for healing certain diseases or ailments but not all of them.

Even though they believed in the gifts of healings, the early Christians did not create a category of “healers” in the church. This is a phenomenon of the last two centuries. The gifts of physical healing were manifested in the assembly without emphasis on the human instrument.

God’s intention and will for His people is that they are to be healthy. The Hebrew word “shalom” captures God’s wholistic view of man. “Shalom” (“peace”) coexists with health in a natural way. The psalmist put it, “May the Lord give strength to His people! May the Lord bless His people with peace!” Biblical peace is more than the absence of conflict; it includes inner tranquility, health, wholeness, integration.

Salvation and health are closely related. David testifies that it is the Lord “who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases” (Ps. 103:3). Jeremiah prays, “Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for You are the one I praise” (Jer. 17:14).
Examples


Mk. 3:14-15 Twelve Apostles
Acts 5:12-16 Apostles
Acts 3:6-8; 9:32-34 Peter
Acts 8:5-7 Philip
Acts 14:8-10; 28:7-9 Paul

Warning

With supernatural gifts such as gifts of healings and miracles there is a very real danger of self-aggrandizement in which sensationalism replaces spirituality and healing is emphasized out of all proportion to other important aspects of ministry. In such cases the interest in a cure becomes much more important than the moral and spiritual factor in illness, that is, what God may be doing in the lives of the individuals. Thus the patients are encouraged to focus on results rather than on Christ.

Unlike so many today who claim the gift of healing, Pastor Blumhardt of Germany reluctantly admitted that God had gifted him. His biography mentions how the “charisma” was manifested in his fruitful ministry.

“He possesses a keenness of spiritual insight that judged, with rarely mistaken accuracy, whether the removal or the continuance of the disease would be in accord with the will of God. He held that this discerning faculty was a ‘charisma,’ a gift of God . . . It was bestowed for gracious purposes of divine pity toward sufferers; it could never be arbitrarily assumed, and where it had been given it was not to be slighted or neglected. He said to one, ‘You, a student of theology, know the gifts of healing were frequent in apostolic times. I was not aware that the gift was intended for me. I had not asked for it; rather, I accepted it with fear and trembling.’

Even possessed with this gift, he carefully guarded all persons from any impression that it was merely by laying on hands or by any physical exertion that cures came. ‘My remedy,’ he invariably said, ‘is simply prayer.’

Thus it is vital that the human instrument, used by the Spirit in the exercise of charismatic gifts, be kept in the background. It also gives an important insight into the nature of the gift itself. While Blumhardt did not claim special powers, he did use prevailing prayer in the exercise of the gift of healing.
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERSON WITH THIS GIFT

1. Faith for the supernatural.
2. Deep trust in God to do the impossible.
3. Used as an instrument of God to heal the sick.
4. Speaks and acts with great authority.
5. Deep concern for the health of the whole body of Christ, not only the individual.
6. Doesn’t always know or claim to know the results of the use of his gift.
7. Intense compassion for the suffering.
8. Sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.
9. Great concern for the display of God’s power and goodness which testifies to His greatness and majesty.
10. Experienced God’s supernatural intervention (the unusual, especially healing) in his own life.
11. Either he or the person being prayed for will experience sensations such as tingling or warmth while praying.
12. A sense of expectation for God to work miraculously.
13. Sensitive to those who are suffering.
14. Often experiences physical manifestations such as heat in his body when praying for a person.
15. Often experiences a deep awareness that God is doing something supernatural when praying for a person.

MINISTRIES

Worship Service
Elder (often asked to anoint and pray for the sick)
Counseling (especially helpful in emotional and spiritual healing)
Hospital Chaplaincy
Hospital Visitation
Small Group Ministry
Various Services of the church
The Giftedness of Others--Questions for Reflection

It is clear from I Corinthians 12:14-26 that each member of the body needs every other member. That, to take it a bit further, even those members with what appear to be self-sufficient gifts have needs that can only be met by others in the body.

It is easy to think that persons with the gift of apostleship or of prophecy, as well as those of pastor, evangelist or teacher, are independent. They’re so capable, they have no need. Paul warns those with those gifts to think of themselves as independent; it is equally important that we not ascribe to them a false superiority.

For each gift, therefore, look for answers to one or more of the following questions.

What shortcomings typically accompany this gift?

What unique needs for reassurance and encouragement is a person with this gift likely to experience?

What are the probable or possible areas of pain or struggle for a person with this gift? In our humanness, to be thrust into a role, even though gifted for it, brings certain kinds of anguish. Witness Christ himself, in Gethsemane!

What does this person, the one so gifted, especially need to be held accountable for?

In what ways do other members of the body need to hold a person with this gift “in check?”

What other gifts, exercised by others in the body, are particularly needed to complement and supplement this one area of giftedness?
PRACTICAL HELPS IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALING

Attitude toward Our Role in the Healing Process

With the following advice Frederick Buechner helps us to keep the proper perspective in healing. While praying for the sick, he says,

“If you feel like a fool as you are doing this, don’t let it throw you. You are a fool of course . . . . Don’t try too hard to feel religious, to generate some healing power of your own. Think of yourself rather (if you have to think of yourself at all) as rather small-gauge, clogged-up pipe that a little of God’s power may be able to filter through if you can just stay loose enough. Tell the one you are praying for to stay loose too.”

It is easy to get proud when God uses us, especially in “miraculous” or “supernatural” ways. Stephen Jeffreys, a Welshman, had a momentous healing ministry where multiplied thousands were healed, especially those suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. His anointing was evident until the day at a large meeting in South Africa when he exalted himself and proclaimed, “The world is at my feet.” Instantly his healing ministry ended. He became ill with rheumatoid arthritis which eventually destroyed him.

God will not share His honor and glory with anyone!

The Setting for Healing

1. A helpful setting could be a home group cell or the gathering of believers at church but it could be wherever the need arises.

   a) Worship is the ideal context for healing. This prepares both the afflicted persons, and those involved in their healing, to be open to God’s Spirit

   b) Such a context builds faith. A negative atmosphere is counterproductive (Mk. 6:5-6).

   c) Healing (whenever there is such ministry) should go hand in hand with the preaching of the kingdom. It is a sign of God’s power and approval.

2. This ministry may take place during the main part of a service of worship and from time to time it should, so that all the church members may see and learn how it is exercised.

3. Because time is needed to be relaxed, it may normally be best to minister at the end of the service when friends and relatives may stay, but others with other commitments can leave.

4. The person being ministered to may stand, or kneel at the communion rails or sit in the pews or be taken to another room if more privacy is required.
5. It is important that the person being prayed for should be as relaxed as possible and protected from all unnecessary embarrassment.

6. An unhurried ministry at the front of the church (with friends and relatives apart praying silently) and other church members chatting at the back creates a relaxed atmosphere and also provides some privacy.

7. Two or three will gather around the sick person to minister.

**Preparation Before Ministry to Others**

1. We seek to remind ourselves of who Jesus is, what he has done and what he has told us to do.
2. We also seek to empty ourselves of “self,” remembering that of ourselves we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5).
3. We check that the armor of God is in place (Eph. 6:14-18).
4. We try to empty the mind of preconceptions and presumption. No two cases are alike in the ministry required.
5. We then ask for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.
6. We ask God what He wants to do (Jn. 5:19-20).
7. We frequently pray in tongues.
8. We try to envisage the affected part of the body well and functioning properly.
How to Pray for Healing

Although God wants us to depend on Him and not upon a technique, Francis MacNutt shares that there are “some simple steps that flow out of the very nature of prayer for healing.”

1. Listening

Listening to find out what to pray for is always the best way to begin. Just as a doctor needs to find out what to treat when he meets a patient, so we need to find out what we are to pray for.

The correct diagnosis is essential if any kind of healing is to take place. In prayer for healing it is no different. Accurate discernment is essential to know what to pray for. This means we are basically listening to two persons:

- To the person who asks for prayer and tells us what seems to be wrong; and
- To God, who from time to time shares with us, (often through the gift of a word of knowledge) the true diagnosis whenever the person isn’t sure what is wrong.

Tommy Tyson, who is known to be a good listeners says that he gives only one ear to the sick person. The other ear he gives go God. In this way the Spirit comes to enlighten us when we are uncertain about what to pray for. This special knowing seems to come in various forms:

- Definite mental images
- Verbal impressions
- Intuition

We may not be sure whether we are inspired by God or not; we learn by experience to sift out our intuitions and to find what works out in practice. “By their fruits you will know them . . .” MacNutt shares that he has often followed what seemed to me a simple intuition about what to pray for, the person he was praying for told him that he touched on those very things he had not directly mentioned but had hoped that he would pray for. When these intuitions work out time after time, you learn to trust that God is working through them.

Among those things we learn to listen for are the following:

Whether Or Not to Pray

Among many sick people there are some who are not ready to be healed, even when they ask for prayer. Furthermore for others who will be healed we may not be God’s instrument to pray for that specific person. MacNutt makes the point that we cannot take for granted that we are to pray for every sick person we meet.
Therefore it is vital that we discern whether or not we are to be God’s healing agent to pray for a specific person at a given time. Typically the people with the gift of faith know this whereas it may be difficult for most of us to know for sure. Unless God shows us in some way not to pray, we should move in faith and pray for that person.

As MacNutt points out, “Others know that they are supposed to pray for someone by reason of a sensation of warmth, or something like a gentle flow of electricity that courses through their hands, as a sign to them that God’s healing power is present.”

For others there is a natural feeling of peace or joy when they should pray as opposed to a feeling of darkness or heaviness when they are not meant to pray. (In the case of exorcism such an indication may not be so accurate since that feeling of heaviness is normal when an exorcism begins.)

MacNutt states,

“It is not the duty of every Christian to pray for everyone. Our prayers will help some and will not help others, for reasons beyond our understanding or control. Only the Holy Spirit can safely direct our healing power. And if we will listen to the voice of God within, we will be shown for whom to pray. God directs us most joyfully through our own desires. The impulse of love that leads us to the doorway of a friend is the voice of God within and we need not be afraid to follow it.”

It is not surprising to find that one of the hardest things we have to learn to say is “No” when someone in need asks for prayer. Even those of us who seem to receive no clear guidance one way or another can still pray for healing as long as we make no presumptuous demands on people where we claim their healing.

While extraordinary revelations of knowledge or warm sensations of healing power are all helpful, they are not essential. Many, if not most, of miraculous healings take place without any unusual manifestations at all. All that happened was that someone came forward and asked for prayer for healing; the group then prayed, and the person was healed.

What to Pray For

In most instances the person who asks for healing usually tells us what we need to know and what to pray for. As we listen we attempt to select the basic things, possibly the underlying problem that we need to focus on in our prayer for healing. As we listen we must decide which of the four kinds of healing the person needs to start with. Even when the person has a physical ailment, we should be alert to the possibility that some deeper healing may be needed.
If we are just dealing with physical healing, we don’t need to spend a long time discussing symptoms. On the other hand, inner healing requires a considerable amount of time for counsel (twenty minutes to an hour at least) with the possibility of follow-up. In the case of spiritual healing where the person needs to repent and/or make a commitment to accept Jesus, we need to give him that opportunity. If that person also needs deliverance from evil spirits, we need to ask for the help of the delivered person afterwards. Since these types of prayer are so different, we need to listen carefully and make a wise decision about how to pray.14

In addition to listening to the person, we should also be alert to the prompting of the Spirit who may enlighten us, especially when we don’t know what to pray for.

2. Laying on of Hands

It is not essential to always lay hands on people when praying for them. This is especially true if you think the person you are praying for would be embarrassed or because they would feel more comfortable if you stay at a distance. We need to be sensitive to people’s feelings. However, if it seems right to touch the person, there are several advantages which explain why the New Testament encourages us to use the practice of laying on of hands.15

Healing Energy

As we minister healing to people it is fairly common that there is a warm current of healing power that often flows from us to the sick person. What exactly is not clear, but it seems like a transfer of life giving power.

Jesus Himself experienced this flow of power in such a way that He could sense it:

There is an account of a woman who was suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, who no one had been able to cure. She came behind Jesus and touched the fringe of his cloak. At that instant the hemorrhage stopped. Jesus responded, “Who touched Me?” When all the disciples denied they had, Peter and his companions said, “Master, it is the crowds round you, pushing.” But Jesus said, “Somebody touched Me. I felt that power had gone out from Me” (Lk. 8:43-46). MacNutt testifies,

“Often we experience this same transfer of power, occasionally like a gentle electric current, but more often like a flow of warmth. Whatever it is, it is often connected with healing. It almost seems like a transfer of life. I have a theory that some persons with long standing ailments could be healed, if only we could pray for them fifteen minutes a day with the laying on of hands (almost like cobalt-radiation treatment).”16

Tommy Tyson talks about “soaking prayer,” a practice in which we just soak the person in a prayer of God’s love. MacNutt claims,
“In thirty years of praying for the sick we have discovered that this soaking prayer where we spend time with a person and pray with the laying on of hands helps immeasurably. It’s like God’s radiation treatment: the longer the sickness is held in the force-field of God’s love the more it shrinks, until it finally disappears. Sometimes you can actually see it happen; for example, you are praying for a tumor on the side of a person’s neck; the longer you pray the more it shrinks and when you stop praying the tumor stops shrinking. This reminds me of Moses during the battle against the Amalekites: ‘As long as Moses kept his arms raised, Israel had the advantage; when he let his arms fall, the advantage went to Amalek.’ Because Moses was old, they assigned Aaron and Hur to hold his arms until sundown, when the battle was finally won” (Ex. 17:8-16).

3. With Confidence

Jesus answered,

“Have faith in God. I tell you solemnly, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Get up and throw yourself into the sea,’ with no hesitation in his heart but believing that what he says will happen, it will be done for him” (Mk. 11:22-23).

This kind of faith which helps us know that this person we pray for will be healed at this time is a gift. Yet all of us can have the faith that God in some way will hear and answer this prayer.

For a long time there has been a kind of tradition which led most of us to end all our prayers with the phrase “If it be your will.” The idea behind it, of course, is that we don’t always know God’s will, so we don’t have the confidence that everything we ask for will be given us, but only those things that God considers really good for us. Although this is true, the qualifying phrase ”if it be your will” can weaken our prayer if it means “I don’t believe anything is going to happen,” which is quite different from the promise Jesus gave when He said, “Everything you ask for and pray for, believe that you have it already, and it will be yours” (v. 24).

This means we should pray that we will be able to discern God’s mind. Then we will be able to pray with confidence for what we know He already desires for us. When we pray, we do not pray to change God’s mind, but instead, we are believing that it is God’s design to restore us to experience wholeness. MacNutt points out,

“By experience we find the phrase “if it be your will” can weaken the effect of prayer because our inclusion of that phrase may indicate that we don’t believe that ordinarily it is God’s will to heal persons who ask. For most people that phrase puts an element of doubt where doubt does not belong we attach the “if” to God’s basic will to heal us of our diseases. “If it be your will,” is a convenient escape hatch, so that if a person is not healed through our prayers,
we can say, “Well, it doesn’t seem that God wants to heal you.” With the doubt centered on God no wonder such prayers are seldom answered. “If you can do anything, have pity on us and help us,” said the father of the epileptic demoniac. In the response to this “if,” Jesus retorted, “If I can? Everything is possible to anyone who has faith” (Mk. 9:32). Yet, there can be a healthy doubt: a doubt as to whether I know all the factors in the case (which I probably don’t)—whether I know the root cause of the disease so that I am praying for the cause of the sickness and not just the symptoms; perhaps there is some hidden purpose in the sickness, or perhaps I am the person God will use to bring about the healing. All these are open questions unless God should reveal to me that he intends to heal this person at this time through my prayer. If he does reveal this, I can pray with utter certainty—even a prayer of command: ‘Stand up and walk.’”

If we are praying without such a revelation, Agnes Sanford suggests the prayer, “Let this be done according to your will.” While this may seem only slightly different from “If it be your will,” there is a significant difference in that the doubt in this case is not centered upon God’s general will to heal. Rather it places the doubt upon whether we know all the factors needed to bring about a healing even while we believe God is answering the prayer “according to his will,” as He sees best.

MacNutt testifies,

“I do know, however, at least one prayer group that prays, ‘If it be your will,’ and through their prayers healings take place, because they do believe in God’s basic will to heal. Their understanding of “if it be your will,” does not place the “if” upon God’s will to heal, and they do pray with confidence, “with no hesitation in their hearts.”

For most of us, though, it helps to leave out “if it be your will” because of the phrase’s ambiguity. If we feel inclined to add anything, let it be “according to your will.”

4. With Thanksgiving

St. John writes:

“We are quite confident that if we ask him for anything, and it is in accordance with his will, he will hear us; and knowing that whatever we may ask, he hears us, we know that we have already been granted what we asked of him” (I Jn. 5:14,15).

If we believe that God answers our prayers, we naturally will have a heartfelt desire to thank Him. We can thank Him even during the prayer.
5. In the Spirit

In Scripture praying in the Spirit means two things:

● To pray in accordance with the Spirit (Rom. 8:26-27)

● To pray in tongues (1 Cor. 14:13-15)

The first meaning of praying in the Spirit applies to every Christian. All prayer should be prayer in accordance with the Spirit of God. Otherwise it is praying in the flesh, which has no value. This is the kind of prayer that Jesus taught us to pray when gave us “The Lord’s Prayer”: “Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10). To pray in the Spirit also means to enter into a deep anguish of soul with “groans that words cannot express.” This most likely means words that cannot be expressed in human language such as in the case of Hannah of which it is recorded, “As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard” (1 Sam. 1:12-13). To Eli who accused her of being drunk she explained, “I was pouring out my soul to the Lord... I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief” (vv. 15-16).

To pray in the Spirit also means to pray in tongues, whereby we turn our prayer over to our spirit with the belief that God’s Spirit will take over and express Himself through our lips in a language we do not know. This is also an example where “the Spirit helps us in our weakness,” as Paul puts it (Rom. 8:26). When we find it impossible to choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit Himself expresses our request in a way that we could never express in words. Since God knows everything in our hearts, the pleas of His people expressed by His Spirit will be in according with the mind of God (v. 27).

MacNutt shares that often when he is pressed for time, with a crowd waiting for prayer and no chance to speak to each one, he simply goes from one person to another, laying hands on their heads or shoulders, praying in tongues about thirty seconds for each one. He does the same thing in foreign countries when he does not know the language. He testifies that God has used this method with many having been healed and with “several remarkable outpourings of God’s grace have occurred at such times as this,”22 when he simply turned the prayer over to God’s Spirit, not even knowing what the needs are of each person he was praying for whether Peruvian, Japanese, Indian, etc.

How the Ministry of Healing Begins

1. Through inviting and honoring the ministry of the Holy Spirit: “If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you” (Rom. 8:11).
2. Through inspiration—a sudden flood of thoughts describing the situation.

3. Through a vision/picture.

4. Through an impression—a deep knowing in the Spirit.

5. Through a Scripture verse coming to mind.

6. Through a word or beginning of a sentence describing a condition.

How the Power of Healing Comes

1. An anointing—a sudden infusing of power or heat (tingling) or heaviness in the hands, a feeling of compassion or a full assurance that it will be done.

2. Detachment—a standing back and sensing something beyond ourselves happening through us.

3. Words of knowledge, wisdom of faith which we had not expected to say proceed from the mouth.

4. A vision or a picture in the mind’s eye of the healing miracle taking place.

5. The Hunters say: “We tell them we are going to lay hands on their necks (or knees) and as we ask them to move their necks”.

Phenomena Often Experienced by Those Involved in Healing

A sense of heaviness or heat in the hands or power flowing out of them; a tingling feeling/goose pimples; trembling/shaking of the hands; a sense of anointing; the inward witness of the Lord’s presence to heal; a sense of electrical currents through the body; a sense of “knowing”; a sense of detachment—standing back to see the Lord operating. Sometimes there is no feeling at all—in which case we minister out of our authority on the basis of what we know.

The last point may be illustrated from a personal experience. I was once walking to church in a poor area in the hills above Vina del Mar, Chile, when a woman rushed up and begged me to pray for her baby, who, she said, was dying. (The doctor at the hospital had said there was nothing more that could be done for her baby). She pushed a bundle of rags with the baby in them towards me. I remember thinking at the time how very inappropriate it seemed (to do this in the street) and felt slightly annoyed, being in a hurry to get to church! I certainly didn’t sense any anointing, but, because she insisted, I prayed for the child and walked on. My companion asked me if I noticed how the baby’s breathing had changed, but I had to admit I had not. I completely forgot about the
whole event until three days later when passing the same way again the mother rushed out to thank me—the baby was completely well and eating normally. We gave God the glory for what He had done.26

Phenomena Often Experienced by People Being Ministered To

1. Sense of heat or cold on the body. (The latter may indicate deliverance is taking place.)

2. Hot flashes on certain parts of the body (e.g. neck, hands, back, etc.).

3. Ripples on the skin/movement under the skin, especially over lower chest and stomach area, or various other related phenomena: a radiance on the face; the flickering of the eyelids; a sense of electrical current; trembling and shaking; stiffness of the body or particular parts of the body; light-headedness; a sense of weariness; a sense of deep peace; deep breathing; tenderness and tears; brokenness and sobbing; moaning and groaning; laughter and joy; falling down under the power of the Spirit (“resting in the Spirit”); prostrate body “bouncing” (sometimes like a fish on dry land); or the body being laid out looking deathly (especially after a demon is cast out spontaneously).27

Any of these sensations or experiences may be manifest. While they may be signs of God at work, they are never proofs of healing:

‘We have seen people go under the power of God and be instantly healed while lying on the floor. We have seen people go under the power of God and not get healed. We have seen people who did not go under the power and were healed standing up. We have seen people who did not go under the power and did not get healed.’28

Points to Consider

1. We endeavor to give all the glory to God.

2. We seek to beware of the enemy’s counterattacks. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7).

3. We never rely on our own emotions, nor do we ignore them.

4. We note that the more we minister healing, the more results we see.

5. We have discovered that some of us have periods of anointing for different conditions/occasions.
6. Some of us develop faith for one area of healing, which we anticipate will become a recognizable ministry.

7. Sometimes there are special anointings and whatever we do brings the desired result.

8. Even though we may feel nothing (no virtue going out), healings can take place, effected on the basis of authority and obedience to the Scriptures.

9. Sometimes someone in a ministry team may be given a word of prophecy for the person healed.

10. We have found that this ministry tends to go in waves. It’s easy to get proud when God uses us. The temptation is to take the glory ourselves. There is a constant need to humble ourselves and to be continually repenting (which applies both to churches and individuals).29

   The Welshman Stephen Jeffreys had a remarkable healing ministry and thousands were blessed through it—especially those suffering from rheumatoid arthritis—until one day at a huge meeting in South Africa, where hundreds were being healed, he exalted himself and declared ‘The world is at my feet.’ His ministry ended there. He became ill and eventually died. Rheumatoid arthritis destroyed him!30

   After Ministry

   The most common subsequent experiences sensed by those who have been ministering are:

   1. Sudden depression

   2. Sense of failure (especially when people do not appear to be healed).

   3. Sense of exhaustion

   3. Confused and mixed feelings. (of course, one may have good reasons for feeling a failure if one has mismanaged the situation, but some mistakes are almost inevitable.)

   4. Temptation to pride—a desire to boast following clear manifestation of the power of God.31

   Those Coming for Ministry

   We need to be sensitive to those coming for ministry and it is helpful to ascertain if they are:
1. Christian? (“Do you know Jesus?”) If so, what stage in their spiritual pilgrimage have they reached?

3. Part of the fellowship or not—or are they new?

3. Ready to receive? Are there any known barriers?

4. Some have already prepared—e.g. to commit themselves to the Lord or to ask for specific prayer for healing, whereas others have come up on the impulse and need to clarify their need. This is the time to ask for a “word of wisdom.”

5. Sometimes people are quite clear about what their problem/need is, but the presented problem is not always the one for which the Lord has brought them to the front. There may well be a deeper need of which they are unaware.

6. Loved ones or friends may be inclined to hold their afflicted relative in an embrace of some kind as they kneel at the rails. This should be gently discouraged. These “supporters” should release the person ministered to and direct their own compassion into silent prayer.

**Phases of Ministry**

1. Keep the dialogue with the individual to a minimum. Ask what the person wants Jesus to do. Don’t let it develop into a life history. Jesus asked pertinent questions. The interviewer must maintain the initiative.

2. Seek to discern the faith level of the afflicted person and encourage the interviewee to articulate his belief that Christ can heal.

4. Invite the Holy Spirit to come down in the name of Jesus. Encourage the individual to welcome him. Relax and wait for the Holy Spirit to minister—keep your eyes open to see what God is doing; bless and honor what the Lord is doing.

5. Take plenty of time to seek and wait for further words of wisdom or knowledge to be given to yourself or other members of the group. Introduce these when given by indicatory prayers or suggestion—but not too directional. The person prayed for may be asked what he/she is feeling.

6. Hands “on” or “off” is not a major issue. It is good for one person to place his hands on the sick person—the others can identify by putting a hand on the shoulder of the person ministering. Be led in the situation, but don’t overburden physically with too many hands! Be sensitive if praying for one of the opposite sex in a delicate area. The afflicted person can put his/her own hand on the afflicted area and then the person ministering can place his/her hand on his/her arm.
7. Encourage the individual to be “open” to the Holy Spirit, receiving Him thankfully, to be relaxed and not striving in prayer whilst receiving—not even speaking “in tongues.”

7. Let the Holy Spirit do any convicting needed. Those being ministered to must not be left under condemnation, feeling too unworthy of God’s mercy or lacking in faith to receive it. Nor should it be suggested that a person should go and “claim” his healing. Most of the New Testament healings are miraculous/spontaneous, but there is clear evidence to show the efficacy of prayer in spiritual healing over a longer period (soaking prayer) in the current literature reporting the work of many of those engaged in the healing ministry where it is being blessed by God (e.g. Francis McNutt).

8. The work of the Holy Spirit is ongoing and may not immediately be obvious. Take time even if nothing apparently is happening. The person should be encouraged to come forward again if he feels the ministry has been partially beneficial.

9. Be ready, if necessary, to speak to the condition “In the name of Jesus I command you to be healed . . . to be made whole . . . (the swelling) to go . . . to receive your sight.” It is good to emulate the words of Jesus himself, whenever this is appropriate in the healing ministry.

10. Sometimes a person being prayed for may appear to be faint or to fall asleep under the power of the Holy Spirit. In this case it is best to lay the person out flat on the floor and simply bless what God is doing. We believe there is “inner healing” going on at this time.

11. If the person “resting in the Spirit” in this way is a woman; it may be seemly to have a small blanket available for a covering if she has fallen in an undignified position. The blanket can be placed over her without disturbing her.

12. There are times when people have been taken home apparently in a “drunken” condition. It is best for them to be put to bed. They will be perfectly all right when they awaken.

13. Frequently there are manifestations of a “power encounter.”

14. Encourage the afflicted person to take a step of faith . . . If it is an arm he cannot bend-see if he can bend it now.33

**Follow Up**

1. The person ministered to should not be told he is healed (he will know if he is) or to leave off taking his medicines (only a doctor is qualified to do that). Of course the Holy Spirit may tell the person himself to do this, but that is entirely between the healed person and the Lord.
2. Where a “follow up” is proposed directly as a result of the ministry within the church, then it should be noted on a “follow up” sheet and passed to the vicar (pastor) or one of the staff. Some church members may already be being supported by a counseling ministry approved by the vicar.

3. Have someone present from the previous team where possible for those who come for “soaking prayer.” Recognize that it is the same Spirit who is meeting the person and don’t be preoccupied with the need to go over the previous sessions. It is reasonable to ask in what way the Lord helped last time . . .

**Difficulties**

1. There will be some who don’t want to come up to the [front] for prayer. There is a place for ‘prayer in the pews’ from friends. Others will want help in private—perhaps later in the week.

2. If anyone ministering is in any doubt, he should ask for help, and not be afraid to discuss.

3. “Deliverance” from some “bondage” or “afflicting spirit” may be called for as a result of ministry at the rail.

4. “Exorcism” is for people who are “demonized” and requires special preparation and should *not* be part of our after-service ministry. The spirit should be bound in Christ’s name and the case referred to the vicar [pastor].

5. When anointing with oil is considered necessary, it is normally ministered at the request of the sick person for his anointing at home. “Is any one of you sick? *He* should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil” (Jas. 5:14). But clearly anointing with oil was not restricted to ‘elders’ in the Bible (Mk. 6:13) and it may be used more generally in the healing ministry.

6. The devil may try to reproduce the symptom (of the sickness or the guilt) again later. Encourage the person to rebuke the affliction himself in the name of Jesus, should this happen.

**Testimony**

1. There is a time to encourage a testimony—“Go home . . . and tell” (Mk. 5:19).

2. The first direction following healing may be “show yourself to the doctor” (Lk. 17:14). On the other hand, the Lord may want the person to “Go and tell no man” and not to rush ahead to tell others (Mk. 5:43).
3. When someone has “committed his life to the Lord,” he should be encouraged to testify to this fact (Mt. 10:32-33).

4. Our experience is that few people healed share their blessing widely, but the good news does circulate amongst those nearest to them.

5. In all cases of blessing it is important to give thanks and the glory to God.36
22. DEMONIZATION & EXORCISM
“Finally, be strong in the Lord
and in His mighty power.

Put on the full armor of God
so that you can take a stand
against the devil’s schemes.

For our struggle
is not against flesh and blood,
but against the rulers,
against the authorities,
against the powers of this dark world
and against the spiritual forces of evil
in the heavenly realms.”

--Ephesians 6:10-12
It was not long ago that theologians and Christians in general viewed Satan, demons or evil spirits, demonization (demonic possession) and exorcism (deliverance) as signs of superstition and fanaticism that belonged to a bygone era. In the last forty years, and especially the last decade, there has been an astonishing interest in the supernatural.

One reason is the **continuing power of evil in society and modern life**. The optimism of the scientific community of the past has failed to account for the escalating evil in our time. The Bible offers reasons why such evil continues to darken our world.

Another reason is the fact that a **naturalistic worldview no longer seems as compelling** as it used to. With the golden era of science having passed a vacuum has developed which is being filled with people, especially young people, who are desperately seeking answers in the spiritual dimension of life.

There is nothing like **personal experience** to be convinced of something one may otherwise be skeptical of. I have personally been involved in a dozen exorcisms which have further convinced me of the reality of a personal devil and of personal demons. I have conversed with these evil creatures through other peoples’ voices (the persons demonized). They have expressed knowledge not known to human beings. They told me things about myself that only I knew. This is a typical strategy on their part because they try to use intimidation to discourage anyone involved in exorcism (deliverance).

G. K. Chesterton was correct when he said that **when people cease to believe in God, they don’t begin to believe in nothing**—instead, they will believe in anything. It is no wonder then that the 60's ushered in the Age of Aquarius, a psychodelic era in which Americans began to believe in anything. Relativism was embraced and unorthodox spiritual searches became acceptable. In an era of flower power, sexual liberation, the gay movement, peace marches, Woodstock and the Beatles, especially young people, opened up to exploring unconventional spiritual answers. Modern superstitions became prevalent.

In approaching the mystery of the spirit world we either lean toward unrelenting skepticism or naive gullibility. We tend to either dismiss the possibility that the demonic may be involved or we see demons under every bush. We are fooled by either believing what isn’t so or by refusing to believe what is so.

C. S. Lewis pointed out long ago in his book, *Screwtape Letters*, the twin errors we must avoid in our approach to Satan, the enemy of our souls:

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

Thus we need to *focus on God and discern what is demonic and what is not*. What complicates this process is the fact that *demonization may go hand in hand with a psychological disorder, physical illness and sinful habits*. Demonic invasion emulates the most ordinary symptoms and thus leads many astray. Therefore skepticism about the demonic is healthy, yet we dare not dismiss the stories of those who have been helped by exorcisms.

The healing of physical illness was seen in the early church as impressive evidence that the Spirit of Christ was actually present and at work among believers. Since both bodily and mental illness was a sign of domination by some evil entity, the power to heal disease was credible evidence that the opposite Spirit—the Spirit of God—was operating in the healer. Thus the healing of those demonized was often spoken of in conjunction with curing illness from other causes.

**Jesus is Greater than Satan**

Although, as Martin Luther points out, “... for still our ancient foe does seek to work us woe,” we need not be intimidated by such a foe since Apostle John points out in his first letter,

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 Jn. 4:4).

Paul clearly points out that on the cross Jesus confronted Satan and all the powers of darkness:

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:13-15).
Not only did God cancel out the accusations of the law against His people, but also conquered and disarmed the evil angels (“powers” and “authorities”—1:16; Eph. 6:12), who entice people to follow their false practices such as asceticism and false teachings about Christ. The picture of Satan here is that of conquered soldiers stripped of their clothes as well as their weapons to symbolize their total defeat. And the picture of Christ is that of a Roman general leading his captives through the streets of his city for all the citizens to see as evidence of His complete victory (2 Cor. 2:14; see also Mt. 12:29; Lk. 10:18; Rom. 16:20).

Evidence of our Spiritual Battle

1. **A marked intensification and manifestation of evil.** This should be no surprise since the Bible states that the devil is “filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short” (Rev. 12:12; see also I Tim. 4:1).

2. **Strongholds have to be defeated for prayer to be answered** (Dan. 10:12-21; 12:1). The “prince of the Persian kingdom” (v. 13) and the “prince of Greece” (v. 20) were apparently fallen angels exercising influence over the Persian and Grecian realms in the interests of Satan. Their resistance was finally overcome by the archangel Michael, “the great prince who protects” the people of God (12:1). Gabriel assists Michael.

3. **There is warfare in the heavens** (Rev. 12:7-9). Michael, the archangel, defeats Satan in heavenly warfare.

4. **Our fighting is not with human beings** (‘flesh and blood”) but with Satan and his demonic spirits (Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 10:3-4). Neil Anderson and Steve Russo did a recent survey of 1291 professing Christian high-schoolers and found that a large percent of them have had “strange” things happen that they think may be of supernatural origin. In the last twenty years I have counseled hundreds of adults who are hearing voices and struggling with irrational, evil thoughts.

The Structure of Satan’s Spiritual Forces

Paul’s exhorts the Christians in the region of Ephesus:

“Finally, **be strong** in the Lord and in His mighty power. **Put on the full armor of God** so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **authorities**, against the **powers of this dark world** and against the **spiritual forces of evil** in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:10-12).
Paul not only makes it clear that we must be strong, take a stand against Satan and put on the armor He has provided, but it also provides insight into how Satan and his minions work. The structure appears like a human **military chain of command** with everything funneling to and from Satan.

“Principalities” or “rulers” come from the Greek word *archon*, the root of some English words that have “arch” in them. For example, an archenemy is the principal, chief enemy. “Powers” or “dominions” come from the Greek word *exousia* and seems to be related to a realm or sphere of rulership. “Rulers of the darkness” (*kosmokrator*), seems to have even more power. It possibly refers to demons who have infiltrated various political systems of the world, attempting to pattern them after Satan’s realm of darkness (Dan. 10:13; Col. 1:15). Perhaps the Prince of Persia, with whom the angel Michael struggled in the supernatural realm during Daniel’s intercession (Dan. 10:12-21), is one such *kosmokrator*.

“Spiritual wickedness in high places” seems to be the highest level of dark power. Such demons may be involved in the most wretched and vile immoralities such as perverse sexual practices, the occult, Satan worship, etc.

Paul’s purpose here is not to give a detailed description of the satanic hierarchy but to point to its sophistication and power so we realize that we face an incredibly evil and potent enemy. Therefore our great need is not to recognize every specific feature of our adversary, but to turn to God who alone provides us with protection and victory. Although it is impossible to know the precise identity and role of each of these forces, none of these powers pose any contest for the strength of God’s might.

When there is “a clear and present danger,” life brings a great purpose and a great choice: life or death, blessing or curse, victory or defeat, God or Satan (Dt. 30:19).

The whole issue of spiritual warfare must be seen in the light of two kingdoms:

**The Kingdom of the World and the Kingdom of God**

These two kingdoms vie for superiority. They will seek supremacy until

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15; see also Dan. 2:44).

As Christians we are at war! The church lives in hostile territory! The great increase of knowledge and technology is paralleled only by man’s inability to harness it.
What is behind the lawlessness and moral breakdown in the world today is satanic in origin. And all that is good in the world stands as a target for all that is evil. We, who are “pilgrims” or “sojourners” in this dark and evil world, will stand strong only by constant alertness and the providential protection of Almighty God. Just as anyone may be in gravest danger when unaware of any trouble at all, so Christians may be in greatest peril by not recognizing the presence of peril or the source from which it comes.

The Message of the Coming Kingdom

Mark points out that following His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus entered upon a ministry of proclaiming the Kingdom of God (Mk. 1:14-15; Mt. 4:23; Lk. 4:18-21).

The message and miracles of Jesus must be interpreted in the setting of His view of the world and humanity, the kingdom of the world, and the need for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of the World

The “kingdom of the world” refers to “this age” of which Satan (meaning “to oppose” or “to be or act as an adversary”) is “god”:

“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:4).

This means that the devil is the archenemy of God and the unseen power behind all unbelief and ungodliness. Those who follow him have in effect made him their god.

Similarly, the “kingdom of the world” refers to the “world system” which is “under the control” of Satan:

“We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 Jn. 5:19).

John does not say that the world belongs to Satan, for Satan cannot lay claim to creating it. Jesus calls Satan “the prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). This is why God’s children are warned:

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever” (1 Jn. 2:15-17).
From the biblical account of Genesis (3:1-19), we know that by deception Satan took control of the entire world. When Satan tempted Jesus, he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and said,

“I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me” (Lk. 4:6).

Jesus did not challenge Satan’s claim to authority and power, but He did resist his temptation to set up a kingdom that would be mightier far than that of the Romans. He resisted the world’s methods. It meant casting out demons by Beelzebub. For Jesus it meant turning His back on His calling. His Kingdom was of a very different kind (Jn. 18:36f.). He had already identified Himself with the sinners He had come to save (Lk. 3:21). That meant the lowly path, not that of earthly glory. It meant a cross, not a crown.

The phrase “it has been given to me” in reference to “authority and splendor” (Lk. 4:6) means that the whole world lies passively in his power. The authority and splendor was given to Satan in the sense that since he (the serpent in the Garden) was instrumental in the fall of mankind he reaped the authority and splendor that once belonged to man.

It is no question that Satan exercises a very powerful influence for evil over the lives of all those wicked people and spirits (demons) that acknowledge him as their master. But this does not mean that the devil is the ultimate owner and ruler of the nations, with the right and the might to dispose of them and of their wealth as he pleases, so that Christ Himself, at least during the present dispensation, would have to take a back seat to him. In fact, the very opposite is true (Gen. 3:15; Ps. 2; Mt. 11:27; 28:18; Rom. 16:20; Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 2:15 and Rev. 12; 20:3-4,10). Some argue that some of these passages refer to the power given to Christ in His exaltation, however, it must be remembered that during Christ’s humiliation Satan was able to do no more than Christ allowed him to do (Mt. 4:11; 12:29; Lk. 10:18; Jn. 8:44; 12:31). Furthermore, Satan knows that Jesus has come to drive him out and that Jesus claims the world which rightfully belongs to God.7

Paul calls Satan

“... the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Eph. 2:2).

This means that Satan is no mere earthbound enemy (6:12). As “spirit” he is a created, but not a human, being (Job 1:6; Ezek. 28:15; Isa. 14:12-15). In the Synoptic Gospels Satan is pictured as a supernatural evil spirit at the head of a host of inferior evil spirits called demons. As such he is “the prince of demons” (Mk. 3:22). And his chief function is to oppose the redemptive purpose of God.8
The reality of Satan and demons means that evil is not imposed upon people directly by God, nor is it blind chance or capricious fate. **Evil has its root in personality.** Yet evil is greater than human beings. It can be resisted by the human will, although the human will can yield to it. Yet evil is not a disorganized, chaotic conflict of powers, as in animism, but is **under the direction of a single will whose purpose it is to frustrate the will of God.** Furthermore, a rationale for the creation of spiritual powers that were allowed to become hostile to God is not lacking.9

**The Spiritual Conflict**

As Jesus looked at people, He did not always see them as rational moral units; rather, He saw their souls as a battleground, an arena or theatre of tragic conflict between the opposed cosmic powers of the Holy Spirit of God and Satan.

As New Testament scholar George Ladd put it, “The theology of the Kingdom of God is essentially one of **conflict** and **conquest** over the kingdom of Satan.”10 (Emphasis added)

Scripture shows no speculative interest in either Satan or demons. Rather, it recognizes the supernatural power of evil, and its concern is the redemptive work of God in Christ delivering people from these malignant forces.

**His Work Directly**

Generally speaking, Satan’s objective is expressed in Isaiah 14:14: “I will make myself like the Most High” (assuming ch. 14 symbolizes Satan). The Word of God represents him as having power, a throne, and great authority (Rev. 13:2; Mt. 4:8-9). To achieve this purpose, Satan sought to tempt Christ to bow to him (Mt. 4:9); and when that effort failed, to induce Him to worship him (Lk. 4:6-7). Had Christ failed, Satan would have achieved the first part of his purpose: to establish his rule on earth.

**His Work Indirectly**

Satan uses various methods in the realization of this purpose. Since he cannot attack God directly, he attacks God’s master-creation: man.

“Roaring Lion” (1 Pet. 5:8-9)

1. **Seeks to Devour**—It means to swallow up. He is never satisfied and he is extremely patient as he waits for an opportune time (Lk. 4:13).

   a) **Tries to get a Foothold** (Eph. 4:27)—A foothold may be provided for the enemy by anger, nursed grievance, deliberate sin, involvement with false cults or the occult.
b) **Sets a Trap** (2 Tim. 2:26)—The purpose of the trap is to “take people captive to do his will.”

1) Falsehood (2 Tim. 2:17-18)—Since Satan is “a liar” and “the Father of Lies” when he lies, he speaks his native language (Jn. 8:44). It is not surprising then that he tempts human beings with such lies (2 Cor. 11:3). Toward the end of the age we can expect the devil using “powers, signs, and lying wonders (2 Thess. 2:9).

2) Iniquity or Wickedness (2 Tim. 2:19,22)—This refers to any unrighteous conduct in the broadest sense. It is used of unsaved people (Rom. 1:18), of money (Lk. 16:9), of parts of the human body (Rom. 6:13; Jas. 3:6), and of actions (2 Thess. 2:10).

3) Foolish Arguments (2 Tim. 2:23)—The reason we must stay away from this practice is that the purpose of foolish questions is to stir up controversy and division.

4) Oppression (Dan. 7:25)—One of the four characteristics of Satan’s rule is oppression which refers to “wearing out” God’s people by a long drawn-out persecution (e.g. wearing out, as a garment).

5) Intimidation by fear (1 Pet. 5:8).11

“Thief” (Jn. 10:10)

1. **Steal**—Our inheritance in Christ through infiltration as the “god of this world” (“the whole world is under the control of the evil one--1 Jn. 5:19) and through outright opposition. He also makes the world with its standards and values look very attractive.

2. **Kill**—Literally kill by planting irrational thoughts in our minds at weak moments (e.g. “Drive into that semi and end your misery. Everybody will be better off that way”).

3. **Destroy**—As the “accuser of the brethren” (Rev. 12:10), who accuses us “night and day” (Rev. 12:10) and “harasses” God’s servants (2 Cor. 12:7), he destroys our peace and joy. When that happens unity is threatened. By the way, the next time the devil comes to remind you about your past, remind him about his future. Satan brings condemnation (contrary to Rom. 8:1) in which there is no hope (despair). When God by His Spirit brings conviction, we are encouraged to make things right.

4. **Hinder**—Paul testified, “For we [Paul, Silas, and Timothy] wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, again and again—but Satan stopped us” (1 Thess. 2:18). Repeatedly Paul was “all set to go” but Satan threw up a roadblock (the metaphor implied in 1 Thess. 3:11). The obstacle was human rather than an event in nature. The devil uses sinful people as his agents.
The Thessalonian authorities might have forbidden the return of the preachers, or at any rate of their leader; or the Jews might have raised problems which detained them. Without doubt, the desired journey was a subject of prayer (1 Thess. 3:11)—which is an answer to those who would limit prayer to “spiritual” matters.

What Paul himself sought to avoid (1 Cor. 9:12), Satan accomplished for the moment. (2 Cor. 2:11; 12:7)

5. **Deceive & Lead Astray**—There is no doubt but that Elizabeth Barrett Browning was right when she said, “The devil’s most devilish when respectable.”

It is when Satan appears as “an angel of light” that he is most dangerous. Just as “Eve was deceived and led astray from our sincere and pure devotion to Christ by the serpent’s cunning,” so we must guard our minds against a spirit other than the Spirit of Christ (2 Cor. 11:3-4).

Satan’s subtlety is seen in tempting is seen in tempting people in their weak moments (Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 22:40-46); after great successes (Jn. 6:1-15); by suggesting the use of right things in the wrong way (probably the most common method of temptation since it is so subtle—Mt. 4:1-11); and in deluding his followers by signs and wonders (Mt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9-10).

**Other Strategies of Satan and his Demons**

1. **They cause or intensify physical ailments or hurts.** They can cause seizures (Mk. 9:20; Lk. 9:39); physical crippling (Lk. 13:11,16); blindness (Mt. 12:22); the inability to hear or speak (Mt. 9:21,33; Mk. 9:17-29); and some physical injuries (Mk. 5:5; 9:22; Lk. 9:39).

2. **They cause severe storms and sometimes control the elements** in order to help Satan carry out his plans (Job 1:12,16,19; 2:7).

3. **They promote sexual perversions and the vilest kind of human behavior.**
   (Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Eph. 2:1-3; Rev. 18:2-3)

4. **They influence God’s people and cause them to dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ.**
   (Acts 5:1-6; Eph. 6:10-18; 1 Tim. 4:1-4; Rev. 2:12-17)

5. **They cause severe emotional disorders and try to bring individuals to self-destruction** (Mk. 9:22; Lk. 8:27-35).

6. **They masquerade as good spirits** doing good things to lead people into deception and bondage (2 Cor. 11:3-5,13-15).

7. **They destroy things through violence** (Mt. 10:28).
8. **They encourage double-mindedness** by compromise whereby man tries to serve God and mammon (Mt. 6:24; 2 Cor. 6:14-15; 7:1).

9. **They encourage doubt** by inducing hesitation (Rom. 14:23).

**Response**

**Submit to God** (Jas. 4:7)—Humility brings God’s grace and protection or covering (1 Cor. 11:10) whereas pride brings God’s resistance.

**Resist** (Oppose—Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9) and **Take a Stand Against** (Eph. 6:11) the devil. To resist is to openly and actively oppose Satan, the enemy of our souls. Peter adds the phrase “standing firm in the faith” (1 Pet. 5:9). When Paul similarly says that we are to “take a stand against” he is picturing an individual soldier withstanding assault. We are to resist him, not attack him. We are not asked or encouraged to chase Satan, but be ready for him when he comes to us, as he will. Courage and resolve then is what is needed.

The most extreme form of spiritual warfare is dealing with the occult. As we are nearing the end of the age we are seeing an exponential increase in occultic activity. This is not only true in countries like U.S. and Canada which are relatively religious countries, but it is also true of countries such as France and England which are extremely secular. The realm of the supernatural, especially the dark realm, has become a fascination for people who find themselves in a spiritual vacuum, whether they are religiously shallow or even agnostic.

The occult is “a satanic counterfeit of God’s true supernatural power and manifests itself in three areas: miracles, communication and knowledge of the future.”

Every form of occult practice cuts a person off from God and turns him towards the worship of idols. And if a person begins to serve the devil, he will receive the devil’s wages. There are numerous passages in the Bible which declare clearly and forcefully that sorcery and occultism are horrendous sins which are an “abomination” to the Lord and a forsaking of the living and true God. The following are just a few: Exodus 7:11-12; 22:18-19; Leviticus 19:26,31; 20:6,27; Deuteronomy 18:10-22; 32:17; 2 Kings 21:6; 1 Chronicles 10:13; Psalm 106:36-37; Isaiah 2:6; 8:11-22; Jeremiah 27:9-10; Zechariah 10:2; Malachi 3:5; Acts 8:9; 16:16-18; 19:19; 1 Corinthians 8:4; 10:20; Galatians 5:20; 2 Timothy 3:8; Revelation 16:12-21; 18:23; 21:8; 22:15.16

**Demonology**

There are at least seven forms of demonology mentioned and condemned in the Word of God:

- Divination (Gen. 44:5; Hos. 4:12)—The practice of foretelling the future or of finding a hidden thing by supernatural means.
- Necromancy (1 Sam. 28:8; 2 Chron. 33:6)—Divination by alleged communication with the dead.

- Prognostication (Ezek. 21:21)—Predicting the future.

- Fortune Telling (Clairvoyance—Acts 16:16-18)—Professing to foretell someone’s future.

- Magic (Gen. 41:8; Ex. 7:1; Dan. 4:7)—The use of charms, spells, etc. in seeking or pretending to control events; any mysterious power.

- Sorcery ( Isa. 47:9-13; Acts 19:19; Rev. 22:14)—Divination by the assistance of evil spirits; enchantment; magic.

- Witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23; 1 Chron. 10:13; Gal. 5:20)—The craft of the practices of witches, sorcery, supernatural power.

- Ventriloquism (Isa. 8:19)—Speaking in such a way that the hearer imagines the voice to come from a source other than the actual speaker.17

**Fortune Telling**

There are at least three basic types of fortune telling addressed in Scripture. On the lowest plane this may be nothing more than a measure of foresight, or crass superstition. To the latter belongs augury or foretelling the future by means of natural signs, such as the flight of birds, the disposition of the entrails (Ezek. 21:21); a vessel or of objects dropped into the water (Gen. 44:50); and astrology which has to do with the determination of the influence of the stars on the destiny of a person (Isa. 47:13). Whenever persons attempt to read the future by a kind of inspiration or divine afflatus (Acts 16:16), they are in reality doing so with demonic assistance.18

**The Worship of Demons and Demon Possession**

Apostate Israel sacrificed to demons (Dt. 32:17; Ps. 106:37), and the gods of the heathen are demons (1 Cor. 10:10). In Acts 17:22 Paul calls the Athenians “very religious,” but the Greek word really means “fearing the gods more than is usually the case.” In some heathen lands (e.g. Africa) the natives worship demons. During the Tribulation period there will be open worship of Satan (Rev. 13:4) and renewed demon activity (16:13-14). There will be an increase of this scourge in the last days (vv. 13-14).19
Spiritualism or Spiritism

Spiritualism is the belief that the spirits of the dead communicate with and manifest their presence to people. It is believed that they usually do this through the agency of a human person called a “medium.” The Scriptures pronounce judgment upon all who have “familiar” spirits (Lev. 20:27) and warn believers against consulting such spirits (Lev. 20:6; Isa. 8:19-20). The witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28:3,14), Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24), Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:6-12), the young girl with the spirit of Pythe, the same as that which guided the Delphic Oracle (Acts 16:16-18), apparently come under this spirit. The Bible refers to this as sorcery (Ex. 7:11; Jer. 27:9; Dan. 2:2; Acts 8:9; Rev. 9:21) and witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23; Micah 5:12; Nah. 3:4).20

The Scriptures exhort us to test the spirits (1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Cor. 12:10), to have no fellowship with those who commune with demons (Lev. 19:31; 1 Cor. 10:20; 2 Jn. 10-11), much less to go after them ourselves (Dt. 18:10-14; Isa. 8:19). Rather, as we have already seen, we are commanded to put on the whole armor of God in order to be able to resist Satan and his minions (Eph. 6:12-17) and to give ourselves to prayer (Eph. 6:18).21

The Powers of Darkness

Anyone who trespasses into Satan’s domain by committing sins of sorcery will immediately be harassed by the powers of darkness, irrespective of whether he takes the step cautiously or unconsciously (unknowingly). And the effects of this transgression of God’s laws make themselves felt in many areas of a person’s life.22

The oppression is most clearly seen in a person’s spiritual life and in his faith. But the question which arise is, “What faith?” Is the Moslem’s faith, the Buddhist’s faith and the Hindu’s faith affected as well? No! It is only Christians, and to a lesser degree “God-fearing Jews,” who are affected. All the other religious faith of the world seem to ally themselves to mediumistic phenomena. Why? Because only the Christian religion stands out in sharp contrast to occultism.23

It is no wonder then that any person who has resorted to any form of the occult in his life will find it difficult to turn to Jesus Christ. People caught in the web of occultism find it impossible to obtain any assurance of salvation or peace with God. If a person has already become a Christian and is somehow involved in the occult he will find that coldness and deadness will descend upon his Christian life. He will lose his desire to pray and read the Bible, and will become lukewarm and sluggish in his faith. Or, on the other hand, he may become hypocritical and self-righteous and Pharisaical due to his involvement with the occult.24

One of the most destructive aspects of occultism is “hereditable mediumism.” This means that involvement in magical practices and sorcery can affect one’s children. It is a case of the literal fulfillment of the second commandment whereby God “punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me” (Ex. 20:5).25
Why the Occult is Forbidden

1. It places a person under the control of a power which is not God’s—a power which is hostile to the Lord (1 Cor. 10:19-21).

2. The lust for knowledge which is forbidden to mankind was the cause of man’s fall—it is an attempt to bypass God’s specifically stated boundaries (Gen. 3:3-5).

3. The desire to dominate and control is opposed to God’s will. (Ex. 3:7-9; Isa. 47:12-15; Micah 6:8)

4. It creates a dangerous and destructive personality (Mk. 3:27; 5:1-20).

5. It is rank disobedience to God; this is rebellion and arrogance (1 Sam. 15:23).26

EXORCISM
(DELIVERANCE MINISTRY)

The Bible is clear that some mental and physical illness is the result of demonic activity. The New Testament mentions demons that caused epilepsy, deafness, dumbness and fever. Yet in most cases physical illness is not caused by an evil spirit. The Greek word *daimonizomai*, most often translated “demon possessed,” is most accurately translated “demonized.” There are degrees of demonization from the milder form of “afflicting” demons to the acute form of “controlling” demons. Even in the case of “possessing” or controlling, it really does not mean that a person is under the total control of another, but that such a spirit or spirits have dominion over one’s life.27 The word “infestation” may be helpful. When a house is infested by mice it does not mean that mice are everywhere and have totally taken over a house. Rather, it means that mice have infested several areas of the house and thus rendered it unattractive at best and repulsive and dangerous at worst. Although there are cases of severe demonization, these are quite rare.

Sickness caused by a demonic influence may have all or some of the symptoms of any spiritual, emotional or physical disease. Healing in such cases, therefore, should include the deliverance from whatever demonic influences may be causing the disease.28

Characteristics of Demons

John Wimber gives the following characteristics of demons as found in the New Testament.

- They are spirits (Mt. 8:16; 12:43-45; Lk. 10:17-20; 24:39; Rev. 16:14).
- They have separate identities (Lk. 11:24).
- They have intelligence (Acts 16:16-18; 19:15-16).
- They are able to evaluate and make decisions (Lk. 11:25).
● They are able to combine forces (Lk. 11:26).
● They can exist outside or inside humans (Mk. 5:12).
● They travel at will because they are spirits.
● They manifest themselves in different forms (2 Kgs. 6:17; Rev. 9:1-12; 16:13-14).
● They are malevolent (Mt. 12:43-45; Mk. 1:27; 3:11; Lk. 4:36; Acts 8:7; Rev. 16:13).
● They vary in degrees of wickedness (Mk. 9:29; Lk. 11:26; Eph. 6:12).
● They are able to communicate (Lk. 11; Mt. 8:28-34).
● They have supernatural strength (Mt. 12:29; Mk. 5:4; Lk. 8:29; Acts 19:13-16).
● They must bow to Jesus’ name (Mt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:7; Lk. 8:26-33).
● They know their own end (Mt. 8:29; 25:41; Jas. 2:19).

The Kingdom of God and Miracles

Jesus’ public ministry included basically two elements:

● **Proclamation** of the Good News of the Kingdom of God

● **Demonstration** of the Power of the Kingdom of God

Jesus commissioned the Twelve and the Seventy-two to preach and demonstrate the kingdom of God. Healings and miracles are given to demonstrate the power of the kingdom since God the Father sent Jesus to destroy the kingdom of Satan and its evil works (Jn. 12:31; 1 Jn. 3:8) and to establish the kingdom of God.

The following sums up Jesus’ instruction on the kingdom of God:

1. God’s reign entered the world in the Person of Jesus (Mt. 12:28).

2. Through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, people redeemed from the world, the flesh and the devil and thus come under the reign or rule of God’s kingdom (Jn. 3:1-21).

3. The kingdom of God is destroying the kingdom of Satan (I Jn. 3:8).

4. At the second coming Satan will be eternally destroyed as Christ ushers in the fullness of the kingdom of God (Mt. 13:36-43).

Deliverance of demons was part and parcel of Jesus’ healing ministry. As Jesus preached the kingdom He healed the sick and cast out demons. The following are a few examples:

1. Two demon-controlled men (Mt. 8:28-34).

2. Gerasene demoniac (Mk. 5:1-20).
3. Epileptic boy (Mt. 17:4-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-45).

4. Man in the synagogue (Mk. 1:21-28; Lk. 4:31-37).

5. The Canaanite woman’s daughter (Mt. 15:22-28; Mk. 7:24-30).

6. Others who were demonized (Mt. 8:16; Mk. 1:32-34; 3:10-12; Lk. 4:41; 6:18).

The Greek word for “exorcist” (exorkistes) means “to send out,” “to leave,” “to expel,” “to cast out,” “to release,” “to call forth,” “to free.” Demons or evil spirits require a form of treatment different from that offered through the gifts of healings. To be demonized or possessed by an evil spirit is not a “normal” illness, nor is it purely a psychological problem. It is a state of being bound by an alien force. Therefore the only way for a cure is an expulsion of that alien force (demon).31

Of the seven deacons, both Stephen and Philip performed great wonders and signs (Acts 6:8; 8:6), some of them being healings and some exorcisms (8:7). Later Paul and Barnabas performed signs and wonders in Iconium (14:3), and on his second missionary journey Paul cast out the evil spirit of clairvoyance from the slave girl (16:16-18). “The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people . . . and they brought their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed” (5:12,16). God did extraordinary miracles through Paul. Handkerchiefs and aprons that touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them (19:11-12).32

Early Church Accounts

There are numerous accounts of deliverance during the era of the early church. Justin Martyr, for example, wrote in he “apology” addressed to the emperor in Rome, referring to the significance of Jesus as man and Savior:

“For numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city, many of our Christian men exorcizing them in the Name of Jesus Christ . . . have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all other exorcists, and those who used incantations and drugs.”33 (Emphasis added)

Origen wrote his influential treatise Against Celsus challenging pagan thinking “piece by piece,” and made several references to how Christians “expel evil spirits, and perform many cures” many of which he had witnessed. He claimed “the name of Jesus can still remove distractions from the minds of men, and expel demons, and also take away diseases.”34

In one of his letters Cyprian points out how baptism itself was sometimes the means by which a serious illness was cured, and how that these baptized believers gave their lives to the church because of such experiences.35
In a letter of protest written to the proconsul in North Africa during the persecutions there, Tertullian cited deliverance and healing:

“All this (that is, the number of times Roman officials simply dismissed charges against Christians) might be officially brought under your notice, and by the very advocates, who are themselves also under obligations to us, although in court they give their voice as it suits them. The clerk of one of them, who was liable to be thrown upon the ground by an evil spirit, was set free from his affliction; as was also the relative of another, and the little boy of a third. And how many men of rank (to say nothing of common people) have been delivered from devils, and healed of diseases! Even Severus himself, the father of Antonine (the emperor), was graciously mindful of the Christians; for he sought out the Christian Proculus, surnamed Torpacion, the steward of Euhodias, and in gratitude for his having once cured him by anointing, he kept him in his palace till the day of his death . . .”36 (Emphasis added)

At the same time Origen also showed that the gift of healing extended even to Greeks and barbarians who came to believe in Jesus Christ, and points out that these people sometimes performed amazing cures by invoking the name of Jesus. “For by these means,” he wrote, “we too have seen many persons freed from grievous calamities, and from distractions of mind, and madness, and countless other ills, which could be cured neither by men nor devils.”37 Origen saw that the name of Jesus, (or a man’s belief) could bring about a complete change even in his body, by removing a diseased condition. He noted that demons were sometimes driven even out of the bodies of animals, which could also suffer injury inflicted on them by evil spirits.38

At the beginning of the fourth century both Arnobius and his pupil Lactanius wrote about healing. While Arnobius spoke mainly of Jesus and his apostles, his point was that none of Jesus’ healings were so miraculous or astonishing that he did not freely put them within the power of the humble and rustic men who followed him. Arnobius’ implication is clear, and Lactanius added what he had seen in the church in his time, writing:

“As He Himself before His passion put to confusion demons by His word and command, so now, by the name and sign of the same passion, unclean spirits, having insinuated themselves into the bodies of men, are driven out, when racked and tormented, and confessing themselves to be demons, they yield themselves to God, who harasses them.”39

Nearly all the ante-Nicene fathers point to the successful use of exorcism. During those beginning years of the church’s life the believers were recognized for their ability to treat the mentally sick or “demon-possessed.” Its early writings show that it was the church that provided the place to which people came to find this kind of help. In fact, exorcism became such an integral part of their life that the writers of the time give little thought to defending it and point to the results instead.40
Exorcisms were performed in several ways:

- Rebuking the evil spirit in the name of Jesus Christ.
- Touching or laying hands upon the possessed person.
- Breathing upon a person.
- Use holy water.41

Such a practice was not only a priestly function, but in the third century there developed laymen who were selected and trained. The order of exorcists grew so rapidly and large that one bishop in Rome complained that they outnumbered priest. It was common practice during this period for candidates for baptism to be exorcised. There are still vestiges of this practice found in the Roman order of baptism today.42

The sacraments were a direct source of healing. Cyprian, in pointing out that wicked spirits no longer found a home in the bodies of Christians who were coming to know the Holy Spirit after baptism, wrote, “This, finally, in very fact we also experience, that those who are baptized by urgent necessity in sickness, and obtain grace, are freed from the unclean spirit wherewith they previously moved, and live in the Church in praise and honour. . . .”43

There are many examples of the belief that the Spirit of God enables martyrs to withstand and overcome the torture to which they were subjected by the pagan world. Ignatius on his way to martyrdom testified to the amazing resource upon which these men drew in their trials. The author of the Epistle to Diognetus expresses the conviction of almost all contemporary witnesses:

“Dost thou not see men cast to wild beasts in order that they may deny their Lord, and yet they are not conquered? . . . These seem not to be the deeds of man, these things are the power of God; these are the signs of His presence.”44

(Emphasis added)

Cyprian, writing during the Decian persecutions, told of instance after instance of the power of Christians to stand above and be victorious over torture and death. Gregory Thaumaturgus, an eyewitness of these martyrdoms, wrote in A Discourse on All the Saints,“And if anyone believes not that death is abolished . . . let him look at the martyrs disporting themselves in the presence of death, and taking up the jubilant strain of the victory of Christ. O the marvel! Since the hour when Christ despoiled Hades, men have danced in triumph over death.”45 (Emphasis added)

One finds the same conviction, the same power, in the specific accounts of martyrdoms. The pagans who witnessed them were amazed—stunned—by the casual way in which Christians met death, not just stoically, but with a joyous abandon.
The blood of the martyrs was indeed the seed of the church, for here was manifest the reality of a power over agony of mind and body, a joyful equanimity in death.

With the victory of Constantinople and the Edict of Milan in 313, persecution of the church almost ceased, and this freedom opened up a new era in the church’s life. In a very short time the tables were turned and Christianity became, first an accepted religion, then the established religion of the empire. But with such political success came also a deterioration of spiritual devotion and power.

Symptoms of Demonization

John Wimber gives the following list of symptoms for demonization. He is careful to point out that the presence of one or more of these symptoms indicates the possibility, though not the necessity, that the person is demonized. Many symptoms that may look demonic are not necessarily so. Most people who claim they are demonized are not.46

1. Contorted physical reactions, especially when the power of the Holy Spirit is present, as in a worship service or prayer meeting.

2. Addiction to drugs or alcohol (which in reality is also a drug).

3. A problem with compulsions such as eating disorders, lust, fornication, pornography, masturbation, homosexuality, stealing, murder, lying, or suicide.

4. Bondage to emotions such as fear, depression, anxiety, and rage.

5. Bondage to sinful attitudes like self-hatred, unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, and contempt.

6. Chronic physical sickness, especially sicknesses that have been in the family for several generations.

7. A history of occult involvement.

8. A disturbed family history involving, for example, incest, alcoholism, and various forms of child abuse.47

Michael Scanlan and Randall Cirner, in their book, Deliverance, describe four types of deliverance. The first is the mild form which is personal and self-deliverance, “where bondage is broken by the individual apart from a special ministry session.”48 Wimber suggests the following steps for those who suspect a personal problem (mild form) with demons.
1. In faith turn to Christ, committing every area of your life to His lordship.

2. Confess and renounce the area of sin and temptation with which you are having difficulty.

3. Take on the authority and power that is rightfully yours in Christ and command any spirits that you sense is present to leave. This may be done with a simple prayer like: “In the name of Jesus, I command you, spirit of [fear, homosexuality, etc.] to leave and stay out of my life.”

4. Destroy all objects associated with the area of sin you are struggling with, especially occult objects and books.

Wimber then points out other kinds of deliverance that may be necessary.

“Some people are too severely demonized for self-deliverance to be effective. They need other types of deliverance. Fraternal deliverance is when Christian brothers and sisters help cast out demons. Pastoral deliverance, ministry from pastors, is helpful in more extreme cases of demonization. In these instances there is usually need for ongoing pastoral care after the person has been delivered. The last type of deliverance comes from people whom God has given special gifts of discernment, revelation, and authority to overcome Satan and evil spirits at their most profound levels of activity.”

David Pytches provides the following lessons from Christ’s deliverance ministry:

1. Jesus did not seek out the demonized. He dealt only with those who were brought to Him or to His attention.

2. He never argued with demons.

3. He sometimes “bound” a demon before casting it out.

4. A few times He commanded demons never to return.

5. He addressed the demons directly.

6. He once cast out demons from a distance.

7. He delivered demonized children.

8. He ministered to the demonized in synagogues, the open air and in their homes.
9. He asked questions to help diagnose the problem before beginning His deliverance ministry.

10. He showed that demons had to obey His orders.

11. His deliverance ministry illustrates that multiple demonization is possible.

12. His ministry indicated clearly that healing and deliverance from demons were sometimes linked

   (Mt. 9:32,33; 12:22; 17:14-20; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 8:35; 9:38-43; 13:12).51

   **Deliverance of demons was central not only in the life and ministry of Jesus, but also with the disciples.** Jesus commissioned the Twelve to preach the kingdom, heal the sick and cast out demons (Mt. 10:1,7-8). He commanded the Seventy-two to preach the kingdom, heal the sick and cast out demons and they reported back by rejoicing that even the demons were subject to them in His name (Lk. 10:17). Jesus, by the way, rebuked them for their arrogant attitude and warned them of the danger of being taken up with the issue of power and authority. Instead they were to focus on their relationship with Him—the fact that they have been given the free gift of eternal life.52

   Jesus also told His disciples to make other disciples and teach them “to do everything” He had taught them (Mt. 28:20) which obviously included casting out demons. We also see that the disciples developed this ministry of deliverance as they reached out to people with every kind of need (Acts 8:7; 16:16-18).

**Test the Spirits**

It is crucial that we do not naively accept suspicious religious manifestations. They are to be tested. John points out in his first epistle:

“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard in coming and even now is already in that world” (1 Jn. 1:1-3).

If a case is not clear, it may be helpful to address the spirit residing in a person and ask, “Did Jesus come in the flesh?” It is also helpful to ask the demon what his name is and thereby ascertain the name of the evil spirit. By so doing we can also discern whether it is a multiple or single demonization. In most cases there are two or more demons residing in a person’s body.
Categories of Demonization

Pytches gives the following analysis of the different categories (degrees) of demonization.

“The Greek word daimonizomai does not indicate degrees of demonization. This will become manifest by the nature of the afflicted person’s problem in the process of ministry or be discerned through the relevant gifts of the Spirit, i.e., discernment of words of knowledge. It is almost impossible by the nature of the subject to categorize spirits, since so much depends on the gift of discernment. Some are clearly more powerful than others, but it may be helpful to define according to the area/origin of the spirit’s influences on the body, mind or personality of the sufferer.”53

Degrees of Demonic Afflictions

Fiery Darts

Some afflictions seem to be “temporary” and “external,” even though they may cause an internal illness. Such afflictions can be lifted or cast off in the name of Jesus.54

Footholds

We are warned in Ephesians 4:27: “Do not give the devil a foothold.” A foothold is the particular sin which has such a hold over the individual that an evil spirit is able to claim dominion of the personality through the practice of such a sin. The most dominant footholds seem to be 1) Anger, 2) Bitterness, 3) Immorality, and 4) Spiritism (occultic practices). Other common footholds are nursed grievance, deliberate sin, involvement with false cults or the occult (this latter even through such seemingly innocent games as ouija-boards, fortune-telling and horoscopes, etc). All such practices need to be renounced and repented of.55

Strongholds

These result from a long-standing rebellion, feud or some deep trauma (in the conscious memory or suppressed). Where repentance is called for it should be made and forgiveness received. Often there is a primary need for inner healing, which begins when forgiveness is released to those who have been perceived as causing the hurts. Inner healing alone may expel the spirit by closing a stronghold against the enemy.56
Bondages

Some long-term oppressions are caused by such things as covetousness, idolatry, spells, curses, involuntary bonding with the past through the blood-lines or present family relationships, an overbearing parent or any other unhealthy relationships (“soul-ties”). Such bondage may produce a pattern of compulsive behavior. The bond can be broken in the name of Jesus (Mt. 18:18; Jn. 20:23).57

Demonization (Infestation or Possession)

The degree of demonization referred to as “possession” is not common, but could be one of the preceding in an acute form. The condition is generally caused by a deliberate contract with the devil, either by the sufferer himself or by an ancestor. The whole personality is affected when the spirit “seizes” the sufferer periodically. The person suffering from this demonization may admit to a root cause, such as blood sacrifice to the devil or selling his soul to Satan, or the Lord may reveal the occult cause through one of the gifts of the Spirit. The spirit/s should be bound in the name of Jesus and the case reported to the church leadership to deal with as, when, if and however it is deemed right.58

Severe Demonization

John Wimber gives a very perceptive analysis of what he calls “severe demonization.”

Jesus’ healing of the demented man in the region of the Gerasenes (the name of the region varies in the gospels and the textual traditions) provides a classic illustration of severe demonization (Mt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39). This is the story in which demons, when they were cast out of a man, went into a herd of pigs. The result was the complete healing of the man. A close examination of this account (the Lucan account specifically) reveals characteristics that distinguish severe demonization from mild demonization and from mental illness:

1. The severely demonized person still has some control over his own life. The demonized man from the region of the Gerasenes met Jesus when he came across from Galilee; his coming forward to meet Jesus was perhaps an indication that he wanted healing.

2. Inhabiting demons exercise influence episodically, often precipitating epileptic-like seizures with convulsions and other symptoms like rigidity, screaming, and foaming at the mouth. For example, when the demonized Gerasene saw Jesus, “he cried out and fell at His feet, shouting at the top of his voice” (Lk. 8:28). Sometimes the attacks are self-destructive, and they may last for only a few minutes or go on for several days.
3. Evil spirits may actually reside in a severely demonized person. They take over almost complete control of the person at will, even blotting out the person’s consciousness. Sometimes the person may be unable to speak or hear (Mk. 9:25; Lk. 11:14). He becomes a slave, a tool to the demons.

4. Many demons can inhabit a person simultaneously. Scripture says that “many demons had gone into him” (8:30). The Gerasene demoniac was inhabited by demon called “legion” (v. 30). A Roman legion normally consisted of 6,000 men.

5. Frequently a severely demonized person has unusual physical strength. “Many times it [the evil spirit] has seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places” (8:29; see also Acts 19:16).

6. The severely demonized person frequently projects a new personality. The demon speaks directly to others through the person it inhabits. The demon refers to itself in the first person, bystanders in the second person, and the person it is inhabiting in the third person. The man approached Jesus when he first cam on shore, then the demon threw him down and begged Jesus not to torture it (the evil spirit--Lk. 8:27-28).

7. A severely demonized person has a strong resistance and opposition to Jesus. “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” (v. 28).

8. A severely demonized person often has the ability to convey knowledge that the inhabited person did not have access to in his normal state. The man knew immediately who Jesus was, even though the man had never met Him before. He also recognized Jesus’ authority to cast the demon out (vv. 8:29,31; see also Acts 16:16-18).

9. Severely demonized people often speak with voices and languages other than their own. The man was described as “shouting at the top of his voice,” an unnatural way to speak (Lk. 8:28). It is common for demonized people to speak with strange voices. At times men will speak like women, but more commonly, women will speak like men. After a specific demon (the one speaking in the strange voice, since, typically, there are usually other demons in the person as well) is cast out of a person, he does not speak with that voice again.

10. Severely demonized persons are marked by moral depravity, depending on the personality of the demon who lives in them. Frequently they may go naked. This man had “for a long time . . . not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs” (v. 27). It seems that every severely demonized person has struggled with some form of serious sexual sin. Many also struggle with alcohol and drug abuse.
11. Immediate deliverance from the evil spirit is possible for the demonized person. For those whose mental illness is caused purely by demons, the cure is immediate. Those whose mental illness is other in origin must go through a long and costly process of psychological healing. The severely demonized man was immediately and completely healed: “When they came to Jesus, the found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demonized man had been cured” (vv. 35-36).

12. Demons resist leaving their host. They may plead for their own well-being (v. 31).

13. When demons leave a person they seek out other bodies to inhabit. “The demons begged Jesus to let them go into a herd of pigs, and He gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned” (vv. 32-33).

14. Demons respond to authority. Jesus issues a command on His own authority. In contrast to exorcists of His day, who used elaborate rituals and incantations, Jesus simply utters the command, “Come out of the man!” Based on our union with Christ, our being filled with the same Spirit by which He cast out evil spirits (Mt. 12:28; Lk. 11:20), and our right to exercise authority in His name over this realm, we can issue a firm and direct command to an intruding spirit with the expectation that it will leave. It is important to command the spirit/s emphatically and boldly for they know they have no authority to stay. The authority and ground they have they have taken, they have usurped. Ironically, the spirit world knows this better than God’s people do. Therefore they have to leave when Christians understand this and take their stand on the ground of Christ’s finished work.

Symptoms of those who are Demonized

Diagnosis by physicians and psychiatrists:

1. Personality changes including changes in intelligence, moral character, demeanor and appearance.

2. Physical changes: preternatural strength; epileptic convulsions; foaming; catatonic symptoms; falling (often forward rather than backwards); clouding of consciousness; anesthesia to pain; changed voices.

3. Mental changes: uncontrollable glossolalia; understanding unknown languages; preternatural knowledge; psychic and occult powers, e.g. clairvoyance, telepathy, and prediction.

4. Spiritual changes: reaction to and fear of Christ, sometimes causing blasphemy adverse reactions to prayer.
Acute Demonic Attack

The above diagnostic indication of **acute demonic attack** have been collated by the Rev. John Richards from eight different authorities and David Pytches testifies that his own experience in this area is similar.

1. Public Knowledge. There are extreme cases of people possessed by spirits which make them violent and who are, therefore generally ‘diagnosed’ by the local community (“Legion” was a case in point—Mk. 5).

2. Natural discernment: If a demon manifests itself, both those who witness it and the afflicted person know it, or the afflicted person becomes aware of a definite pattern of compulsive behavior (bondage) which may be symptomatic, such as addiction, sexual perversion of some kind, self-destructive thoughts, etc.

3. Through the gift of “discerning of spirits” the kind of spirit at work is revealed.

   (1 Cor. 12:10)

   In one meeting Smith Wigglesworth ministered to two people who seemed to everyone but Wigglesworth to have identical problems: both were deaf and dumb. Wigglesworth put his fingers into the first person’s deaf ears and said “be opened in the name of Jesus.” He then placed his hand on the person’s lips and said, “Tongue be loosed” The man was healed. He dealt with the second problem in a different manner. He looked the man straight in the eye and said, “Thou deaf and dumb spirit, come out of him in the name of the Lord Jesus.” The person was wonderfully delivered and received his hearing back.

4. Through the gift of a “word of knowledge” the spiritual cause behind the affliction is revealed.

5. When the Holy Spirit is invoked over an oppressed person there is frequently a manifest “power encounter”—shaking, contortions of some kind, eyes rolling upward, localized pain.

6. Sometimes the speech is unusual in its pitch and strange in its content. Sometimes there is a manifestation of al false “tongue” which is not of God— it is almost uncontrollable in its speaking or its singing. Sometimes there is clearly another voice speaking through the person being ministered to, usually vocalizing such things as a boast of its power, a claim to long time ownership, a plea to be left alone, a threat to expose something in the life of one of those ministering or a challenge to his authority. Sometimes the other voice utters a stream of filthy language and blasphemy.
7. General spiritual sensitivity and experience by which those ministering detect the presence of demonic influences. The pattern of symptoms becomes recognizable; covering emotional, and sexual problems, addictions, physical infirmities and religious error, etc.

8. It would be quite wrong to suggest to the afflicted person that the cause of a problem was due to an evil spirit without other corroboration and some manifestation of its presence. Many people seeking help have been greatly frightened by such a suggestion and have retreated from a fellowship which has real help to offer, feeling terrified, condemned or rejected.

9. It is far too easy and damaging to jump to such a simplistic solution. There needs to be clear confirmation: either by evidence of a spirit’s “control” in the sick person’s history or through the gifts of the Spirit or experience.

11. Sometimes a sufferer is convinced he has an evil spirit but the counselor is not certain. In such a case it may be right in the name of Jesus to command any dark spirit to manifest itself - which it will do, producing such symptoms as in #6 above.

12. Beware of assuming that all shaking, bodily contortions, hysterical screaming or sudden physical pain, etc., is demonic. Many people have deep reserves of suppressed emotion which may be manifest when they are being surfaced to the conscious mind by the Holy Spirit for healing.

DANGERS IN THIS MINISTRY

Pyitches continues by pointing out the dangers in this ministry:

1. “If all life is seen as a battle with demons in such a way that Satan and his hosts get blamed for bad health, bad thoughts and bad behavior without reference to physical, psychological and relational factors in the situation, a very unhealthy demonic counter part of supernaturalism is being developed.”

2. This ministry should never be engaged in without authority from the leadership of the church.

3. It would be unwise to engage in this ministry alone, but in exceptional circumstances there may be no other option.

4. Do not be distracted by exhibitionist or mining spirits, nor be deceived by lying, boasting, mocking, threatening or bargaining spirits. These should be ignored or silenced. “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” (Mk. 1:25).
5. The exercise of forceful physical restraint may easily provoke a physical reaction. Lack of a proper relationship with the Lord on the part of those ministering may also produce this response (Acts 19:16).

6. There is always a danger of those ministering that they are operating on the basis of a technique, when only the operation of God’s Spirit will be effective.

7. The suggestion from an affiliated person that the cause of his problem is a demon is not sufficient grounds in itself for initiating

8. Beware of those Christians who are persistently avoiding taking responsibility for their own lives and seek deliverance from demons as an escape. Such people waste precious ministry time. Sooner or later they have to make decisions for themselves if they are to be healed.64

PREPARATION

In no ministry is spiritual preparation more important than in this most difficult ministry. The following are essential:

1. **A right relationship** with the Lord is paramount (Jn. 15:4).

2. **Prayer** and “The Lord’s Prayer,” is especially relevant.

3. **Fasting.** This may not always be necessary, but there are some kinds of spiritual afflictions for which it is helpful (Mk. 9:29).

4. **Scriptures** which recount Jesus’ victory on the cross, the defeat of Satan, and the authority which Christ gives to his disciples should be meditated upon (Mk. 16:15-20; Lk. 11:21-22; Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Col. 2:15; Rev. 18, etc.).

5. **All known sin must be confessed** and cleansed (1 Jn. 1:7,9).

6. **The whole armor of God** should be put on (Eph. 6:10-18).65

MINISTERING DELIVERANCE

1. It is always best to minister in groups to encourage each other; to allow some to minister whilst others pray or sing praises and still others listen to God.

2. It is possible to minister quietly but firmly at all times.

3. It is helpful to sit in a circle with the leader of the group facing the afflicted person.
4. It is better to minister in a private place--preferably in some room in the church
building, where noninterruption may be ensured; better not late at night. The only time that public
demonization is legitimate is when a manifestation occurs in a public meeting.

5. In the course of this ministry some dark secret or sin may come to light. Those
ministering must avoid any appearance of shock or disgust if such is mentioned.

6. The afflicted person needs to feel secure in the love and confidentiality of the group.

7. A prayer may be offered for protection through the blood of Christ over all who are
present and the members of their families just where they are.

8. It may help someone in the group to lay one hand lovingly on the person’s shoulder to
give him a sense of assurance. The dignity of the person being ministered to should be preserved,
though this may not always be possible.

9. The ministry may begin with a brief dialogue covering the following areas:
   a. Personal occult involvement.
   b. Family history--especially of those who died immediately prior to the onset of
      the symptoms.
   c. Any false religion, cult involvement or masonic links.
   d. Any sexual liaison with another demonized person or one with occult
      involvement.
   e. General case history.

10. The afflicted person will need to repent and renounce all involvement with the occult
    and of the flesh (Gal. 5:14-21; Col. 3:5-10).

11. One of the group will call down the Holy Spirit upon the one seeking help. The
    afflicted person will be encouraged to invite the Holy Spirit to come into his life, welcome Him,
    and thank God for His coming.

12. Sometimes by the infusion of the Holy Spirit (a power encounter may be manifest),
demons are driven out by the same operation.
13. It is possible to exercise a degree of deliverance ministry without any mention of demons at all. It is possible to simply addressed the “darkness” in a person and commanded it to leave. The affliction may be commanded to go or its power broken in Christ’s name. It is important to remember this when any mention of demonic activity would be counter productive.

14. The afflicted person should cooperate and share the nature of the demon’s activity as far as he can recognize it, where it is and what it does. The ministry group will need to keep their eyes open—even in prayer—to see what God is doing to the person or may be saying to the others in the group.

15. When ministering, we may address the afflicted person or the evil spirit and it is necessary to specify to whom we are speaking.

16. The voice should be clear and commanding, but to speak too loudly or excitedly is undesirable and is often counter productive.

17. In addressing the evil spirit, it is good to look straight into the afflicted person’s eyes (Mt. 6:22), though sometimes the eyes will roll upwards, hiding the pupils.

18. The spirit may speak aloud through the voice of the person afflicted or within the afflicted’s own mind, especially to maintain “a lie” such as “I don’t have to go,” “Don’t believe him,” etc. It is not uncommon for demons to clearly admit they are demons!

19. When the spirit speaks, the afflicted person’s own mind is often somehow blanked out.

20. It is important to sense God’s leading before beginning any deliverance ministry. To minister to someone who is unwilling to continue in obedience to Christ is to risk the last state being worse than the first (Lk. 11:26).

21. Demons may try every delaying device or tactic, pretending they will not come out right up to the last minute—but they have to yield to Christ’s name, the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, and prayer.

22. In the case of a spirit manifestly resisting the command to come out in the name of Jesus, it may be better to stop the proceedings and ask the Lord to reveal what foothold the enemy still has in the afflicted person’s life.

23. Spirits get wary and fearful (this sometimes manifests itself in the afflicted person).
24. Experience in this ministry will help in discerning when the spirit has left the afflicted person. This could be manifest in a variety of ways. When Jesus delivered the deaf and dumb boy, “The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead”’ (Mk. 9:26). But the act of deliverance may simply produce an immediate sense of peace.

25. In ordering an evil spirit to leave, it is wise, for some people’s peace of mind (though not essential), to command the spirit to go to the place God has prepared for it.

26. The afflicted person should put his own will to his deliverance and should himself renounce the spirit, telling it to go. “Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas. 4:7).

27. Experience would indicate that there are usually more than one spirit to cast out (Mk. 5:9-10; Lk. 8:2).

28. Forgiveness and repentance are normally a prerequisite, but not necessarily so.66

SATAN’S COUNTERATTACKS

It is important to be alert to the enemy’s tactics. He hates any penetration of his kingdom.

1. He may attempt to make us boast of the fact that God is using us in this ministry. When the seventy-two disciples returned from their first mission saying “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name,” Jesus warned them, “Do no rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Lk. 10:20).

2. On the other hand he may try to convince us that we have “bungled” it and failed our Lord.

3. Frequently, those who have been ministering (especially women) sense a feeling of oppression following this deliverance ministry. It is vital to learn to resist the devil (Jas. 4:7).67

Follow-Up

The ministry of deliverance is not finished when demons have been driven out. For such a traumatic experience leaves a person with the need for healing of the whole person. Jesus warned that it is not enough to sweep the house clean for seven more demons may show up; rather, the person must fill the vacuum left by the departed demons. This means the person needs to ask the Holy Spirit to fill him and to establish spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, prayer, worship, giving, meditation, fasting, etc. Typically in Scripture, those who have been exorcised are referred to as those who have been “healed.” Thus the casting out of evil spirits and the subsequent restoration of the person’s mind, emotions and body are a healing process.
Perspective

After Jesus commissioned His seventy disciples to go out two by two preaching, healing and casting out demons they later reported back to Him and shared how impressed they were by the fact that in the name of Jesus even the demons fled. But Jesus rebuked them. The account is as follows:

“And the seventy returned with joy, saying ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to treat upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven’” (Lk. 10:17-20).

Although it is vital to keep any ministry in perspective, this is especially so when it comes to ministries that have to do with the so-called supernatural. The reason is that our experience with the supernatural more easily leads to pride because as human beings we are so easily impressed by it. It is therefore easy to begin to see ourselves as special and take credit for ourselves that belongs to God. After the warning Jesus advised His disciples to rejoice about their relationship with Him which makes eternal life in heaven possible. Life with God forever and forever in heaven is something to rejoice in (for a more comprehensive treatment of this subject see my book Spiritual Warfare).

Jesus brought life and healing to the people He encountered and showed that the power of His being was greater than the power of the Evil One by defeating him on the cross.
23. SCRIPTURES RELATED TO HEALING
**Heal—To Heal, Repair** (Hebrew—rapha)

Genesis 20:17-18  “Then Abraham prayed to God, and God **healed** Abimelech, his wife and his slave girls so they could have children again, for the Lord had closed up every womb in Abimelech’s household because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.”

Exodus 15:26  “He said ‘If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands, and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who **heals** you.’”

Numbers 12:13  “So Moses cried out to the Lord, ‘O God, please **heal** her!”’

Deuteronomy 32:39  “See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will **heal**, and no one can deliver out of my hand.”

2 Kings 20:5  “Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will **heal** you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord.’”

2 Kings 20:8  “Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, ‘What will be the sign that the Lord will **heal** me and that I will Go up to the temple of the Lord on the third day from now?’”

2 Chronicles 7:14  “. . . if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will **heal** their land.”

2 Chronicles 30:20  “And the Lord heard Hezekiah and **healed** the people.”

Psalm 6:2  “Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint; O Lord, **heal** me, for my bones are in agony.”

Psalm 30:2  “O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you **healed** me.”

Psalm 41:4  “I said, “O Lord, have mercy on me; **heal** me, for I have sinned against you.”

Psalm 60:2  “You have shaken the land and torn it open; **mend** its fractures, for it is quaking.”

Psalm 103:3  “...who forgives all your sins and **heals** all your diseases . . .”

Psalm 107:20  “He sent forth his word and **healed** them; he rescued them from the grave.”

Psalm 147:3  “He **heals** the brokenhearted and **binds up** their wounds.”
Ecclesiastes 3:3  “. . . a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build.”

Isaiah 19:22  “The Lord will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the Lord, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them.”

Isaiah 30:26  “The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the Lord binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted.”

Isaiah 57:18-19  “I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the Lord. ‘And I will heal them.’”

Jeremiah 3:22  “Return, faithless people; I will cure you of backsliding. Yes, we will come to you, for you are the Lord our God . . .”

Jeremiah 17:14  “Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.”

Jeremiah 30:17  “But I will restore you to health and heal your wound,” declares the Lord, ‘because you are called an outcast, Zion for whom no one cares.’”

Lamentations 2:13  “What can I say for you: With what can I compare you, O Daughter of Jerusalem? To what can I liken you that I may comfort you, O Virgin Daughter of Zion” Your wound is an deep as the sea. Who can heal you?”

Hosea 5:13  “When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his sores, then Ephraim turned to Assyria, and sent to the great king for help. But he is not able to cure you, not able to heal your sores.”

Hosea 6:1  “Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.”

Hosea 7:1  “Whenever I would heal Israel, the sins of Ephraim are exposed and the crimes of Samaria revealed. They practice deceit, thieves break into houses, bandits rob in the streets;

Hosea 11:3  “It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them.”

Hosea 14:4  “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them.”
To Heal

2 Kings 2:21 “Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, ‘This is what the Lord says: ‘I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.’”

Jeremiah 51:9 “We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her and each go to his own land, for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the clouds.”

Ezekiel 34:4 “You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.”

Zech. 11:16 “For I am going to raise up a shepherd over the land who will not care for the lost, or seek the young, or heal the injured, or feed the healthy, but will eat the meat of the choice sheep, tearing off their hoofs.”

To Make Thoroughly Whole or Sound

Luke 7:3 “The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant.”

With a View of Healing

Acts 4:30 “Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

Attend to

Matthew 4:23 “Jesus went through Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among people.”

Matthew 4:24 “News about Him spread all over Syria, and people brought to Him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.”

Matt hew 8:7 “Jesus said, ‘I will go and heal him.’”

Matthew 8:16 “When the 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.”

Matthew 9:35 “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every kind of disease and sickness.”
Matthew 10:1 “He called his twelve disciples to Him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to **heal** every kind of disease and sickness.”

Matthew 10:8 **“Heal** the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”

Matthew 12:15 “Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed Him, and He **healed** all their sick.”

Matthew 12:22 “Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus **healed** him, so that he could both talk and see.”

Matthew 14:14 “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and **healed** their sick.”

Matthew 15:30 “Great crowds came to Him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and He **healed** them.”

Matthew 19:2 “Large crowds followed Him, and He **healed** them there.”

Matthew 21:14 “The blind and the lame came to Him at the temple, and He **healed** them.”

Mark 1:34 “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 3:2 “Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched Him closely to see if He would **heal** on the Sabbath.”

Mark 3:10 “For He had **healed** many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch Him.”

Mark 3:15 “...and to have authority to **drive out demons**.”

Mark 6:5 “He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and **heal** them.

Mark 6:13 “They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and **healed** them.”

Luke 4:23 “Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, **heal** yourself! Do here in your home town what we heard that you did in Capernaum.’”
Luke 4:40 “When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various sicknesses, and laying His hands on each one, He **healed** them.”

Luke 5:15 “Yet the news about Him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear Him and to be **healed** of their sicknesses."

Luke 6:7 “The Pharisees and teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched Him to see if he would **heal** on the Sabbath.”

Luke 6:18 “. . . and come to hear Him and be **healed** of their diseases.”

Luke 8:2 “. . . and also some women who had been **cured** of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out . . .”

Luke 8:43 “And a woman was there who had been subject to a bleeding for twelve years, but no one could **heal** her.”
Luke 9:6 “So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.”

Luke 10:9 “Heal the sick who are there, and tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God is near you.’”

Luke 13:14 “Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, ‘There are six days for work, so come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.’”

Luke 14:3 “Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts of the law, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?’”

Acts 4:14 “But since they could not see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.”

Acts 5:16 “Crowds gathered also from the towns round Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. “

Acts 8:7 “With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.”

Acts 28:9 “When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured.”

Antichrist Heals

Revelation 13:3 “One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.”

Revelation 13:12 “He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.”

To Heal

Matthew 8:8 “The centurion replied, ‘Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed . . .’”

Matthew 8:13 “Then Jesus said to the centurion, ‘Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.’ And his servant was healed at that very hour.”

Matthew 13:15 “For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”
Mark 5:29  “Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was **freed from her suffering.**”

Luke 4:18  “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and **recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed** . . .”

Luke 5:17  “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 6:17-19  “He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of His disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Him and to be **healed** of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were **cured**, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming form Him and **healing** them all.”

Luke 7:7  “That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be **healed.**”

Luke 8:47  “Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at His feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly **healed.**”

Luke 9:2  “. . . and he sent them out to preach to kingdom of God and to **heal** the sick.”

Luke 9:11  “. . . but the crowds learned about it and followed Him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and **healed** those who needed **healing.**”

Luke 9:42  “Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, **healed** the boy and gave him back to his father.”

Luke 14:4  “But they remained silent. Taking hold of the man, He **healed** him and sent him away.”

Luke 17:15  “One of them, when he saw he was **healed**, came back, praising God in a loud voice.”

Luke 22:51  “But Jesus answered, ‘No more of this!’ And He touched the man’s ear and **healed** him.”

John 4:47  “When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged Him to come and **heal** his son, who was close to death.”
John 5:13 “The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.”

John 12:40 “He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn and I would heal them.”

Acts 3:12 “Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”

Acts 10:38 “… how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.”

Acts 28:8 “His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him.”

Acts 28:27 “For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes and hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.”

Hebrews 12:13 “‘Make level paths for your feet,’ so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.”

James 5:16 “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

1 Peter 2:24 “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”

**To Make Sound or Whole**

Mark 5:23 “… and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.”

Luke 8:36 “Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured.”

Acts 14:9 “He listed to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed.”
Healed, to Heal, be Healed (*rapha*)

Isaiah 6:10 “Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

To Be or Become Healed

Leviticus 13:18 “When someone has a boil on his skin and it heals . . .”

Leviticus 13:37 “If, however, in his judgment it is unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed. He is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.”

Leviticus 14:3 “The priest is to go outside the camp and examine him. If the person has been healed of his infectious skin disease . . .”

1 Samuel 6:3 “They answered, “If you return the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it away empty, but by all means send a guilt offering to him. Then you will be healed, and you will know why his hand has not been lifted from you.”

2 Kings 2:22 “And the water has remained wholesome (was healed) to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.”

Isaiah 53:5 “But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”

Jeremiah 15:18 “Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable (which refuseth to be healed)? Will you be to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails?”

Jeremiah 51:8 “Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her! Get balm for her pain; perhaps she can be healed.”

Jeremiah 51:9 “We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her and each go to his own land, for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the clouds.”

To Let Self Be Healed

2 Kings 8:29 “… so King Joram returned to Jezreel to recover (to be healed) from the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramoth in his battle with Hazael king of Aram. Then Ahaziah son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to Jezreel to see Joram son of Ahab, because he had been wounded.”
2 Kings 9:15 “... but King Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover (to be healed) from the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him in the battle with Hazael king of Aram.”

2 Chronicles 22:6 “... so he returned to Jezreel to recover (to be healed) from the wounds they had inflicted on him at Ramoth in his battle with Hazael king of Aram.”

**To Give Remedies**

Ezekiel 30:21 “Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt. It has not been bound up for healing or put in a splint so as to become strong enough to hold a sword.”

**Healed--To Cause To Be Healed**

Exodus 21:19 “... the one who struck the blow will not be held responsible if the other gets up and walks around outside with his staff; however, he must pay the injured man for the loss of his time and see that he is completely healed.”

**Healing (marpe)**

Jeremiah 14:19 “Have you rejected Judah completely? Do you despise Zion? Why have you afflicted us so that we cannot be healed? We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time of healing but there is only terror.”

Malachi 4:2 “But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.”

**What Raises Up, Strengthens**

Jeremiah 30:13 “There is no one to plead your cause, no remedy for your sore, no healing for you.”

**Healing**

Luke 9:11 “... but the crowds learned about it and followed Him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.”

Acts 4:22 “For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.”

1 Corinthians 12:9 “... to another faith by the same spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit ...”
1 Corinthians 12:28  “And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.”

1 Corinthians 12:30  “Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?”

Revelation 22:2  “. . . down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

These words are used in the sense of healing disease and are found in the following places in the New Testament:

*Iaomai, iama, iasis:*

Matthew 8:8, 13; 15:28
Mark 5:29
John 4:47; 5:13
1 Cor. 12:9, 28, 30
James 5:16

*Therapeuo, therapeta:*

Mark 1:34; 3:2, 10, 15; 6:5, 13
John 5:10
Acts 4:14; 5:16; 8:7; 28:9

*Hugiaino, hugies:*

Mark 3:5; 5:34
Luke 5:31; 6:10; 7:10; (healthy) 15:27
John 5:4, 6, 9, 11, 14, 15; 7:23
Acts 4:10
Sozo, diasozo

Matthew 9:21 22; 14:36
Mark 5:23,28,34; 6:56, 10:52
Luke 7:3; 8:36, 48, 50; 17:19; 18:42
John 11:12
Acts 4:9; 14:9
James 5:15
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1 Newsweek (November 10, 2003), 53.
2 Ibid., 46.
3 Ibid., 48.
4 Ibid., 54.
6 Ibid., 49.
7 Ramsey MacMullen, Christianizing The Roman Empire, A.D. 100-400, n. p.

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2 Ibid., 105-106.
3 Ibid., 107-108.
6 Ibid., 110.
8 Ibid., 76.
9 Niklaus, Sawin and Stoesz, All for Jesus, 42.
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_Ibid._, 113.

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Thompson, _A. B. Simpson: His Life and Work_, 80.

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_Ibid._, 120-121.

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Ibid., 66.
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29 Mallone, Those Controversial Gifts, 23.


32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.


38 Kelsey, Healing and Christianity, 337.


40 Ad. Scap. IV, 4 cited in Graf, Healing, The Three Great Classics on Divine Healing, 156.


42 Cristlieb, Modern Doubt, 321 cited in Graf, Healing, 158.


44 Ibid., 165.

45 Ibid.

46 Kelsey, Healing and Christianity, 152-153.

47 Ibid.

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"Spiritual Gifts Today,” 166.

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*Ibid.*, 179
65 Bromiley, “The Charismata in Church History,” Theology News & Notes, 10.
70 Ibid., 159-160.
73 Ibid., 405-406 cited in Graf, Healing, The Three Great Classics on Divine Healing, 161-162.
74 Graf, Healing, The Three Great Classics on Divine Healing, 162.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
82 Evimy’s History of the Baptists, 333 cited in Graf, Healing, 168.
83 Graf, Healing, The Three Great Classics on Divine Healing, 175-176
84 Mallone, Those Controversial Gifts, 25.
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Brooke, Christian Healing in History, 16.
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Pytches, Spiritual Gifts in the Local Church, 163.
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Bridge & Phypers, Spiritual Gifts & the Church, 30-31.

CHAPTER 3

1
David Stevens with Gregg Lewis, Jesus, M.D. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 10-11

3 Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity*, 43.


7 I have included this incident because it illustrates the issue so well although I am aware that the earliest manuscripts and many other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11.

8 *Ibid.*, 82.

9 MacMullen, *Christianizing The Roman Empire, A.D. 100-400*, 59-60.


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1 Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity*, 121-122.


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6 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 284.
13 Smedes, *Love Within Limits*, 69-70
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22 Ibid.
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CHAPTER 7

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CHAPTER 8

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Dorothy Sayers, "That forever reason God chose to make man as he is--limited . . .

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Emily Gardner Neal, "We are often led astray by the false assumption . . .

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16 Ibid., 644.

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18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

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23 Ibid.

24 S. I. McMillen, None of These Diseases (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1963).


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1  Draper, *Draper’s Book of Quotations for the Christian World*, 480.
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4  Draper, *Draper’s Book of Quotations for the Christian World*, 491.
5  Sweeting, *Great Quotes & Illustrations*, 208.
7  Wells, *Inspiring Quotations*, 160.
10  Doan, *Speakers Sourcebook II*, 292.

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CHAPTER 20

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46 Wimber, Power Healing, 124.
47 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Wilhelmsson, Spiritual Warfare, n. p.
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56 Ibid., 198-199.
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