

SESSION 4 PHYSICAL HEALING: Praying for the Sick

Reading: Luke 10.1-11 & 16-20

4.1 Categories of Healing

4. Physical

- Cause: Disease, accidents
- Remedy: Prayer for healing, medicine, surgery
- Aim: Restoring physical condition so that we are well enough to fulfil our God-given vocation

4.2 Focus on the person not the problem

- seek God's perspective
- consider the whole person (Mark 2.1-12, 3 John 2)
- look for gifts, vocation, opportunities
- don't make assumptions
- God and the patient are to set the agenda: *What do you want me to do for you?* (Matthew 20.32)

4.3 Healing is not simply problem solving

- valuing the person, not their ability to perform
- not simply restoring physical function
- restoring the possibility of fulfilling the purpose for which we were created
- chronic illness and disability can yield unique insights and ministries
- acceptance of incurability can open up new possibilities and restore self-control and self-esteem
- the vulnerable may need protection from insensitive ministry
- see Chapter 7 of A Time to Heal

4.4 Some New Testament Words for Healing

Woman with the issue of blood, Luke 8.43-48:

- v. 43 Therapeuo - to care, treat, cure, heal “no one could heal her”
- v. 47 Iaomai - to heal “she was healed”
- v. 48 Sozo - to save “your faith has saved you”

Luke 17:11-19 - Ten lepers, Ten cleansed and healed (iaomai), One saved (sozo)

Link between health, healing, wholeness, holiness, salvation.

The Church is called to be a therapeutic community, an advocate for healing and a messenger of salvation.

4.5 Healing is a Wide-ranging Ministry

- Prayer and Medicine - no conflict, we need both
 - James 5.14 Is any sick ... call the elders
 - Luke 10.30-37 Good Samaritan: oil and wine
 - Mark 7.33 Jesus spat and touched his tongue
 - Consult your GP - when was your last check-up?
 - Grace for medicines
 - Need for spiritual discernment before accepting some alternative therapies

- Obedience and Responsibility - we are God's agents, be positive not arrogant
 - Matthew 10.7f Sending the 12
 - Matthew 28.20 I am with you always

- Success and Failure - no such thing!
 - Matthew 27.46 Why have you forsaken me?
 - Hebrews 11.19f Not all the heroes of the faith were healed
 - Care and cure

- Now and Later - healing can be progressive
 - Ecclesiastes 3.1-8, 8.4-8 A time for everything. NT: Chronos & Kairos
 - Mark 8.22 As trees walking

- Life and Death - God is in control
 - Romans 8.38f Nothing can separate us from the love of God
 - Romans 14.7f Living and dying we belong to God
 - John 14.1-6 Do not let your hearts be troubled...
 - "Death is not the worst thing that can happen to a Christian"
 - Must seek to be at peace with our own mortality to be wholly available to the dying

- Us and Them - whose faith?
 - Matthew 9.22 Woman reached out
 - Matthew 13.58 Lack of faith in Nazareth
 - Matthew 17.20 Faith the size of a mustard seed
 - Never blame a sick person for lack of faith

- Doing and Being - both can be healing
 - Luke 10.38-42 Mary and Martha
 - Simple caring for one another is the foundation for a healing community
 - Touch, time and compassion
 - Psalm 46.10 Be still and know
 - Psalm 31.5 Into your hands ...
 - Letting Go and Letting God

- Pray with the mind and the Spirit
 - Romans 8.26 In the Spirit
 - Isaiah 50.4 Listen – God wants to speak

- Pray Alone and with Others
 - Matthew 18.19 Where two agree
 - Be careful with confidences, ask permission before telling others

- Gift and Ministry
 - Romans 12.1-2 Living sacrifice - be available
 - I Corinthians 12 Use your gifts

- Pray with touch and at a distance
 - Healing power of touch
 - Proxy healing

- Giving and Receiving - We are all Wounded Healers
 - Acts 20.36 Paul is prayed for
 - Colossians 4.3 Pray for us
 - I Corinthians 12.12ff We are the body of Christ
 - All are to give and receive
 - Care for the carers

4.6 How groups can pray for a sick person

1. Describe the situation (being careful to respect confidences).

2. Begin to pray: first come to God in confession (James 5.16). Then ask for God's wisdom about how to pray for the person or situation. Wait in silence allowing God time to speak and us to listen!

3. Share what you think God might be saying. Encourage people to mention any thoughts, feelings, words, pictures or Bible verses that have passed through their minds. These thought fragments may well form part of the whole (like pieces in a jigsaw) that God is communicating. Don't worry if nothing seems to make sense at first.

4. Agree how to pray.

5. Pray together.

6. Discuss your experience and if necessary go back and repeat cycle.

If the person concerned can be present, then it would normally be appropriate to pray for them with the laying on of hands at step 5 and perhaps to anoint them with oil.

If the sick person is not present, then it may well be appropriate for one of the group's leaders to tell them what has happened and to pray with them personally.

For insights into long term prayer, see also 'Praying for a friend with cancer' Page 8 in Resources Section.

Please note:

This model of listening prayer is designed to respond to the common feeling of helplessness that can follow news of a serious illness.

In handling our on-going response we will want to be listening for the ill person in their entirety – physically, emotionally and spiritually. We will also need to be listening to and caring for ourselves – how does the situation affect our own feelings of security and trust in God etc?

A comprehensive approach to listening is promoted by the excellent Christian Listeners programmes made available by the Acorn Christian Foundation. The sheet "Active Listening", in the Resource Section, summarises part of their methodology.

SESSION 4 PRACTICAL WORK

A Listening Exercise in groups of 6-8:

- i. Each person speaks out a truth about God (eg “God is love”)
- ii. Each person speaks a truth on behalf of God (eg “I love you”)
- iii. We pray together for God to speak to us by his Holy Spirit
- iv. We wait in silence
- v. Each person shares what they think or feel God may have said, whether a word, picture, scripture text. It is OK not to speak!
- vi. Groups share their feelings about this exercise and whether any of the “words” were for them, then end in prayer.

A Silent Prayer Exercise in pairs:

- i. Sit in silence, focussing on the person sitting on your left
- ii. The “left” person brings to mind an issue for prayer
- iii. When this is clear, or after a reasonable time (if nothing specific comes to mind) they touch their prayer partner’s hand or arm
- iv. The prayer partner lays a hand on their shoulder and prays silently
- v. Swap over and repeat
- vi. Share with each other something about the experience.

SESSION 4 LINKWORK

Read through the healing accounts in **one** of the Gospels (see list on page 1 of the Resources Section).

What strikes you about Jesus' ministry of healing?

What lessons do you want to learn concerning your own situation and ministry?

On a blank sheet of paper draw a picture, without using any words, with the title 'Death'.

Reflect prayerfully on what you have drawn, note especially any fears and/or hopes that your drawing may suggest.

How does the picture relate to your beliefs about death, resurrection, heaven and hell?

Read and reflect briefly on these passages:

John 11.25-26

John 14.1-6

Romans 14.7-9

1 Corinthians 15.21-22, 35-38, 42-44

Philippians 1.20-24

Think about how open you are to hear God speaking to you and to praying for the sick.

Pray through any hopes, hesitations or fears. Are there any questions you want to ask?