

A Biblical Approach To Healing

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Healing appears to be one of the most complex, and potentially controversial, issues facing the church today. There are many who claim to have all knowledge and understanding of this very complex issue, disregarding the Biblical statement by Paul that we see “in part” and “through a dark glass” (I Cor. 13:12). Although we are encouraged to seek truth, it is doubtful that this side of heaven we will have full understanding of the mystery and mysteries of healing. This is one of many issues in the Bible that is read by God-loving, Christ-honoring Christians who reach different conclusions about what the Bible teaches and what it means for our lives today.

For example, there are Bible students who believe that every healing miracle that is reported in the Scriptures can be duplicated and replicated by the church-if we possess enough faith. On the other end of the spectrum, there are those who believe that miracles, including supernatural healings, were limited to Biblical times and that the miracles reported have a spiritual implication, i.e., the physical healings represent our need for spiritual healing, such as spiritual blindness and spiritual lameness. In between these two polar ends, there are many who take a “middle of the road approach”. Where does Oak Street stand on this issue and what is to be our *modus operandi* (our “M.O.”) for dealing with this issue of healing as it relates to our mission of reaching the nations with the gospel of Christ?

It is a fact that healing was a major part of the ministry of Jesus as He walked upon this earth. Anyone who reads the gospel accounts of the life of Christ would say that Jesus spent a great deal of time healing sick (in some cases, very sick) and infirmed people. The church in the book of Acts carried on this activity, although appears to have a minor role compared to them fulfilling their mission of taking the message of Christ to the world. The New Testament letters also refer to healing in different places, such as it being a spiritual gift (I Cor. 12:9) and a procedure for being prayed for and ministered to in seeking healing (James 5:13-16). Passages such as these and others should not be ignored regarding the issue of healing but studied carefully to obtain insight and revelation.

A completely Biblical and solid theological stand can be taken on the fact that God is a healer and has healed multitudes of people in a multitude of ways. There is no sickness or infirmity that God cannot heal. He is “the Lord who heals” (Exodus 15:26). Therefore, it is always proper and appropriate (unless the Spirit of God directs otherwise) to pray for and believe God for healing. Just as we ask God to save the lost and deliver those in bondage, so we should be diligent to pray for those who are sick, diseased, or have other health-related issues.

However, the crux of the issue seems to be this-Is God obligated by His Word to answer every prayer prayed for healing with a “yes” answer? If our faith were to rise to that “biblical” level, would every person that we pray for be healed-immediately or eventually? Is there a guarantee in sacred Scripture that healing is a part of God’s covenant relationship with us and that we will experience total health and healing if we believe Him enough? Can we, should we “claim” healing and wholeness in every instance where healing is needed or desired, and thereby, obligate God to come through 100% of the time? When someone is not healed as prayed for, does that reveal that we have lacked faith or that there is “sin in the camp” or some other problem or hindrance must be “short-circuiting” God’s healing power? Does God’s power and heart to heal the sick and hurting give us “carte blanche” with Him as we pray to, in effect, demand that He heal?

Seeking to explain the mystery of healing is not like exposing the secret of how a magic trick works. Because it is a mystery, we must admit first and foremost that no one has the “final word” on healing-except God Himself. We as a church do not want to fall short of what God desires for us in this critical area-neither do we want to “over shoot” what God’s Word tells us. What is the furthest we can go and still be on solid Biblical ground?

After much prayer, thought, study, seeking counsel, and listening to those who have walked in this ministry for much longer than we have, the elders of Oak Street Baptist Church feel confident recommending the following guidelines. This is not a “creed” to adopt or a “litmus test” of fellowship. These are Biblical guidelines to give us a unified, doctrinal stance on this complex, and potentially divisive, issue in order that we may keep the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3).

First, the elder body and Oak Street is committed to pray for and seek God for healing in every area of people’s lives-spiritual,

emotional, relational, physical, etc. We will follow the biblical directive to pray over the sick and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. Any member of Oak Street can request prayer for healing and ask to be anointed with oil for healing. This may take place in formal settings such as worship services, prayer services, etc., or in other places and situations such as homes or hospital rooms. We believe in the power and promises of prayer!

Second, we are committed to growing in our faith in regards to healing. A study of the Scripture indicates over and over again that faith is a key to seeing and experiencing the supernatural work of God in our lives. As we grow in faith, we expect to see God do more in our lives, including more healings of body, soul, and spirit. We “feed” our faith through spending more time in God’s Word, prayer, and want to look for more opportunities to exercise our faith in God.

Third, we are committed to living Spirit-filled lives as explained in the Scriptures-i.e., living in the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, keeping in step with the Spirit, and being filled with the Spirit (see Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 5:18). Only as we live in God’s Spirit and refuse to develop and indoctrinate people in man-made “formulas” for healing will we discover all that God has for us in this area. God’s Spirit knows all truth and will reveal to us what we need to know in His time and way as we follow His spiritual leadership and lordship. Since only spiritual people understand spiritual truth, we must be diligent to keep on being filled with God’s Spirit.

Fourth, we are committed to remaining teachable in our understanding of healing and patient with others who may be at a different level than we are spiritually. As God reveals more insights into this mystery, we will seek to follow Him and apply what He teaches us. We will refrain from “forcing” others to believe what we believe or condemn others who do not see what we see or have not experienced what we have. We will not use the “lack of faith” club to attack people who do not experience healing at the level or in the time we think is appropriate. At each new point in our journey, we will thank God for his mercy and patience with us and seek to walk in the truth He has revealed.

Finally, we are committed to bringing glory to God regardless of the situation we are in. When God heals instantaneously, completely, and miraculously (as He has done and many have testified), we will give Him all the glory. When the healing of God comes gradually, slowly, or naturally through means such as doctors, medicine, or

medical procedures, we will give Him all the glory. Should we not see the healing or breakthrough that we prayed for and believed God for, we will still give God the glory He deserves because He alone is God and His wisdom and knowledge are beyond our understanding in this life (Rom. 11:33). We will always and forever believe that the heart of God is good and filled with love for us, as the Word of God spells out and the cross of Christ testifies. God is our healer, our helper, and our hope-in this life and the life to come.

The Elder Body of Oak Street Baptist Church

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