



Healing

for the
Rest of Us

Healing for the Rest of Us

By Jeff Krantz

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Introduction

Many years ago, when I was working as an ophthalmic assistant, one of my co-workers called me at home. She knew I was also a volunteer prison chaplain, and she wanted me to pray for her daughter. Her daughter and husband had been in a bad auto accident, and her daughter was in the ICU at the hospital in a coma. She asked if I'd go pray for her there.

I went, but I was terrified. I'd never done anything like this before. I had worked at the hospital for some years before coming to the ophthalmology office, and my wife was the director of infection control, so it was easier for me to get into the ICU than it would be for most folks. I stood at the foot of the teenager's bed and prayed. I don't remember holding my hand out, or touching her, or saying anything coherent. I was pretty desperate. I think I stayed for about twenty minutes, then I went home.

The next day, my co-worker's daughter woke up. I was elated, but I didn't know what to think. Did it have anything to do with the prayer? I couldn't tell. If it had happened right away, I might have been more willing to attribute the one to the other, but I wasn't sure. I'm still not sure to this day.

This is what I learned: Being sure isn't what matters. Being willing to show up and try is what matters.

Fifteen or twenty years later I was the rector of an Episcopal church on Long Island. One of my parishioners delivered her child prematurely, and the baby was in the NICU for a couple of months. She didn't ask, I just went to pray for the baby once a week. Again, I didn't know what I was doing or what to say. I would just go and lay a hand on the incubator and pray strength and healing. I don't think I used words much. None, that I can remember. I just willed the baby to grow stronger. I had no idea that it was really doing anything, but it was all I had to do.

Then one day as I was leaving the NICU, one of the nurses stopped me. "You really should come more often, it's good for the baby," she said. I think I must have said something stupid like, "Huh?" She laughed and said, "Haven't you noticed? When you're here, the baby's O2 saturation goes up by several points." "Really?" I think I said. "Yep. So come more often." I did. I didn't watch the numbers on the machines, I just showed up more often.

What I learned there? It isn't important that you know what you're doing. It's important that you show up.

I'm nobody special. I do not have the special gifts for healing that some have. But God used me in those situations to accomplish what God wanted done. Healing isn't only for "healers." It's for the rest of us, too. It is shrouded in too much mystery and theater sometimes to see just how simple it is, so a lot of us, me included, can be put off by it, or frightened by it. But I believe that it is God's will that no one suffer, and that the ability to eradicate suffering is something God has entrusted to us. Each of us is empowered to manifest that healing will of God if we're willing to take up the mantle, and heaven knows the world needs a lot of healing.

Since those early days I've received a lot of training in healing. I've been trained by the good folks of Bridge for Peace, Global Awakening, and most recently the Order of Saint Luke. I've learned a lot from each of them, but I think I can boil it down to some basics. I want to try to impart those basics and in so doing, encourage you to dare to step out of the boat into the storm and walk in your own authority to heal.

My friends, your walk with Jesus, if you choose to take this up, is about to become an adventure.

One other note.

As you read through this book, you'll find that I've avoided using pronouns for God. When it comes to my own personal piety, I use masculine pronouns, because that is how I really came to experience God as Savior. But when I write for others, I try to take into account that not everyone meets God in the same way.

At the same time, I do like to use pronouns because I think it's important not to lose sight of the "Personhood" of God. God is more than I can imagine a person being but is still "personal" as well as transcendent. So in the first draft of this small book, I tried using "They," and "Their." I was writing in the wake of the murders of two transgender teens, both of whom had chosen those pronouns for themselves, and I wanted to hold dear God's love for them. I also thought that plural pronouns kind of "fit" a triune God.

But the readers of that first draft, while acknowledging the rightness of my intent, found it difficult to read. Not off-putting, just startling. It kept interrupting the flow for them. So I've relented and gone back to omitting pronouns. I'm sure the day will come when we can read "They" without having to think about it, but I'd like this text to have as much usefulness as I can give it, so it'll be God and God's rather than They and Their.

I have also referred to God as "Father" in some places where I am echoing Jesus' speech about the way that the Son does what He sees the Father doing. I don't know how to make that more inclusive without losing the scriptural resonance.

Chapter One - What Happened to Healing?

I'm still astonished that there is so little emphasis on healing ministry in most of the churches that I know or have been involved in. Apart from the Passion Narrative itself or Jesus' longer discourses like the Sermon on the Mount or the High Priestly Prayer, it's difficult to read more than a few pages in the Gospels without running into one or more healing miracles. And while they're not mentioned as frequently in the Acts of the Apostles, it's clear that the miraculous wasn't limited to the ministry of Jesus. Luke just lumps the healings and miracles together in his descriptions of Peter, or Stephen, or Philip. If we look through Christian history, we will also find that healing is "a persistent theme in the history of Christianity, threading its way through ritual practice and theological belief." (Amanda Porterfield - *Healing in the History of Christianity*, Oxford Press)

I ask myself why, then, is it so little appreciated in our time? My answer to that question is that "healing is messy." The church, as an institution, has steadily fenced in healing and other ministries of the Holy Spirit because they're difficult to manage, because they can be subject to abuse, because they bring up difficult questions and because they can cause a fair amount of disappointment. People who engage in Spirit-led ministries like healing sometimes become too full of themselves and difficult to manage in a pastoral setting. Others use healing as a steppingstone to influence or power, sometimes faking the results of their prayer in order to gain more recognition. (I know personally of a man who was subject to this at the hands of Oral Roberts.) Some are healed, many are not. How do we deal with the disappointment and frustration this brings? How do we answer the question, "Why was she healed and I was not?"

For all these reasons the leadership of the larger church has, for the most part, confined "healing" to the prayers we do on Sunday mornings that we call "Intercession." We pray for long lists of people but, especially nowadays, we don't hear last names or know who they are or what we're really praying for. It is safer. People don't abuse it. Not knowing the person or the outcome, it doesn't raise difficult questions. This isn't to say that corporate intercession has no value. It does. It brings to mind the reality that members of our community are in need of prayer. It also often comforts those for whom we pray to know that we're praying for them.

There are also those congregations that offer healing services or healing stations during other worship services. I certainly did this for years before I came to a new understanding of what healing can be. Clergy, and sometimes lay persons in the congregation lay hands on folks who come to them and pray for them. But I wonder how many dare to really expect to see the recipient of prayer get up and walk away healed. I know I didn't for a long time.

These things are good, but they aren't the kind of healing that Jesus ministered to others and invites us to offer. The kind of healing that Jesus did went beyond the walls of the synagogue, it brought glory to God. It demonstrated the presence of the Kingdom. This is the kind in which He instructed His disciples. "These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather

to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.'" (Matthew 10:5-8a, ESV) The proclamation of the Kingdom was always intended to be accompanied by manifestations of its presence. Why do we not pray with the authority Jesus entrusted to us?

There's an answer to that question that I learned from Randy Clark, (founder of Global Awakening and someone who teaches healing and raises up others in healing) whose school in Pennsylvania I attended. He says that being a part of healing ministry is, in the western world, as close to carrying the Cross of Jesus as we will ever get. He might be overstating it a bit, but he still hit one nail right on the head. Healing ministry means living with disappointment all the time. We will see miracles, I know I have, but many, no, most of the people we pray for will not be healed. Randy has documented this. Even the greatest healers in the modern era only managed to heal about half the people they prayed for. (Though I wonder what John G. Lake's results were. He was a healer in the late 19th century and is said to have emptied whole hospitals.) But for the average Christian there will be fewer than half. I haven't counted the healings I've been a part of and figured out percentages, but my batting average wouldn't get me into the majors, I'm sure.

So healing is hard to do. It's hard to pray for someone with absolute confidence that God wants them healed, to pray with all the authority given to us by Jesus through His Crucifixion and get no results. It's even harder to pray for the next person with the very same faith and authority after you've been disappointed. I can tell you stories of the times I've laid this prayer aside because it became too much. But that's a discussion for later, when I get to the importance of surrounding yourself with other believers who will support you.

Then of course there are those who will argue that the gifts of the Spirit that I'm talking about, healing in particular, ended with the Apostles. This theology is known as "cessationism." People argue that these gifts were intended only for that first generation of Christians, to establish the Church, and that after the Apostolic period God withdrew those gifts. God still heals from time to time, but the authority to heal given to the church ended with the Apostles. I won't get into that argument here, except to say that I have searched the Scriptures myself and find no biblical warrant for cessationism. Further, I have been witness to too many healings, under my hands or the hands of another, to be able to accept that God changed His mind about healing when the last Apostle died. I might question the thousands and thousands of reports of healing that have happened over the centuries as somehow false or mistaken, but I cannot question the evidence of my own eyes and ears.

I really believe that cessationism grew up as a theology to explain why we see fewer and fewer healings since the early days of the church. People aren't getting healed any more. There must be a reason. It cannot be that our faith has waned, so it must be that God doesn't want it to happen any more. This is the kind of logical fallacy we call an "argument from silence." We just can't argue that God doesn't want us to heal from the absence of results. I'm reminded of a scene from *The Santa Clause* in which Neil, the ultra-rationalist, is trying to convince Charlie, Scott Calvin's son, that there is no Santa Claus.

He asks Charlie if he's ever seen Santa and he replies that he has. Then Neil says, "Well, I haven't." Charlie asks, "Have you ever seen a million dollars?" Neil says, "No" and Charlie drops the hammer with, "Just because you can't see something doesn't mean it doesn't exist." What we have done with healing is let our theology be shaped by what we have not seen. (Thank you to Bill Johnson, founder of the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry, for that insight.)

There is another contributor to the reluctance of many to take up serious healing ministry. We have either been told or just assumed that "healing is only for special people." Certain gifts, especially the more spectacular ones like miraculous healing are reserved for those with special gifts or those who have the greatest faith. That certainly doesn't include "little ol' me." (Randy Clark's favorite phrase.) Paul even seems to support the idea that most of us aren't given the gift of healing.

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills." (1 Corinthians 12:4–11, ESV)

But nowhere in Paul's letters do I see him limit healing to the "stars" of the faith. Neither does he say that anyone who has one of these gifts might not walk in others. His purpose in this section of First Corinthians was not to limit the expression of spiritual gifts, but to prevent some from lording their gifts over others.

Jesus, on the other hand, when He sent out the seventy-two in Luke 10, commanded all of them to "heal the sick" in the towns they came to. He wanted all of them to heal, not just some. There is a grain of truth in the idea that some are more gifted than others, of course. Few of us will see as many miracles as Kathryn Kuhlman or William Branham. (Kuhlman was a healer in the middle decades of the 20th century, known for her television programs, Branham a minister who began the Healing Revival after WWII.) But just because some excel in the expression of a given gift doesn't mean that all of us cannot expect to see it. The church at large is more deeply indebted to John Wimber than it may ever realize. (Wimber founded the Vineyard movement.) Through him God moved the ministry of healing from the platform to the floor. John pointed out time and again that the same Holy Spirit that descended upon Jesus at His baptism and empowered all of His miracles was given to you and to me at our baptisms. As a result, Wimber taught that we can all "do the stuff" that Jesus did. My favorite phrase of his is, "Everyone gets to play."

We all get to play, and I have found that keeping the image of play in mind has been a good antidote to the disappointments I often experience in healing ministry. That is, the ultimate outcome is not in question. I am invited to be a part of God's redemption of Creation by acting as God's agent, but I am not responsible for the final result. That is in

God's hands, and I can rest in that. I am offered the chance to join in the fun of tearing down the strongholds of the enemy, but God's victory is never in doubt. It's more like play than work.

I'll mention one last possible source of our reluctance to enter into healing ministry. We may feel unqualified, not holy enough, but that is just the enemy talking. It's also a subject that I'll get into later when I can give it more space. For the moment let me suggest that feeling unqualified is perhaps one of the greatest qualifications I can think of. You're right. You aren't. Not in yourself. But that's no reason not to do it!

Finally, I want to mention why I'm writing this. I wanted to write a book on healing for "the rest of us." By that I mean that healing and the other gifts of the Spirit are not meant just for those with conservative theologies. Some conservatives subscribe wholeheartedly to the theology of cessationism that I named above. But those denominations or movements within the larger Church that are best known for healing tend to hold very conservative ideas. I cannot think of one that doesn't. (I hope I'm wrong.) I believe, in the depths of my heart, that God wants those of us who are more inclusive and compassionate to take up our own gifts. There is nothing that says that we can't believe in healing and also evolution. There is nothing that says that science and psychology are enemies of the miraculous. One of the great gifts of science since the mid-20th century is the gift of uncertainty. The absolutism of the enlightenment has yielded to the humility of quantum realities. Just because we don't understand why something happens doesn't mean that it can't happen any more.

I believe that the world needs more healers, people who demonstrate the Goodness of God in ways that defy explanation apart from God's unstoppable love for us. And it needs healers among those of us who aren't busy putting up fences to mark who's "out" and who's "in." The witness of Christianity to the world is deeply wounded by this truth: We who preach a Gospel that includes even those who don't confess it do not often move in the gifts of the Spirit. It is time that we did. It's scary. It can be very disappointing and painful. It can bring ridicule. But it is also exhilarating and even fun. And Jesus did ask that we take up His Cross daily and follow Him. The rest of us need to "do the stuff," too.

Chapter Two - “Why do we do healing?”

I think that the first question I need to address is, “Why would we want to pray for miraculous healing?” After all, we are modern people and we have excellent physicians. It’s true that many of the things we will wind up praying for will be things that a doctor could cure, so why pray? I have two answers to this.

First, it was always intended by Jesus to be a part of evangelizing the world. Before I go any further with that, I think it might be helpful if I explain how I understand evangelism. Back in the 1980’s the Episcopal church had this rather disastrous period we named the “decade of evangelism.” Church attendance had been declining rather markedly since about the 60’s and our leadership decided that we would devote ten years to increasing it. I’m not sure, but I think the goal was to see membership and attendance double. The project failed. Church attendance and membership continued to decline alongside all the other mainline churches.

I believe that this was in large part because we misunderstood “evangelism” to mean “getting bums in the pews.” Jesus never asked us to do that. He asked us to preach the Kingdom, to preach Good News. He didn’t even ask us to win converts to Christianity. He just said that our job was to tell others Good News, “Gospel.” Some will answer me here, “Yes, Jeff, but what about Matthew 28? Aren’t we told to make disciples of all nations?” It certainly appears that this is Jesus’ intention here, but if we read this “Great Commission” in the context of Matthew’s whole Gospel, we will realize that what Matthew and his largely Jewish congregation would have heard is not “Go and bring everyone into the Church,” but rather, “Go and preach the Gospel to all nations, even the Gentiles, making disciples from among all nations, not just Israel.”

Personally, I believe that Good News, well preached and accompanied by “signs and wonders” will lead many, even these days, to be baptized, to become believers and part of the *ekklesia*, those “called out,” the church. But the moment we make their conversion our goal and not just the sharing of the Good News of God’s love for them, God’s sacrifice for them, we have lost the battle. There will always be an edge to what we say. People will always sense that we want something from them rather than for them, and our message will be tainted. So to sum it up, evangelism is not getting people into the church, it is getting the Gospel into the world.

As I pointed out in the last chapter, when Jesus sent His disciples into the surrounding villages to preach the Kingdom, He instructed them to heal. In chapter one I quoted the story where He sends out only the twelve directing them to “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.” (Matt. 10:8) The two things that He told them to do were inseparable. When He sends out the 72 in Luke, Jesus’ command sounds a little less daunting. But here in Luke the order in which things are to be done is significant. “Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” (Luke 10:9) At least we’re not commanded to “raise the dead.” But notice that the healing comes before the preaching of the Kingdom. It prepares the way. Only after the village has experienced the power of the presence of the Kingdom are the 72 told to explain that this is because “the Kingdom of God has come near to you.”

This reminds me of the way that one of my heroes of the faith has planted thousands upon thousands of churches in the “bush bush” of Mozambique. Her name is Heidi Baker. She and her husband Roland went to Mozambique many years ago and in that time have taken in thousands of orphans while planting all these churches.

When Heidi would go upriver to find a new village in which to preach the Gospel, she and her helpers and translators would often be treated with hostility when they first set foot on the riverbank. They would endure the shouts and stones, and when they subsided Heidi would ask (through an interpreter), “Do you have anyone in the village who was born deaf?” It seems many of them did, and when this person was brought forward, Heidi would pray for them. She has always had a particularly strong gift for healing deafness. When the deaf person would begin to hear, the village chief would want to hear more about this Jesus in whose name the healing took place. Healing paves the way for preaching.

There is something of an example to us in the difference between Paul’s experiences in Athens and in Corinth. In Athens he preached a brilliant sermon in the Areopagus but his results were meager. Acts 17 tells us that only “some men” joined him and believed. We hear nothing more of Athens, either in Acts or in any of his letters. Immediately after Athens Paul goes to Corinth and there he says of himself, “...and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:4–5, ESV) The contrast in method and results is remarkable. Imagine what our evangelism would be like if our own preaching of the Kingdom were linked to demonstrations of its presence.

Here’s a different take on the importance of healing ministry as a part of evangelism. It’s also powerful when we don’t see healing. When we are willing to risk disappointment, looking foolish, being ridiculed for the sake of the love that holds the one in front of us, that speaks. If it is perceived as an act done to elicit a given response (conversion) it loses that power, but as long as we act out of the love God has for the other that dwells in us, those we pray for will know it. There were a few aphorisms that Randy Clark left with me when I was at his school in Pennsylvania. One of them that really sticks is, “You will not see every person you pray for healed, but if you’re going to be affiliated with this ministry (Global Awakening) then every person you pray for will go away knowing they are loved.”

I see it this way. Jesus called us to be “light” in a dark world. Living as those who know the Kingdom’s presence means drawing more of the future Kingdom into the present. We become vessels of the “light” of the “Day of the Lord” that will one day dawn on all creation, manifesting it in the here and now. Our faith, our belief that illness and suffering are not a part of God’s will for any of God’s children and our willingness to try to manifest that Kingdom reality for the sake of one of God’s beloved shines like a beacon. Whether we see the cancer cured or the broken bone immediately mended, our belief that this is God’s will for the person in front of us preaches Good News in a way our words never will.

There’s a second reason that I believe we do healing. It’s the result of living with the heart of Jesus. This manifests itself in two ways that I can find in the Scriptures, compassion and anger. Yes, anger, but I’ll get to that in a moment. The Gospels tell us that

frequently Jesus healed because he was “moved with compassion” or “had compassion.” In Matthew 14:14 we read, “When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.” In Mark 9:22 Jesus is implored to “have compassion” on the boy with the unclean spirit. In Luke 7:13 Jesus encounters the woman whose son has died and while not technically a healing, he raises that son from the dead out of the same compassion.

When we walk in the Spirit, when we view the world through the eyes of Jesus, we also feel what He feels for those we encounter. We may have compassion of our own, but God’s is greater, and it compels us to do something we hadn’t planned. The healing encounters I mentioned above were not accompanied by preaching. These are not evangelical moments, though they are certainly thin places where the Kingdom breaks through. They were simple acts that resulted from “suffering with” (com-*passion*) the other in a way that exceeds our own capacity, that we can only know by having God’s heart.

Anger is another emotion that leads Jesus to heal. It isn’t well known, but in Mark 1, when the leper asks Jesus to heal him, saying, “If you will, you can make me clean,” most of our translations then read, “Moved with compassion, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, ‘I will; be clean.’” Some of our more honest translations have a little footnote where it says “moved with compassion.” These will tell you that there is good manuscript evidence that reads, “moved with anger.”

Biblical scholars will tell you that when there are two manuscript traditions from which translators must choose, the “more difficult” reading is usually the original one. It is far easier to imagine a copyist seeing “moved with anger” and thinking, “Oh, that must be wrong” and changing it to “moved with compassion” than the other way around. Still, our translators stick with the less reliable text. Perhaps it’s because “anger” raises so many more questions than “compassion.” No matter their reasoning, there is good evidence that what moves Jesus to touch and heal this leper is His anger.

What is it that makes Him angry? Could it be that He is angered that His will could be questioned? That there is any question at all that He might actually want the man to be made whole? Perhaps, though this error in thought is not the leper’s error. It is one he would have been taught. He’d have been taught that he deserved what befell him, whether for his own sin or perhaps that of his parents. Could Jesus be angered by the social isolation that the leprosy has brought on the man? I think this is a strong possibility, marked by Jesus’ decision to touch him rather than simply tell him that he’s healed. Could it be that Jesus is simply angered that people suffer the way that they do? Could He be angry with the enemy who brings so much pain and suffering? I think that’s possible too.

In the end, I would suggest that it is some combination of all three. The point is that the Father and the Son are both offended by the suffering of their children. If we carry in us the heart of Jesus, we will be similarly offended from time to time, and that will also move us to try to bring healing without regard for its connection to evangelism.

Coming full circle to evangelism, I look out at a world full of people who are in desperate need of the knowledge that they are deeply and unshakably loved. Even most Christians have not experienced that love in a way that frees them from the need to

control their environments, to set up fences or walls to keep themselves safe. The miraculous in-breaking of the Kingdom can be the pebble on the windshield whose tiny chip spiders into a million cracks and finally sets them free from their self-constructed prisons. To quote Bill Johnson, God is so much better than we think. The encounter with the miraculous can open the hearts of the world to that truth.

Chapter Three - Some Introductory Questions

Where does healing come from?

This question is different from “Who does the healing?” I’ll talk about that in the next section. But before we discuss that topic, I’d like to deal with the origins of healing. That is, where does the Bible understand it to originate? In the Garden, there was no need for healing, but here in a world corrupted by human sin, where is the door through which healing enters? The short answer is, “Through the Atonement.”

We live in a world that lives daily with the consequences of human sin. Illness, pain, death, all these flow from humanity’s rebellion, our desire, our attempt to “be like God.” As a result of these decisions (which continue into the present and will likely continue well into our future) there are sequela, outcomes that follow. Healing breaks off these outcomes, these consequences, sets them aside in mercy. But how?

I have been taught, and I accept, that the ability to sever sin from consequence lies in Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross, the Atonement. Isaiah puts it quite simply, “In His wounds we are healed.” Isaiah speaks in the Hebrew’s perfect tense, which functions both as a past perfect and a future tense. My point here is that when Isaiah sings of the Suffering Servant and of the wounds by which we are healed, he sees it as a *fait accompli*. Through Jesus’ wounds our health is already ours. Healing ministry is not about bringing into being that which is not yet, but calling Creation to conform to that which was already purchased for us on the Cross. I will talk more about that when I try to discuss the mind-set that I believe we are to carry into any healing encounter.

Jesus has undone the curse of human sin by taking all our illness, all our disease and finally all our death upon Himself. It is from this well of forgiveness that our healing flows.

Who does the healing?

While God and Jesus continue to heal in this day and age, the answer to this question isn’t as obvious as it may initially seem. We can say with some certainty that God is the source of all healing, but that doesn’t mean that God and Jesus are the doers of all healing. This certainly isn’t the Biblical view.

In the Bible, God endows humanity with the ability to heal. Adam and Eve are given authority over Creation to “subdue it.” While that authority became twisted through human sin, it was restored through the Cross. For this reason, when Jesus sent out the Twelve, or the seventy-two, He commanded them to “heal the sick.” He did not send them out with words like, “When you encounter the sick, pray for the Father to heal them.” He sent them out to do the healing.

In like manner, you and I are commissioned to heal. Yes, we do it in Jesus’ Name. That is, we do it for His sake, for His glory. We do it with authority that we have been given by Him, but we do it. I will write more in a bit on the role of authority in healing, but I wanted to be clear about who it is that heals (we do, as well as God) from the start because it affects how we pray.

Most of the prayer for healing that I have encountered in mainline churches has taken the form of requests. “God, please heal Jennifer,” or “God, please restore Frank.” Our corporate prayers of intercession are filled with petitions followed by the cry, “God, hear our prayer.” Nowhere in the Gospels do I find Jesus praying this way. Not once does He ask the Father to do anything. Rather, the Son sees what the Father is already doing and does the same. He hears what the Father is already saying and says the same.

We are similarly empowered. When we encounter someone who is sick or broken by the world, we can look with eyes of faith and see that the Father is already lifting them up. Then we do what the Father is already doing and take them by the hand, literally or figuratively, and lift them up, too. When we see the Father declaring His healing power over a person, we do the same, declare His power over them. When He is commanding their bodies to be healed, to align themselves with His good will for the individual, we do the same.

We don’t ask God to do what He is already doing. One of my mentors, Randy Clark, said something to our class once that has stuck with me. He said, “When we ask God to heal someone, we’re acting as though we care more about that person than He does, as though He doesn’t already want to heal them.” He didn’t go on to say out loud how arrogant that is, but his raised eyebrows said it for him. It is amazing to me that we actually try to shift God’s will for a person through prayer, as though our will for them might even for an instant be better than God’s.

This doesn’t mean that when we pray, “God, please heal Aunt Carol,” God doesn’t hear, that God doesn’t respond. God does. But that petition is more akin to “Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief,” than the prayer of faith into which you and I are invited. When I get to the five-step prayer model, there is a step in which we discern which prayer to pray, how to pray it. Personally, I tend to reserve the “God, please heal this person,” prayer for those times when I’m stumped and can’t figure out what to pray, or I’ve tried everything else.

As a father, I think I can imagine a little bit of God’s pleasure in seeing us take up the mantle of healing that is our inheritance. There is no healing that I can do that God cannot do better, but still God seems to prefer to encourage me to try my own hand. Always with God’s power, God’s authority, but God seems to prefer for me to try and not to push it off on Them. So a part of the answer to “Who does the healing?” will always be, “We do,” as terrifying as that may seem.

Chapter Four - Things That Help and Things That Hinder

Faith

It is beyond question that Faith plays a role in bringing healing to a person, whether physical, emotional, or spiritual. Jesus is very clear that having faith for healing brought it about for some people.

While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.” And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.” Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well. (Matthew 9:18–22, ESV)

And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.” And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.” And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way. (Mark 10:46–52, ESV)

On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” (Luke 17:11–19, ESV)

These are all stories of persons whose own faith contributed to their healing. It is clear that the faith of the afflicted person is an important component for healing. Yet it isn’t necessary. Far too often those who seek healing and fail to receive it wind up going away having been told that their faith wasn’t adequate. “If you’d only had more faith, you’d have been healed.” This is not just biblically unsupportable, but cruel. Don’t do this. There are

far more stories of people being healed without any mention of their faith than there are of those whose faith is commended as the reason for their healing.

Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. (Matthew 12:22, ESV)

This man could not have had faith in Jesus to heal him. He couldn't even see Him.

He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. (Mark 6:1–6a, ESV)

The village took offense at Him. They wrote Him off as the lowly son of the carpenter. And while He did no "great work" there, people were still healed.

Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. (Luke 4:40, ESV)

Jesus healed all of them. It does not say that Jesus healed those who had faith. Yes, faith contributes to healing, but we cannot make it a rule or use it as an excuse for our own failure to see healing happen. The truth is that our own faith is more important for healing than that of the person we're praying for.

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly. (Matthew 15:21–28, ESV)

This story of the Canaanite woman and that of the Centurion (Matthew 8:5-13) both highlight the truth that the faith of the one doing the praying is more important than that of the girl or the servant. And what do they both believe? That it is not God's will that either the woman's daughter or the centurion's servant should suffer. This unshakable faith enables the woman to persist and the centurion to claim that Jesus need not trouble Himself to visit the servant personally. Yes, they both believe that Jesus can heal the one for whom they make intercession, but what is more important is that they believe that He wants to.

As important as our own faith may be for healing to occur, I will emphasize here that as with the faith of the individual for whom we're praying, we make a big mistake if we try to make a rule out of it. God is sovereign. He may choose to work through our prayer even on a day when we're badly shaken and have little to no faith in what we're doing. Our willingness to show up even when all we can do is "phone it in" and risk failure and ridicule (whether from those around us or the enemy) may be all God wants in that moment to manifest His goodness. As Francis MacNutt (the author of a number of books on healing) has said, "My faith is in God, not in my faith."

Of course, my main purpose in writing this book is to build up your own faith and to enable you to step out onto the waves. I hope to do that by showing you who you really are, what you're empowered to do and constantly reminding you of Who it is who stands behind you as you pray. I'll try to help you feel a bit less lost in this exciting realm of power and praise and even give you some step-by-step guides so that you don't feel like you got home from Ikea without the instruction book. If you're anything like me, the first few times you dare to pray for someone you won't be very impressed with your own faith. But I have faith for you, and so do a lot of other Christians. I want you to have great faith for healing, but I also want you to have courage to risk even when things don't feel ideal.

Sin

I know that those of us who consider ourselves progressive and inclusive begin to squirm when that three-letter word pops up, but if we're going to go to take healing seriously, we also need to take the role of sin seriously. I said in chapter two that I believe that death and disease came to be through human sin. (Of course, Paul said it first, in Romans.) But how does that play out in our ministry of healing? Does sin block healing? Sometimes I think it does, but not in the way that you probably think.

Jesus heals too many people without any mention of their sins or forgiveness. It is quite impossible that they had all just stepped out of the Mikveh (the Jewish ritual bath for forgiveness of sin) and stood before Him fully forgiven before He healed them all. So it cannot be that one must be clean of any unforgiven sin in order to be healed. People have made too much of the instance in which Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic before He healed him. (The one whose friends let him down through the roof.) We can't draw a conclusion from that that healing requires that all sin be forgiven for healing to occur, but some do.

How then does sin get in the way of healing? I believe that the weight of unforgiven sin sometimes causes a person to reject healing. Not consciously of course, but if I'm carrying a weight of guilt because of something I've done, or failed to do, I have created an opening through which the enemy can whisper, "You don't deserve to be healed. You deserve this illness. Nothing will happen," and I will be more inclined to believe it. When I don't believe that I deserve to be healed I may well actually cling to my injury or my weakness as a way of punishing myself. So sin in itself is not the root cause of my failure to be healed. Rather, it is the enemy's manipulation of my guilt that is the reason.

This is one of the reasons that we as healers must discern "what the Father is doing" in a person before we pray. We try to do this in the initial assessment (more on that in chapter five) but in my experience we often miss the role of unforgiven sin. A lot of people who pray for healing more than I do have told me that when they prayed for such and such a person and saw no healing, only after initial disappointment did they discern the unforgiven sin that was in the way and were empowered to declare forgiveness as a prelude to healing.

In a strange and wonderful way, God actually seems to use the illness or injury for which we're praying to create an opportunity for the person before us to hear the message of forgiveness! The enemy seems to work against its own purposes without realizing it. The torment the enemy creates draws the one in need of forgiveness to our attention, or brings them to our doorstep, where they will receive forgiveness as well as healing!

But sin isn't only an impediment for the one who needs the healing. It is also a problem for the one doing the praying, and it works in much the same way. When we carry a weight of guilt from sin that we haven't brought to the Cross it doesn't automatically invalidate our prayer, but it does create another opening through which the enemy may whisper, "You know what you've done! You've disqualified yourself! You can't pray with any expectation that you'll see results!" Carrying around that kind of guilt will cause you to pray with no sense of authority, or it may cause you to choose not to pray at all, hearing the accusation "Hypocrite!" echoing in your mind.

First, this is no excuse not to pray. You may be feeling miserable, but it doesn't depend on your faith, it depends on God, whose will is always good. Even if your faith is absent, anyone present who has faith in that prayer the size of a mustard seed has enough for it to be effective. Second, though, is that you and I know our forgiveness through the Blood of Jesus. When we hear those whispers, it is really only an invitation to lay hold of that forgiveness for ourselves and to carry on.

This is where I'd like to talk a little bit about the importance of taking sin seriously for the prayer minister. There is a real risk that when we see people healed we will begin to get too full of ourselves. It has led any number of people who were especially gifted to go off the rails because they forgot Paul's admonition to "be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself." (Philippians 2:3) Keeping our own sins before us is the best thing the enemy can do to prevent us from getting "too big for our britches." When we hear accusations from the enemy, Jesus enjoins us to "agree quickly with your accuser." That phrase, elsewhere translated as "come to terms with your accuser quickly" reads, in its

most literal form, “Make friends with your accuser quickly.” Yes, make friends with your accuser because the enemy here has done you a great favor. You are reminded that you are only able to share in the Lord’s work this way because of God’s mercy, and you fall back on that in humility and grace and you cast every crown that others may give you at the foot of the Throne. Hallelujah!

None of us is without sin. We may walk for a spell unaware of the ways we continue to miss the glory for which we were intended, but we all miss even so. This sin is not an impediment, but a welcome and constant reminder that it is only through the mercy of God that we are empowered to do what we do. In a way then, it is less a hindrance than a help. Of course, this doesn’t mean that we should continue to sin, to that Paul said, “Heaven forbid!” (Romans 6:3). We pursue sanctification as long as we live, but the grace that we receive through Jesus transforms the sin that remains into a means for God’s continued work in us instead of being the reason for separation the enemy would like it to be.

Testimony

Under “Things That Help,” testimony could probably have its own chapter. Not that it’s more important than any other factor, but I do think it’s least understood, especially among progressive Christians, so it needs more explaining. Testimony doesn’t just function in one way, either. There are two that I can think of. The first would be that it gives glory to Jesus. When we give testimony to healings that we have either seen or experienced ourselves, we always say that this was done in His Name. This serves healing’s purpose of evangelism. Healing is always about the demonstration of the statement, “The Kingdom of God has come near to you,” or “The Kingdom of God is at hand.”

Healing demonstrates God’s good will for Creation and in particular for the one standing before us needing prayer. It reveals the Kingdom that Jesus came to inaugurate and releases that Kingdom’s power into the world, “...the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.” (Ephesians 1:19-20a) That same power that raised Jesus from the dead is “toward” us and is gifted to us to help us manifest its presence to others.

Healing that isn’t accompanied by testimony doesn’t just rob Jesus of the glory that is His due, but it robs those who don’t hear it of the opportunity to experience the presence of the Kingdom. In the Bible, “Word” creates. Our words concerning what we have experienced in God don’t just convey information, they release Kingdom, they create new space in which the Kingdom of God has sovereignty, and they place others within its healing reach.

I am not glad to have to do it, but I do think that I should deal with a couple of possible objections to this function of testimony, that of giving glory to God and Jesus. I can hear in the back of my head, someone reading this and thinking, “Yes, but what of all those

times that Jesus healed someone and then told them not to tell anyone about what had happened?” We certainly have enough examples of this, enough that William Wrede wrote a book more than a hundred years ago entitled “The Messianic Secret.” It does seem that in some circumstances it was Jesus’ intent to limit the number of people who heard about His healings. To this I would simply answer, “What Jesus did during His lifetime was concerned with the timely working out of His ministry and has very little to do with you or me.” Will there be times in which the Spirit moves us to remain silent about miracles? Perhaps, but I think they’ll be rare. God desires to bring every person within the reach of God’s saving embrace, and testimony is an important component of that.

The other objection is one that I’ll deal with in greater detail later in the book. That would be the question, “But won’t telling about the healing of some make others who aren’t healed feel even worse?” The short answer to that is, “Possibly.” But I believe that a careful shepherding of this ministry can and will eliminate that risk. As I said, though, I’ll get to that in the chapter, “What do we do with failure.”

The second way that testimony operates in healing ministry is that it builds faith. The Gospels are full of stories of those for whom the testimony of others played a hand in their own healing. Think of the woman who’d had a flow of blood for twelve years. She comes to Jesus believing that she need only touch the hem of His garment in order to be healed. How in the world could she have come to believe that if she had not heard it first from others?

Or blind Bartimaeus, begging by the side of the road as Jesus passes. He begins shouting after Him, “Son of David! Have mercy on me!” He becomes so obnoxious that others actually try to silence him. But he keeps on calling after Jesus until He takes notice. When he is called forward Jesus asks what he’d like Him to do for him. The mercy that Bartimaeus requests? Not money, not protection, healing of his sight. His faith for that request came from somewhere. He must have overheard others talking about Jesus, perhaps even those who were in the crowd walking with Him were speaking to one another about what they’d witnessed. However he heard it, though, Bartimaeus had faith that he could have this same healing. He could never have had it had he not heard it from someone.

There are a couple of stories from my own experience that come to mind as illustrations.

When I was in the school for healing and prophecy at Global Awakening, part of what they had us do was practical experience. We were placed in certain settings and told to go find someone to pray for. This helped us get over the jitters about doing ministry in the marketplace like Jesus did it. One day they took us all to Baltimore and set us in pairs on different blocks in the inner city. My partner Taylor and I were given one block to cover. On this block there was a methadone clinic and a large liquor store, just to give you a sense of the place.

There was a bench on the sidewalk outside the liquor store and on it sat a man with his arm in a sling. Taylor and I thought he might be a possible candidate for healing prayer, so we approached him. I guess it was my turn to speak first, so I got down on one knee and explained that we didn’t believe that God wanted this fellow to live with whatever was

ailing his arm, and asked if we might pray for him. It turned out he'd had a stroke several years before and lost the use of his arm. He was very willing to receive prayer.

Before praying I thought to ask him to squeeze my hand with his stroke-afflicted hand so that we could later test to see if the prayer had done anything. He did, his hand barely moved. So Taylor and I prayed. I did the vocal part and held his arm, Taylor had his hand on my shoulder. Afterward we asked him if he'd felt anything. He hadn't, but I asked him to squeeze my hand again and while it was still weak, he really gripped my hand. I was excited and so was Taylor.

I told the man the story of the blind man that Jesus prayed for twice and asked if we might do the same, see if we got more results the second time. The man agreed and we prayed. After the second time he gripped my hand firmly. Now, this was a big man, so I said, "You know, this is amazing what God's already done, but I bet before the stroke this hand was a lot stronger. One more time?" Grinning, he agreed and we prayed. After that one he fairly crushed my hand with his grip.

We spent some time with this fellow telling him about Jesus' love for him and how it was this love that had really healed him, not us, and we went on our way, really excited. Taylor told me as we walked that while I prayed he had actually watched the muscles in the man's arm grow, and that I should pray especially for people with strokes and brain maladies. I have ever since.

That isn't the end of that story, though. This experience gave me greater faith for one that happened only months later in my congregation. One Saturday I received a call from one of my parishioners. One of my altar guild members had been taken to the ER with a mild stroke. She'd lost the use of her hand, discovering it when she couldn't write anything in the altar guild log book. She would try and the hand would just flop over to its back like a fish.

I hurried to the ER with considerable faith that she would write her name before I left. My previous experience filled me with determination. When I arrived, they hadn't yet treated her. (Why, when strokes are so time sensitive, I'll never know.) But I got to her cubicle shortly after she did and told her my story about the man in Baltimore and what Taylor had told me and asked if I might pray for her. She agreed and we prayed. I had a pen, but there was nothing to write on so we could check to see if there were results. I ran around and finally found one of those tiny boxes of tissues they have so she could try to write on the bottom. After the first try her hand just flopped over, so I asked to try again. Still no improvement.

It took more than three attempts, but my own testimony gave us both faith to keep at it. After several tries she held the pen, placed it on the back of the tissue box, and wrote her name. I'm pretty sure we were both in tears. It was the power of testimony that facilitated that healing.

My determination to pray for people with brain injuries of one sort or another also led me pray for a surgeon in my congregation who had Parkinson's. He had obviously lost his ability to practice, and I hoped that it might be restored to him. In addition to my own experience, I knew a testimony of Randy Clark's in which he'd prayed for a woman with Parkinson's and seen her completely healed. She went from being unable to walk without

assistance to walking alone to the conference's piano and playing for the first time in years. I knew my parishioner could be healed too.

He was a faithful member, there on almost every Sunday, and a man of considerable faith. We prayed together after church every single time I saw him in church with no visible improvement. This went on for years. It required a lot to come to each new session of prayer with the real expectation that this would be the day that we saw his Parkinson's resolve when it did not, week after week after week.

Then the time came that I retired and prepared to move home to North Carolina. On my last Sunday with my folks I prayed for him again. I was in tears and I told him how sorry I was that we hadn't seen him healed. He took me kindly by the shoulders and looked into my eyes. "But Father Krantz," he said, "haven't you realized that over the last ten years my Parkinson's hasn't advanced at all?" I hadn't. He embraced me and thanked me for continuing to pray for him all that time.

I don't know why he wasn't healed, and it still breaks my heart, but I'm pretty sure that if I hadn't had my own and Randy's testimony to encourage me, I wouldn't have persisted the way I did.

Sometimes testimony seems to work on its own. Randy Clark once had a man at one of his healing missions come up to give testimony. The man had come with low expectations, but having heard someone else testify to their healing of the same malady that afflicted him, chose to believe it for himself. (He was suffering with "long covid.") He never went to have anyone pray for him, he just believed. Then he tested what he believed and found that the symptoms that he'd suffered with for months and months were completely gone. As I said in the paragraphs above, testimony releases Kingdom power, creates Kingdom space in which God's healing can more easily operate. It certainly did in this case.

For this reason, if I have someone before me requesting prayer for something I've seen healed, either through my prayer or something I've witnessed personally, I usually recount those past experiences before praying. I want this person to know that God has done this before, right in front of me, and that we can rightly expect to see the same happen again.

As I think I showed above, testimony doesn't just work in the one for whom we're praying, but also in the one doing the praying. In the section above on faith I acknowledged that faith plays a major role in healing (while also insisting that it wasn't a requirement). Paul says of faith that it "comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Once again, we are confronted with the power of word(s) to create, in this case, faith. Of course, not everyone who hears will believe, but when we're dealing with people seeking/needing healing, they are far more open to the testimony's ability to build faith in them.

So, retelling those stories doesn't just work in the heart of the person I'm speaking to. It works in my heart too. I don't always come to the act of praying for someone with my greatest faith, my greatest expectation that we'll see miraculous results. Hearing someone else's testimony helps there, but so does remembering my own. So even though I may remember it, I also recount it. Saying it out loud somehow makes it more real, grants those words greater power to stir me to greater faith while I pray.

Before I leave the topic of Testimony (which is probably too long already) I would like to point out that we in liturgical churches rely on its power routinely. Standing at the altar, the minister of the sacrament recalls Jesus' instruction to "Do this in remembrance of me," as we consecrate the bread and the wine. This "remembrance" has a fancy liturgical name, "anamnesis." It means "call again to mind." It means much, much more than simply "remember." Anamnesis calls a past event to mind in a way that makes it completely present in the moment. We become those seated at table with Jesus.

This is the way that the retelling of the Red Sea story functions for our Jewish siblings at the Feast of the Passover. Those seated at the table and hearing the story become a part of the story, not just hearers. The retelling of a story about God's miraculous work makes that miraculous power present in a way I'll never understand, but it happens nonetheless. Testimony matters.

Unforgiveness

Having devoted a fair portion to testimony that helps, I will shift gears briefly to another hindrance to healing, unforgiveness. As with any other obstacle it is far from insurmountable, but at times it can be a barrier to healing.

This really harkens back to the way that sin can get in the way. Holding on to unforgiveness means holding on to a belief that there are some sins that are not covered by the blood of Christ. Clinging to our anger can (not must, but can) close our hearts to the power of the Gospel to set things right, to heal our bodies as much as it does our spirits. It is less an opportunity for the enemy's whispers than it is the result of them, but rather than saying we are too low to deserve healing, we have enclosed ourselves behind a wall of righteous anger, setting ourselves too high.

"Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." The link between the two is unbreakable. And praying as those who stand in need of forgiveness sets us in the proper stance before God, humble and in constant need of grace. This is the place in which healing seems to operate most effectively.

I will add this. Unforgiveness seems to be a barrier I encounter far more often when praying for people *within* the church than without. Randy Clark once said in one of our classes that it seems far easier to "get healing" outside the church than inside it. Sometimes I wonder if this is part of the reason. People who haven't heard much of the Gospel before may be less likely to get tangled up with the question of who is worthy, whether or not they are worthy to receive healing and therefore are more open to it.

Sometimes though, when you pray for someone and nothing is happening, you may receive a word, a sense that they're holding on to this kind of righteous anger, this unforgiveness. It requires great care to bring it up, lest we blame them for our lack of ability to bring healing (remember that Jesus never had to ask anyone to forgive in order to be healed), but it is sometimes worth asking, "Could there be any old anger that you're holding on to? Sometimes I find that this complicates things when I pray for people. Is there someone you're having trouble forgiving?"

I'll be honest here. I have rarely felt moved to ask anything like that, but when it happens, I do believe that God has brought us together more for the healing of their heart than their disease or injury. The tears that accompany the long-withheld forgiveness are more healing than anything I can do. And the physical healing sometimes follows.

I don't think that you'll encounter this block often. Some folks I know who pray for healing seem to me to turn to this too quickly when their prayers don't yield results. I understand that. We all want to find some reason other than our own lack for our failures. But don't be one of those who falls back on this too easily.

Worship

I'd like to close this chapter with a mention of one thing that really seems to help, help me at least, and that's worship. I've gone out on the streets and prayed for people cold, and sometimes it bore fruit. But there is something about praying for healing in the context of really powerful worship (or right afterwards) that makes it all flow so much more easily. The faith is right there, the sense of God's presence is empowering, the courage to risk is easier to come by. I can summon some of all those benefits by just listening to worship music that means a lot to me. That might be something you can adopt, too, whether it's Gregorian Chant or contemporary worship music.

When that's not available to you, time in prayer before you begin is still important. Not petition, like, "God, please equip me for what I'm about to do," but adoration and thanksgiving for what God has already done, what God has already entrusted to your care. Focusing on God's goodness, God's good will for you and everyone you're going to pray for that day is a great way to prepare yourself to be a healer for others.

Chapter Five - The Five Step Method

In the preceding chapters I have tried to lay out the kind of foundation for healing prayer that I wish I'd had when I first came to this ministry. It is a bit of this and a bit of that from different ministries with which I've been affiliated to one degree or another over my lifetime. I hope that those chapters will encourage you to approach the method I'll outline below with some real excitement about what God has empowered you to do.

The five steps outlined below are heavily based on the model taught in the Vineyard Movement, but they are not identical. They combine a couple of steps into one and add a step that I learned while studying at Global Awakening. Randy Clark was himself set on his path of raising up other healers by Vineyard and especially John Wimber. I don't know that the church will ever understand how deeply indebted it is to John for decentralizing healing ministry and opening the doors to all of us in the pews.

Still, the Vineyard's model is missing something that I think is important, and it makes two steps of something that feels like one to me, so I'm offering my version here. The Five Steps as I see them are:

- Introduction
- Assessment
- Prayer for the recipient
- Second Assessment
- Closing encouragement

1. Introduction

Healing doesn't often happen anonymously. It springs from relationship. Not just relationship between the one praying and God, but also between the people involved. The people before you are not just diseases or injuries to be healed. They are beloved children of the Most High God and they deserve to be known, so take some time to get to know them. Let them know you. Introduce yourself and invite them to tell you something about themselves as well. Treat them as whole persons. See them as the healed and restored persons they already are in God's eyes and share something of yourself with them so that it doesn't feel like a one-way street.

Being honest, when I've been called upon to lead a healing service and I've had scores of people to pray for, I haven't always given this step the time I would have liked, and I can definitely see how the encounter suffered as a result. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, one thing that every person we pray for should be able to count on is going away knowing they were loved. Not everyone will experience miraculous healing, but they will be bathed in God's love before they walk away. It is very difficult for that to happen when we don't know them at all.

So take time to get to know the person you're praying for before you tackle the presenting issue.

2. Assessment

This is the step that the Vineyard divides into two parts, but it feels like one part to me. This is where you work with the person in front of you to figure out what you're praying for and how you're to pray.

It begins with asking them why they've come for prayer. What hurts? What is afflicting them? You also need to know how long it's been troubling them. When did this begin? It is often helpful to ask what was going on in their lives when this ailment began or the injury happened. That question may or may not be useful, though.

Once you've established the simple issue that brought them for prayer, take time to pray, to listen to the Spirit. You may receive a sense that there is something lying behind the presenting issue that God wants you to address as well. That is when questions like, "Was there anything going on in your life when this all began?" may be helpful. Or you might be led to suggest, "I think God is asking me to pray for something else as well. Is there anything else that you'd like prayer for?" Do not pry. If they say there isn't anything more, pray for what you've been asked to pray for.

Once you've established what you're praying for you'll know what sort of prayer to use. That is why I combine these two steps from the Vineyard into one. The second part flows seamlessly from the first.

If someone has come to you with a broken bone that happened while roller skating, the answer is pretty simple. You pray the *prayer of authority*. In the Name of Jesus you command the bone to align itself with God's good, loving will for the person in front of you and be healed. You command pain to depart, in Jesus' Name. If they are suffering with cancer, you command the cancer to leave, to melt away, to vanish, whatever imagery works for you, and you command it in Jesus' Name. This will be the prayer you pray in the great majority of cases.

My experience is that too many prayer ministers try to delve too deeply and too rapidly for deeper spiritual issues. While Jesus did model this discernment for us (He declared forgiveness for the paralytic before telling him to take up his pallet and walk) it was a rare thing and probably chosen for that moment for a variety of reasons. Don't assume that you'll find deeper issues beneath most of the simple complaints that people bring to you. Even when there are more complex issues healing is a first step to addressing them, not the reward for bringing them up. Someone who has been touched by God's love through healing is going to have much more courage to face the harder things, and probably in a setting where there is more time and relationship.

Even so, you may on rare occasion find yourself called not to pray with authority, but to pray a *prayer of declaration*. You may discover as you listen to God before praying yourself that God is already about the healing the person requests. In this case, your job is not to command but to speak what God is already doing into the situation. "Cathy, as I was listening just now, I heard God saying that God is (or use whatever pronoun works for you) already healing this sprain! It's already happening!"

Another kind of a prayer of declaration is one where you're called to speak what God is doing or has done with regard to a deeper issue, without ever drawing it out. We do this to

save the dignity of the person before us while still freeing them from the inner bondage that may hold them. Here is an example from my own ministry.

At the conclusion of a conference, at the end of the final worship service, I was asked to go and pray for a man who knelt at the altar rail. He was shaking and nearly rigid, his face a rictus of pain. I knelt beside him and put my hand on his shoulder and just prayed for a while, asking God what to pray. God gave me a word about this man, that the pain I saw manifest in him resulted from a deeper pain, his addiction to pornography. I remembered then what I'd learned from Bob Hazlett (a prophet and one of my teachers at Global Awakening) about prophecy. When we perceive something broken we don't point to the brokenness, we speak the opposite into the life of the person before us. I knew then what God wanted said to this man. "You are clean," was all I said, because he *was* clean, washed by the Blood of Jesus. His shaking became sobs of release and the tension went out of him, the pain in his face melted away. I repeated that several times, but I never named the issue that shamed him. Maybe he knew that I knew, but for sure he knew that God knew, and God saw him as redeemed in the Son. He was freed from at least some of his shame, and I hope he was enabled to seek continuing support in his new freedom. I wish now that I'd had the wisdom to suggest that continuing support in the moment, without being specific, but I didn't.

Another sort of prayer that we may be led to is simple *intercession*. You may find yourself asking God to intervene rather than praying directly for the healing that is needed. This sort of prayer usually winds up in a later part of the cycle of assessment for me. I don't see Jesus doing this in the Bible, and I believe that we're all empowered to pray as He did, but sometimes I'm just stumped, and I don't know what to pray. In those cases, I will turn to intercession.

3. Prayer for the recipient

Once you've identified the issue you're praying for and the kind of prayer you're called to offer, it's time to get to work. Try not to get too hung up on using just the right words. I can't tell you how many times I've stumbled my way through a prayer only to find that something wonderful happened. We're not here to impress the people we're praying for with our elocution, we're here to see them set free from pain and suffering.

Before you begin, though, there are a couple of things it's good to ask. First, do *not* put your hands on anyone, anywhere, without asking permission. I like to put my hands where the pain is, but some people just aren't comfortable with that. Some locations on the body are just too sensitive for us to touch, too. If they don't want to be touched, you can allow your hands to hover over the place. If they don't mind being touched, but the location is too sensitive, put your hand on their shoulder or head. Someplace safe. There is another way to approach touching. If the location makes you or them uncomfortable, you can ask them to put their hand on the spot and then put your hand on the back of their hand. This can work, but if there are some places I won't even ask them to do that.

Now that you've figured out if and/or how you can touch them, ask them to pay attention to and then report anything they feel while you pray. They may feel heat or

tingling, chills or lightness, any number of things. The reason for asking them to tell you what they're feeling is simple. It helps build faith when you and they know something is "happening." Many times they don't notice anything at all until they check it out (Second Assessment) but sometimes they do, and it can really accelerate the healing if you both know about it.

As you pray, pay attention also to anything you feel or hear or sense from the Lord. You may feel nudged to shift the prayer one way or another, or simply to give thanks for whatever you're sensing and cry out for "more!"

Whether it is you or they who sense something, It is always good to give thanks right away for it and ask for "more." Placing ourselves in a position of gratitude makes us more open to the Spirit and that makes it easier for healing to flow in and through us. I always begin my prayer with thanksgiving as well, thanks for God's love for us, especially for the person I'm praying for, thanks for the Blood that Jesus shed that makes us worthy to pray as we pray, thanks for God's good will for the one standing before me.

Only then do I launch into the prayer of command, or declaration, or petition/intercession. I prefer to close with thanks too, bookending the prayer for effect with worship. This reminds me that it is not my worthiness or ability that is at work here. It empties me of any pride and with the loss of pride, fear strangely melts away, too.

It doesn't really matter how long I pray. Sometimes I feel moved to carry on for a while. Sometimes it doesn't seem to take long at all. I don't recommend "piling up words" for the sake of sounding holy or competent. Pray until you feel done, then stop.

4. Second Assessment

This second assessment is probably the step that I see overlooked most often. Once we've finished with the prayer it is vitally important to check and see if anything has happened. Most of the time the answer will be "no" or "not really," but part of being a healing minister is having the courage to face disappointment. I think that's probably what drives most people out of this kind of ministry, the lack of immediate results. If it doesn't drive us out of praying for healing, it causes us to pray with greater timidity, less expectation. We slowly slide back into prayer that has little power to stir faith because it has none of its own.

But if you're going to pray for people for healing, the fourth step is to ask, "Did you feel anything?" We asked before we started that they interrupt you if they did, but my experience is that many people are reluctant to interrupt us if they do, so ask again, "Did you notice anything?" They may say no, but even so we then ask, "Would you check it out? Try to do something you couldn't do before?" or, "Would you do the thing that hurt, and see if the pain is any different?" Again the answer will often be, "I don't feel any change," or "Maybe a little, but not much." That's hard to hear, but trust me, it's harder for them to say. If you've done your job in a way that makes them know how much you love them in Jesus and how much you believe that Jesus loves them as well, then they usually want to tell you something is better. There have been times, many times, when I heard, "You know, I do think it hurts less," and I thought, "Oh, they're just saying that to make me feel

better.” I’ve been heard too often to respond, “Really? Are you sure?” in my own surprise. Not a great thing, but I want you to understand how difficult it is for them to say nothing has happened. It is.

We do this because we want God to get the glory here. We want to know if healing has happened so that we can give thanks and praise to God for the healing that has occurred. In this time of joy and gratitude our own faith is built up along with the one who was healed. We acquire a new testimony to recite to ourselves and others the next time we pray. If there are others gathered at the same meeting, their faith is increased and the likelihood that we’ll see more healings is increased with it.

This is a step that Randy Clark insisted on when I went to his school. Those are the reasons he gave. I will add one more. Part of our task as healers is to enter every encounter expecting to see miracles. Much of the time we don’t, but the person we’re praying for needs to be convinced that this time we will. When we ask them to “check it out” and see what has changed, they become even more convinced of our real expectation. This doesn’t just increase their faith for healing, it increases their faith that we trust absolutely in the Love that Heals. They may not go away healed, but they will go away loved.

Before we move on to step five we will often find ourselves cycling back to step three, then four again. If your prayer doesn’t yield results the first time, pray again. When nothing happens, I often find myself saying, “Well, even Jesus had to pray for one guy more than once (Mark 8, the blind man) so I’m not giving up after only one try!” Sometimes when there is some slight improvement I say the same thing and go back at it. Like the man I mentioned in chapter two for whom we prayed three times, each time there’s improvement, there is also more faith, and many times then there is increased healing.

One Sunday after church I went out onto the streets of Westbury with a parishioner to look for folks to pray for. (I would not go out like this alone, but I’ll get to the importance of “twos” later.) We walked down Post Avenue to a lovely plaza that the village had made in the place of a decrepit old gas station. It was a chilly day, but there were several men out there enjoying the bright sunshine.

We approached the man closest to us whose name turned out to be Billy, and introduced ourselves. We explained that we had just come from church and were looking for folks who might need prayer. We believed that God did not want anyone to suffer, and that we also believed that God wanted us to try to bring healing. Did he have any sickness, any pain we could pray for?

Billy nodded rather sadly, in a sort of resigned fashion. “Yes, I have cancer in the bone,” he said (He was Latino). He poked at his chest, indicating that the cancer was in his ribs. I knew that bone cancer could be incredibly painful, so when I asked how much it hurt he nodded again and said. “Very much pain.” I told him again how beloved I thought he was to his Father in Heaven, and how I didn’t think that God wanted him to have this cancer, this pain. I asked again if we might pray for him. He said we could.

With his permission I laid a hand on his shoulder. My parishioner, a woman, put her hand on my shoulder and we prayed. We prayed fervently. Then I asked him if he’d felt

anything. “No.” Was the pain any different?” I stretched his arms up and then prodded his ribs. “A little. Maybe.” I did my spiel about the blind man who saw people as trees walking and asked if we could pray again. “Okay.” (Clearly, he did not have much faith for healing but there seemed to be a wee bit of hope.) We prayed again and asked him to check the pain again.

He stretched his arms to the sky and his eyes opened in wonder. Continuing to look at me he started to prod his ribs and his eyes seemed to get even bigger. I asked him if the pain was better. He nodded. “If your pain was at 10 before, what number would it be now?”

“Zero. I have no pain.” He sounded stunned. I was stunned. So was my prayer partner. We sat with him for a few more minutes giving thanks and reminding him that it was the love that Jesus had for him that brought his relief. I didn’t want to go, but there were other men to talk to on the plaza and my faith was sky high, so we finally went off to speak to others.

Only one other man allowed us to pray for him. His shoulder was giving him pain and we prayed for him. Even with repeated prayer he only saw moderate improvement which brought me back to earth a little until we got up to leave the plaza. I looked back at Billy and he was still stretching his arms into the air and then pressing his fingers into his ribs and shaking his head in wonder. And wiping tears from his eyes with both hands.

I never saw Billy again. I don’t know if his cancer was really healed, though we did ask him to see his doctor to have it checked. I do know his pain was relieved, completely. And I know that he was touched by the love of God in that plaza that day through the willingness of two strangers to look like fools and try to see him healed. If I ever think of giving up healing ministry, Billy reminds me that all the disappointment and frustration is worth it for the times that God acts so wonderfully.

But none of that would have happened if I’d been satisfied with, “Maybe, a little,” or if I hadn’t asked at all. So ask. Pray, ask, repeat as needed.

5. Closing Encouragement

When you sense that you’ve finished with the prayer and reassessment cycle, you’re not quite done. It is important to offer thanks to God, or Jesus. I usually offer thanks for being allowed to be a part of God’s ministry to that person. “I thank you that in your great love for Jerry, you have brought us together so that I could be Your hands in this moment. I thank you for the Blood of your Son that makes this unworthy vessel worthy and that protects us against all assaults of the evil one.” Something like that. Personally, I believe in the protective power of the Blood of Jesus, so I usually pray that over then before we leave one another.

Then it’s important to ask the person you’ve prayed for if they have any Christian community to whom they can go to reinforce what God has begun in that moment. This isn’t trying to get them into church, certainly not your church (unless they ask), but rather trying to make sure they aren’t left alone with what has happened to them. When God

intervenes in someone's life in this miraculous way it can be kind of earth-shaking. They may need someone to help them process it.

If they haven't seen any immediate healing, they may also need to deal with some disappointment. They will often try to soften your own disappointment by saying "Well, maybe it'll happen later." Be gracious when they show concern for you. Also, Randy Clark told us in class that sometimes it really does take 24-36 hours for prayer to manifest fully. Especially in the cases where there's been some healing, but not complete, I do ask them to continue to pray for themselves, to cry out to God for "more." Just that simply. Give thanks for what you have received and ask for more as any beloved child might ask a loving parent.

Finally, if you have seen significant improvement in some way, encourage them to have it checked out by their doctor. Always instruct them to continue whatever medications they've been taking until the doctor confirms it. Some folks seem to think this shows a lack of faith. It doesn't. It shows responsibility. I had a parishioner once with type one diabetes. He came to me for prayer because his A1C was somewhere north of 11 (normal is usually under 6). He told me at the time he felt something shift and we were both elated, but I was careful to remind him that he shouldn't change anything he was doing until his doctor checked him. When he went to the doctor the next week it was six point something. He was able to cut way back on his medicine, but that wouldn't have been safe without the doctor's direction.

Chapter Six - What Do We Do with Failure?

Not everyone we pray for will be immediately, miraculously healed. Not even half of them. I don't keep count of my own success/failure ratio, but as I said in an earlier chapter, I don't think my batting average would get me into the major leagues.

Randy Clark, the most important of my mentors/teachers in healing ministry, does regular conferences with Bill Johnson where they teach others to pray for healing. In those conferences he has a two-part teaching he calls "The Thrill of Victory, the Agony of Defeat." (Yes, he credits the old show, the Wide World of Sports.) In "The Thrill of Victory" he tells stories about healings he's seen that seem like they shouldn't have happened. Someone was healed who had no faith for it. Someone was healed when Randy had no faith for it. Someone else was healed who was living in notorious sin, etc. He uses those examples to remind the listeners that we can't make rules out of things that help or hinder. God will heal in spite of anything.

Then he goes on to teach "The Agony of Defeat." He believes this message to be the most important he ever teaches. In it he recounts deeply painful stories of people with great faith, sometimes children, who were not healed. He uses his own failures to equip others to face theirs. It was in this context that I heard him say that he thinks healing ministry is the closest thing we have in the West to taking up Jesus' Cross daily.

You and I, as people committed to healing prayer, will have to deal with a lot of failure. Even the greatest healers of all time had to deal with that. So it's important for us to acknowledge that reality and deal with it. It isn't only about us and the effect of our failure on us, either. We need to be prepared to deal with the disappointment of those who come to us and go away without seeing results.

Every time I pray for someone I want to go into it expecting that this will be the time we see a miracle. That's difficult when most of the time I do not. But that doesn't excuse me from summoning the faith to believe that the next person I pray for will see the miracle they need. I know that "failure" is a strong word, but I don't want to whitewash it. That's what it is. If I had the faith of Jesus, every person I prayed for would be healed. But I don't and so they aren't.

Too many people in healing ministry I've known (not that many, but one is too many) start to make excuses for failure that are both false and damaging. They blame it on the person prayed for, lack of faith, sin, anything to shift the responsibility. Sometimes they try to write it off to "God's timing." "It just isn't the time for you to be healed today," or "Perhaps God intends for someone else to do this healing instead of me."

Blaming it on the person you're praying for isn't just inaccurate, it's cruel. Jesus healed everyone He prayed for, regardless of their sin or lack of faith. Almost no one will come to you for prayer unburdened by at least a little of one or both. Healing in spite of these things is almost the point. God saves *before* we believe, in order that we might believe better.

Blaming it on "timing" makes God a monster. It is the same as saying that God wants the person in front of you to continue suffering to satisfy some other purpose. God may

use my failure to accomplish something but doesn't desire it. So don't send the person you're praying for away thinking that God is that callous.

When you don't see results, take responsibility. It's hard, but it's the only truth. Instead of trying to explain it away, use your failures to make you more humble, to increase your reliance on God, to help you cry out with greater passion, "I can't do this without You, God!" I have found that this stance before God opens me to greater levels of God's love for the people I pray for, which increases my faith that this will be the time we see miracles. That is where my faith comes from, my conviction that God loves the person before me more than I can imagine. My failure becomes the gateway to greater faith.

Taking responsibility for your own failure in prayer isn't just better theologically for you, it is also important for the person seeking prayer. It takes a good deal of courage for most folks to step forward and ask for prayer, even more to ask for it expecting results, allowing for disappointment. When they don't see immediate healing, they will look for reasons that will lighten that disappointment. Even if they don't give voice to them, they will likely go away thinking there was something wrong with them that led to the lack of results.

When I pray for someone and they aren't healed, I almost always say something afterwards like, "I'm sorry I couldn't bring the healing you needed." Usually, at that point they will say something like, "Oh, it's okay, it wasn't you, but thanks for trying." It is at that moment that I think it's very important to add, "Oh, of course it was me. If I had the faith that Jesus had, everyone I prayed for would be healed, but I don't. I know that." This statement carries a great deal of meaning beyond the mere words. It says, "God wants you healed, I just wasn't an adequate instrument today." It says, "This isn't about anything wrong with you." It says, "I love you and I love God enough to risk embarrassing myself for the sake of your healing." Those are all good thoughts to send away with the person who doesn't receive healing.

In one meeting I attended, Larry Randolph was teaching about the gift of the Spirit called prophecy, and how he understands it. (Larry, a prophet from Arkansas and one of the humblest men I have ever met, had once prophesied powerfully over me in a smaller meeting years earlier.) He recognized how much an accurate prophecy could change the course of a person's life when they realize that God does see and know and love them deeply, and that God wants to release a dream over their life to empower it, to create a future and a hope. And Larry said this, "I don't always get it right. And it's painful and embarrassing when I get it wrong. But I'll tell you this. The times that I get it right make all the times I get it wrong worth it. And knowing that I have the ability to help people that way, I don't think I have permission not to try." Even when I fail at healing I don't think I have permission not to try, either.

I remember a time that my parish and I put up a tent in the local flea market, offering healing prayer. We didn't have a lot of people coming to the tent for prayer, so I started looking around for people to invite in. I saw a man walking with his wife. He had an elastic brace on his knee. I worked up the courage to go and let him know what we were doing, that we believed in healing and that God wanted that healing for everyone, and asked if we might pray for him. He agreed, though not too enthusiastically. We prayed for him and got

no real results. I think we tried twice more before he grew discouraged and asked that we stop. I told him I was sorry we hadn't been able to bring him relief from his pain. He said, "I am too. But maybe you could pray for my wife."

Now, my threshold of faith at that moment was not high. Hers was non-existent. She'd seen us try time and again with no results and was sure it was a waste of time, but her husband persisted. She'd fallen down some stairs earlier in the week and her ankle was giving her fits. She finally relented and sat in the "prayer chair" and I knelt and (with her permission) put my hands on her ankle. With my partners putting hands on my shoulders I prayed and *bam*. Heat in my hands, she felt tingling, and when I asked her to test it, the pain was gone. Completely gone. We celebrated and gave thanks for the healing and they went on their way.

I am convinced that if we had not taken responsibility for the husband's disappointment, she never would have allowed us to pray. Without our humility, I don't think he'd even have suggested that she should allow us to pray. Humility changes everything.

You and I will fail like we did with the husband. But if we stay humble and persistent, every once in a while, we'll see an ankle healed or a stroke ravaged limb restored or bone cancer pain vanish, and it will make all the failures worth it. It will also raise the question, "If I can do this even one time in ten, how do I not try?"

Chapter Seven - Staying on the Rails

Healing Ministry can be difficult and/or messy because Holy Spirit empowered ministries are often difficult and/or messy. Paul struggled with the congregation in Corinth because they were too enamored of their spiritual gifts and the church has had difficulties with its Spirit-led members ever since. We will not create problems for the leaders of our congregations. We will not add to their burdens. There are three basic elements that I think we can build into our lives as people committed to Healing Ministry that will assist us in this commitment.

1. Being under authority and accountable.

We will recognize that we are under the pastoral and parochial authority of any person leading a congregation in which we minister. We may have a vision for our ministry within the congregation, but that vision is to be subject to the guidance of the rector/pastor. What we do must fit within the rector's/pastor's vision, not run alongside it or compete with it. There can be only one guiding vision for a congregation and that must come from the leader and leadership group.

Healing ministry must not ever be allowed to cause division. It must not draw undue attention to itself. Its purpose is to manifest the love of God and to draw attention to Jesus, not the healers. It is small wonder that in the early chapters of Mark Jesus routinely commands those He heals to silence. As He had come to point people to the Father, so we are pointing others to Jesus.

This also means that we will meet regularly with the leadership of the congregation to "check in" and receive input and guidance. It does not matter if you think the person appointed to lead you is sufficiently "Spirit-led." They have been appointed by God and we will be obedient.

Some people, excited by the new ministry of Healing in which they find themselves, will be disappointed if their rector/pastor does not share their enthusiasm. This is not a cause to go church shopping. Do not go off trying to find a congregation that supports "your" vision. God has you in that place for a reason. Stay put and submit to those in authority over you.

The practices of the Benedictines speak loudly in this instance. I am no monastic, but there is a principle in the Benedictine rule called "stability." My understanding of it is that those committed to this rule do not easily leave the company in which they find themselves. Instead, they allow the conflicts, mild or great, to shape them, humble them, make them more Christlike. We who are to be local healers will adopt the same principle.

We will also be accountable to the leadership and to each other within the congregation in which we find ourselves. Our behavior will be subject to the scrutiny of others, our successes, our failures. We will not isolate ourselves so as to "keep our faith untainted by the world." When others share criticisms, we will listen carefully and seek to discern what we can do better.

If our ministry becomes just another divisive element in the life of the Church, then we have failed. It may attract some of those who are disenchanted with the Church as they find it, but we will root out that sentiment and recognize the gift that we have been given in our religious community.

This does not mean that we may not seek support and guidance outside the congregation as well. Especially given how unfamiliar large segments of the church are with spiritual gifts like healing, the kind of support this ministry requires may be difficult to find locally. There may be meetings in which we can find encouragement and discernment. These meetings will not compete with the lives of local congregations. They exist to help resource them. Healing ministers in these settings will be especially careful to hold each other accountable to the authority under which they operate, but more, they will provide support. And that brings me to the second element.

2. We will meet together in some form to encourage and continue to form one another.

It may be that you find yourself in a congregation that includes seven or eight others who have the same desire to see healing that you do. If you want to be active in healing ministry and survive the inevitable disappointment, you will meet regularly (at least monthly) to worship, learn, share testimonies and encourage one another.

At certain points in your ministry you may find yourself riding a wave of positive results that make these meetings feel unnecessary. Meetings may not strengthen *your* faith or resolve, but your presence and testimony will do that for others. And when you crash, others will be there to lift you up as well.

Such meetings may be difficult to organize physically. While I am “old school” enough to prefer (strongly) in-person gatherings, I also know that platforms like Zoom have served us very well through and after the Pandemic. As the Rapha-El community grows, these meetings are likely to have an important place in the process.

3. We will, whenever possible, pray in partnership with others.

Jesus sent His disciples out two by two. When the school in Mechanicsburg sent us out onto the streets of Baltimore to pray for people, they sent us in pairs. As I see it, there may be three or more reasons for this.

First, it helps us keep in mind that this is not about us. We do what we do within the embrace of community. It is far less likely that we will fall victim to the whispers of the enemy that we are somehow “special” if we are (almost) always praying in concert with others. When we went out in pairs from the school at Global Awakening, we took turns being the one who gave voice to the prayers, alternately praying or supporting in prayer.

Yes, there have been times when I was called to pray for folks when I was the only one there. Part of that was due to my pastoral responsibility, though. When I went out seeking people to pray for, I never went out unless someone went with me. They were, at first,

reluctant to be the one doing the praying, but that gradually changed as they joined me and saw God at work.

This leads into the second possible reason. Or maybe it's still part of the first. Praying in pairs is a good way of teaching others to pray with boldness and expectation. I find it good to pair those who have experience in healing ministry with those who have less. As newcomers witness God working through them and their partners, their faith and confidence grows and they become more and more willing to take the risk of praying aloud themselves. I think of all the healings the Twelve witnessed before Jesus sent them out.

Finally, being paired with someone gives us greater courage. Just not being alone makes the weight of praying for someone less as it is spread across more than one set of shoulders. Each encourages the other(s), and we accomplish more for the Kingdom.

A final thought on accountability.

While this consideration will ultimately fall to the discernment of each diocesan or similar unit, I strongly recommend that anyone involved in healing ministry be required to take whatever Safe Church courses are expected of other lay ministers. There is something deeply personal about praying for other people. It requires vulnerability on the part of all participants, and this can open the door to unhealthy behaviors. This is another reason that anyone involved should also be expected to participate regularly in group discussion and supervision. These are not absolute failsafes against abuse, but we owe it to our congregations to do the best that we can.

Appendix - How I Read the Bible and How I Got Here

One of the reasons I wrote *Healing for the Rest of Us* is that I couldn't find good instructional material on healing that wasn't written by people whose theology isn't much more exclusive than mine. I want to help equip people for healing whose understanding of God is more kaleidoscopic than most or all my teachers' have been. (I'll admit that some of those teachers have been notably silent on some hot-button issues. They may be more inclusive in private than many of their students.) I find myself straddling two worlds and I've spent a lot of time trying to figure out if I can sustain this position. As a result, I don't read the Bible quite the same way as anybody else I know. I value, I treasure every single word of it, even the ones that make me weep or squirm. But at the same time, I don't read them as if every word of it reveals something about God to me.

I absolutely love grappling with the text and coming away with some bruises. Sometimes with my hip out of joint. Why? Because every "jot," every "tittle" reveals God's love to me, even when it gets God entirely wrong. But how can that be?

It began a few years before I entered seminary. My wife SaraLouise went before I did, and while she was in school the seminary paid so that seminary spouses could take a lay-education course called Education for Ministry, run by the seminary at the University of the South. During those three years I was either a participant or a facilitator for the on-campus group. I loved it.

I discovered that I had a deep, deep hunger for the Bible. I loved delving into it to find all that it revealed and all that it concealed, too. I gobbled up historical criticism, source criticism, text criticism. The EFM materials were so good that they enabled me to test out of large chunks of the required seminary survey level Scripture courses when I got there.

In seminary I dug deeper. I learned about structural criticism, rhetorical criticism, feminist criticism, post-structural criticism. I was even invited to teach a class to seminar level students on post-structural semiotics. I reached a place in my studies where I had so dismantled any understanding of the Bible that I'd had earlier that I nearly lost my faith. But I still knew that the Scriptures held treasure for me that I needed to unearth.

Then came the day that my church started to split along the line created by the consecration of our first openly gay bishop, Bishop Gene Robinson. I was convinced that we'd done the right thing but I couldn't articulate why in a way that satisfied me. Conservative elements of the church responded to what the Episcopal Church had done with something called the "Windsor Report." In this report they expressed their considerable dismay and asked for something that seemed entirely reasonable to me. They asked that we explain the biblical rationale for consecrating Bishop Robinson. I waited for our response, but nothing came.

It seemed that we had decided that such a response wasn't necessary, that our decision did not have to "square with" Scripture. It felt like we were thumbing our noses as a huge part of the Church. I was upset. Really upset. Not only because it felt rude not to try to explain, but also because I wanted the Bible to mean more than that. I was convinced that if what we were doing was something God wanted, God would have made provision for it in the Scriptures. I was also deeply convinced that we needed to make the attempt to

explain ourselves from the Bible as a sign of our unity with those who disagreed with us. We may read it differently, but we both read it. The Bible could be a place of connection, not disconnection.

I set about to write a biblical response to the Windsor Report. I began by making this commitment to myself. “If I cannot find biblical warrant for the consecration of Bishop Robinson, I will say so.” In the end, with some help from the Holy Spirit, I found that I could make that argument from the Bible, without reservation. Some of you may remember that paper. I published it on my church’s website and it drew immediate attention. Many groups either cited it in their own responses to the Windsor Report or tried to rebut it.

During that time, I became even more convinced that those of us who read the Bible from an inclusive place need to find a way of approaching the text that continues to preach that “mercy triumphs over judgment” but also in a way that does not cast aside inconvenient texts as meaningless. It is that apparent freedom to gloss over hard texts that I think drives our conservative siblings in Christ crazy. I have found a way that works for me, and I hope that it may work for you.

Before outlining my way of reading I must admit that it has not bridged many chasms with my conservative siblings. It turns out that valuing every word of the text doesn’t carry much weight with them unless I value them exactly the same way they do. I had hoped to be able to build bridges, but it seems that the struts get torn away before I can even begin to pave the surface.

Even so, my way of reading also supports much of what I believe and try to do when it comes to healing. Obviously, I believe in miracles. I believe that Jesus did the things that the Gospels tell me He did, which means that I can too, you can too. Of course, there are many things that Jesus did that I’ll never see, but even that truth doesn’t give me an excuse not to try.

When I began to try to give form to my way of reading, to ground it in some authority, the only authority I could find that made sense was the Bible itself. I believe that the Bible not only authorizes the way I read it but commends this method.

There are three passages of Scripture that I turn to when I look to the Bible for guidance on how to read it. The first is probably the one you would first think of. “All Scripture is inspired by God and valuable toward teaching, correction, and toward instruction in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16, my translation.) While Paul speaks here of the texts that he knows as “Scripture,” that is, the Hebrew Scriptures, I still believe in a process of inspiration that includes the whole of the Bible. The processes of editing are no less inspired to me than the writing. I find in the text the hand of the Holy Spirit, guiding the assembly of the books of the canon. Every verse has value (though that value may be quite different from what it appears to be on the surface). (And yes, while I do not believe Paul wrote 1 Timothy, I am persuaded that he did write 2 Timothy.)

This text, then, encourages me to struggle with each word, every book of the Bible, to find the value that is sometimes well hidden in it. But I do not throw any verse away as worthless, no matter how distasteful it may seem. How then do I read it when there are so many verses that seem to show God as violent? Vengeful? Hateful? Exclusive?

I need a hermeneutic, a way of reading that separates what is of God from what is not and then recognizes the value even in those passages that are not about God, that get God wrong.

Once again, the Bible gives me the lens for reading, the sieve through which I pass the words of Scripture to sort them according to what is of God and what is not.

First, in 2 Corinthians Paul speaks of the lens through which he reads “the old covenant.”

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns (back) to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:12–18, ESV)

For Paul, Jesus is the lens that permits us to read the Scriptures with an unveiled mind. He is the key that unlocks all the texts. And lest someone think that I believe that Paul sees Jesus as somehow superceding all that went before Him, I would draw your attention to the word I added to that passage, “back.” When Paul speaks of “turning” he uses the word “*epistrepho*.” This word has the strong connotation of “turning back” or “returning.” For Paul, the Jew, the Pharisee, this way of reading his holy texts is a return, not a turning to something new. What he finds now in his Scriptures has always been there. But reading “through Christ” allows him to read without the veil.

The last text to which I turn comes from Jesus Himself. If ever there were an authorization in Scripture to separate that which is about God from that which is not, it comes to use from the 14th chapter of John.

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? (John 14:8–9, ESV)

Jesus speaks very plainly. “There is nothing in the Father that you have not seen in Me.” Jesus is the “exact imprint” (Heb. 1:3) of God’s nature. Quite simply, if it doesn’t look like Jesus, it doesn’t look like God.

What then am I to do with all of those texts about God that clearly do not look like Jesus? How do I value them alongside the ones that do?

This is how I answer those questions. I believe that all of Scripture is revelatory. But in some portions of the Bible God reveals God’s Self to me and in some portions God reveals

myself to me. When God's commands or actions are in harmony with what Jesus revealed in His life, death, and resurrection, they show me God. When they are not, they show me how I distort God to suit my own purposes or needs. Those verses call me to repentance no less than the calls of the prophets.

Sorting out which is which is not always easy, but I don't think God ever intended to make it simple. I think God likes to be sought, to be pursued. I like to think that this is why Jesus taught in parables rather than in maxims. Proverbs says it this way, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter." (Prov. 25:2) For this reason I don't think I'll ever tire of studying the Bible. It's like playing hide and seek with a loving God, One who is always delighted to be discovered anew.

We who are inclusive read the Bible differently, but we needn't cast off the portions that don't conform to the love we find in Jesus. We can delight in the texts that help us to recognize in ourselves the small "g" gods we have yet to surrender, texts that exist precisely to help us let go.

I have been engaged in healing ministry for more than 20 years. During that time I have been taught and mentored by some incredible, gifted, kind people. But also during that time I often had to remain quiet about my beliefs that the Gospel encompasses all my siblings in Christ, not just the cis-gendered ones. I think that many of my friends knew what my beliefs were. We tacitly agreed not to talk about such things.

A couple of years ago I joined another international group whose focus is healing and that had its origins in the Episcopal Church. I had hopes that this would prove to be the healing ministry that was open to all persons. It was not. I won't name the group here, but its leadership is not Episcopal, or inclusive. While they permit members of the LGBTQ+ community to join, they bar them from any leadership or teaching positions.

I could not remain a part of a ministry that treats my siblings in Christ as second-class members, but I thought I'd exhausted my options. I did not like feeling alone, so I expressed my disappointment on an Episcopal Facebook group. Many of the responses there said, in one way or another, "Well then, start one." I don't know if I'm the right person to do this, but I seem to be the one who wants to see it happen, so I'm trying.

This book is my attempt to provide some basic teaching about healing for Christians who are inclusive, but who also feel drawn to healing ministry. There must be an alternative, and I hope that together we can make one. At this early stage I propose to call it the Rapha-El community. The name means "God who heals." I don't know if it'll keep that name, or look like what I imagine, but I do hope that we can provide folks with an alternative to the groups whose Gospel I find much too small.