

Church of the Open Door White Paper

“Healing...explored and defined”

That God heals is all over the Bible. Believers have called upon Him and are encouraged to call upon Him, when they find themselves and their loved ones in positions where they are under duress because of sickness or disease. God has a heart to heal. But we recognize that we live in an age when the kingdom of God is “already” here, but “not yet” here. Therefore Christians in this life will often experience healing, but they will also experience continual sickness and eventual death. In each case it is God’s sovereign wisdom that decides the outcome. We don’t want to limit the desire of God to heal, or the Spirit’s power, in any way in the life of this church. But we also want to be as Biblically accurate as possible in understanding healing in the Bible. In this paper we will look at the whole of the New Testament to explore and define this wonderful truth.

I. What is Healing?

A) As we observe from the below lexical meanings, “healing” means “to cure and/or restore.” In the scripture, healing can refer to physical and/or spiritual restoration.

LEXICAL MEANING of the greek word translated “heal”:

- “to heal,” [Gr. *iaomai*] is used 20 times of physical treatment. (Matt.8:8,13;15:28; Mk.5:29; Lk.4:18; 5:17; 6:17,19; 7:7; 8:47; 9:2,11,42; 14:4; 17:15; 22:15; Jn.4:47; 5:13; Acts 3:11; 9:34; 10:38; 28:8; Jms.5:16. Luke, the physician, uses this word and related words fifteen times.
- “to heal,” [Gr. *iaomai*] is used 5 times figuratively of “spiritual healing from the disease of sin,” Matt. 13:15; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Heb.12:13; 1 Pet. 2:24. The gift of healing deals with the physical illness rather than one’s spiritual, mental or emotional health. The gift of evangelism focuses on those who are sin sick (Matthew 9:11-13 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?” But when Jesus heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. “But go and learn what this means: ‘I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”) While gifts like exhortation (counseling) and mercy focus on restoring the inner man or the psyche (soul), the gift of healing may also include casting out (exorcism) of demons or unclean spirits that often brought diseases with them.
- “a healing or a cure” [Gr.*iasis*] in Lk.13:32; Acts 4:22;30.

- “a means of healing” [Gr. *iasma*] occurs 3 times of divinely imparted gifts in the churches during apostolic times (1 Cor.12:9,28,30).
- “to care for the sick, to restore to health, to treat, cure, heal” [Gr. *therapeuo*]; we get our English word “therapeutic” from this Greek word. This word occurs 42 times (Matt.4:23,24; 8:7,16; 10:1,8; 12:10,15,22; 14:14; 15:30; 17:16,18; 19:2; 21:14; Mk.1:34; 3:2,10,15; 6:5,13; Lk.4:23,40; 5:15; 6:7,18; 7:21; 8:2,43; 9:1,6; 10:9; 13:14; Jn.5:10; Acts 4:14; 5:16; 8:7; 17:25; 28:9; Rev.13:3,12).
- “ the healing effects of the leaves of the tree of life” [Gr. *therapeia*] Rev.22:2

B) Healing as a ‘sign’.

Healings by Christ and the Apostles also had other significant purposes beyond restoring the health of individuals. One of these purposes was to authenticate the deity of Christ, as well as the ministry of the Apostles. Healing used as authentication is termed as ‘a sign’.

- Mark 16:17,18 suggests this: "These **signs** will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."
- The word “sign” in verse 17 [Gr. *semeion*] emphasizes the significance or purpose behind these unusual occurrences of the supernatural. When the word “sign” is applied to miracles it implies that the deed is an indication of some power or meaning behind it to which the miracle itself is secondary in importance.
- Others have written these words about the word “sign”: 1) “Signs had a spiritual reality behind them, they acknowledged some personal claim of Christ or one of his messengers.” 2) “*semeion* is a sign or distinguishing mark by which something is known” 3) “The signs, however, are not of primary intrinsic importance. The important thing is what did the signs say about Jesus Christ or the messenger of God’s word.” The supernatural ability to lay hands on the sick and see them recover was an attesting miracle to the fact that the new revelation that the Apostles were speaking was from God. This is clearly stated in verse 20 “And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and **confirmed the word by the signs that followed**” cp. Acts 4:22. Christ’s healing ministry served various purposes; all of them primarily contributed to authenticate the person of Jesus as the true Messiah.
- Another significant purpose for healing is that Christ was able to give to those among Him (through healing) a sign or foretaste of the age to come. This age to come would be an age with “no more mourning nor crying nor pain anymore”, Revelation 21-22

It’s interesting that the healing miracles had many purposes: They were performed: 1) to fulfill the messianic prophecy of Isa.53:4 cp. Matt.8:17; 2) So people would know that Christ had authority to forgive sins Matt.9:6 cp. Mk.2:10; Lk.5:24; 3) To provide His messianic credentials for the

imprisoned John Matt.11:2-19 cp. Lk.7:18-23; 4) To fulfill the messianic prophecy in Isa.42:1-4 cp. Matt.12:15-21; 5) That the works of God might be displayed in Christ Jn.9:3; 6) That men might believe that Jesus is Christ Jn.20:30-31; 7) God's authentication of Christ Acts 2:22; 8) To glorify God by delivering the individual from the evil consequences of sin, and releasing the dynamic life of Christ in the individual for further service; and 9) To bring comfort and health to those who are ill.

II. The Healing Ministry of Christ

- By far, the greatest manifestation of miraculous healing in history occurred during the earthly ministry of Christ.
- Christ healed with only a word or touch. Matt. 8:5-13; 9:6, 20-22; 14:35-36; Mark 3:1-5; 5:24-29; Lk. 13:10-13; John 5:1-9
- Also, from these Scriptures we see Jesus healed instantly. Only a few times was it not instantly and that was separated by only a few minutes. His healings were genuine miracles not recoveries over time.
- Jesus healed completely. Lk. 4:39; John 5:9;
- Jesus had all authority and power to heal every/any disease and brokenness (physical and spiritual), and unlike contemporary faith healers, He didn't leave disappointed people in His wake who He tried to heal but couldn't. Lk. 4:40, 6:19.
- Jesus healed *organic* physical diseases and infirmities, not simply "back pain, headaches, sore shoulders." He restored and replaced crippled legs, withered hands, bent spines, blind eyes, deaf ears. Matt. 9:28-30, 11:5, 12:10-13; Lk. 13:10-13; Mark 7:32-37. No infirmity was beyond His power. Matt.4:23
- Jesus healed in response to faith but often He healed those who did not manifest faith. Matt. 8:14-15, 9:32-33, 12:10-13; Mk.7:32-35; 8:22-25; Lk. 14:1-4; 22:50-51; John 5:1-8, 9:1-7. One of the cruelest lies is when people who are not healed are told by "faith healers" that they must be guilty of sin or a lack of faith.
- Jesus raised dead people. Mark 5:22-43; Lk. 7:11-16; John 11:43-44.

SOME OTHER SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

- Matt.8:13 And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was **healed** that very moment.
- Matt.15:28 Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was **healed** at once.
- Lk.6:19 And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and **healing** them all.
- Lk.8:47 When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately **healed**.
- Lk.22:51 But Jesus answered and said, "Stop! No more of this." And He touched his ear and **healed** him.

III. The Healing Ministry of the Apostles

The Apostles also healed as an 'authenticating' sign, but their expression was different than Christ's, in that they were not God, as was Christ. Thus, we find that those who were gifted by Christ to heal, and performed many healings, were not able to heal in all situations.

Matthew 17:14-22

- Acts 3:7 "Instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong..."
- Acts 5:16 "Crowds gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed."
- Acts 10:38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and **healing** all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

IV. The Healing Ministry of the Church

A. Scripture indicates that one of the gifts given to the Church is the gift of healing.

- 1 Cor.12:9 "and to another **gifts of healing** by the one Spirit,"
- 1 Cor.12:28 " then **gifts of healings**,"
- 1 Cor.12:30 "All do not have **gifts of healings**, do they?"
- James 6:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed." Believers are encouraged by God to seek Him for miraculous healing.

B. GIFT DEFINITION:

The Gift of Healing is the spiritual capability to be a channel of God's power to restore people to physical health by direct command or touch. Just as Christ gave a 'foretaste' of His eternal kingdom through healing, so also healing in the Church Age communicates the same wholeness that **all** believers will experience in the New Heaven and New Earth.

C. CHARACTERISTICS and CONCLUSIONS of the gift of healing

- This gift used in the plural ("gifts of healings") indicates the great variety of both the sicknesses healed and the means used in the healings.
- This gift cures diseases **instantaneously** in the name of Jesus. The ability to bring physical supernatural healing in the authority of the name of Jesus Christ. Acts 3:1-10; 5:12-16; 9:32-35; 28:7-10;
- This gift uses a variety of methods or techniques.
- This gift does not depend on the sick person's faith.
- This gift doesn't have to be tested for because it is self-evident. God has always clearly shown who has His power and who does not.
- This gift originally has as its purpose to authenticate the messenger and the new message (revelation) as being from God.

- This gift provides a clear demonstration of the power of the Spirit.
- This gift doesn't account for all healings. James 5:16-18
- This gift brings renewed health to the sick and diseased.
- This gift is the spiritual capability to be a channel of God's power to restore people to health and to hold off death temporarily.
- This gift is the ability to instantaneously restore people to health apart from the use of natural means.
- This gift was to be used to glorify God.
- This gift had a huge purpose during the apostolic era. This is clear from Acts, 2 Cor. 12:12, and Hebrews 2:3-4. Whereas miraculous healings are still a blessing that God bestows on us directly at times, the fact that the gift seemed to not be prevalent and even die out for thousands of years, leads some to believe it is no longer a gift that God chooses to use the way He once did, that is, *by individuals* who are the channel of His healing power. We tend to believe this, but since there is no exact Scripture we can base this on, only the witness of history, we do leave the possibility open that in places and amongst people where an atmosphere of pervasive unbelief persists, and where a situation calls for a power encounter between Christ and the devil, that God can and will use these gifts to authenticate the truth of His Word, and bless those in need of healing.

V. Some issues and things to consider about “healing”:

1. **Confusing the gift of healing with the prayers of faith by a board of elders (James 5:14-18).** James 5:14 teaches that it is the responsibility of the sick church member to call for the elders to come pray over him. There is to be a time of mutual confession because the prayers of righteous men accomplish much (v.16). This time of confession also provides an opportunity to discern whether the sickness was caused by some sin in the sick member's life (cp.1 Cor.11:28-33). The purpose [Gr.hina] for the mutual confession and prayer is to create the possibility that the sick member “may be healed” [Gr. Aorist Passive Subjunctive] by God. The subjunctive mood affirms the objective possibility. It assumes that a verbal idea is not now a fact but may become one. The action is possible, but it depends on certain objective factors. One objective factor is whether it is God's will. James 4:15 says “Instead you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” This verse is in a context dealing with the sin of presumption. It is wrong to expect or demand that God will heal us. Those who possess the gift of healing are a channel of God's healing power to those who are sick but the elders of James 5 make no claim to possess God's power, and merely intercede through prayer believing that God can directly heal the sick person they are visiting.
2. **Craving for miracles to prove God's existence.** We are never told to do this in Scripture. Matthew 12:39,40 says, “But He answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; For just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’”

3. **Confusing instantaneous supernatural healing and physical recovery from illness through physical therapy.** The apostle Paul miraculously healed people but he also administered therapy as a medical missionary (Acts 28:8,9). The word healed in verse 8 is describing a supernatural touch, (Mk.16:17-18) but the word "getting cured" in verse 9 is where we get our English word "therapy. So some people were instantaneously healed by the touch of an Apostle (2 Cor.12:12) but others were cured over time through therapy. It's important to make a distinction between a therapeutic cure over time and the instantaneous nature of the miraculous healings of Christ and the Apostles (Matt.8:3,13,15; 9:6-7,22,29-30; 15:28,30-31; 17:18; 20:34; Mk.3:1-6; 7:33-35; Lk.13:13; Jn.4:53; 5:8-9). All of Jesus' healings occurred instantaneously with only three exceptions. The three miracles that had a time-delay only involved mere minutes and no longer (Mk.8:22-26; Lk.17:11-19; Jn.9:1-7).

4. **Attributing all healings to God as the source.** A number of sign miracles in scripture have a satanic rather than a divine origin (Matt.7:21-23 ; 24:24 ; Mk.13:22; 2 Thess.2:9 ; Rev.13:2-4,11-14) Many people are experiencing occultic healings from new age crystals, witchdoctors and Buddhist acupuncture. Demons who often brought illness with their possession (Matt.4:24; 8:16-17; 9:32-33; 12:22; 15:21-28; 17:14-18; Mk.1:32-34; 9:25; Lk.8:2; 13:10-17; Acts 8:7; 10:38), could also depart to produce a counterfeit miracle to mislead people as deceitful spirits (1 Tim.4:1; 2 Cor.11:13-15). These "false or lying wonders" (2 Thess.2:9) are miraculous signs that are calculated to deceive. Their "falsehood" [Gr. *pseudos*] doesn't question their miraculous nature but their false claim that God was the source of their power when in reality it was Satan.

5. **Exercising gifts of healing for personal acclaim.** Christ shunned acclaim. Jesus went out of his way to avoid public approval or reward for His healing miracles (Matt.8:4; 9:30; 12:16; Mk.1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26; Lk.5:14; 8:56). In contrast to Christ's ministry, the Corinthian church was in chaos as carnal believers sought to parade their sensational gifts before the body.

6. **Making sick people feel guilty for their lack of faith when the healer should own the failure for not healing them.** Christ healed people who didn't have faith. Whenever Jesus healed the multitudes, it can be assumed that most, if not all, were unbelievers (Matt.8:1-4; Lk.17:11-19; Jn.5:1-9). In Acts 5:14-16 if Peter's shadow just indiscriminately fell on someone who was sick he would be healed. Faith was not necessary. Jesus did not require personal faith to be healed. In addition to the following examples, it is obvious that Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and the widow's son were incapable of displaying faith. Yet, they all were resurrected from the dead (Matt.8:14; 9:32; 12:12,13; 20:30; Mk.7:35; 8:22; Lk.14:4; 17:14; 22:51; Jn.5:8; 9:1). There were occasions when another's faith was honored (Matt.8:10-11; 9:2; 15:28; Mk.2:1-5; 9:23-24; Lk.8:50; Jn.4:50) and occasionally Christ commended the faith of the afflicted one (Matt.9:22,29; Mk.10:52). Those who claim that a person is not healed because of his or her lack of faith need to be alerted to the disciples' failure in Matthew 17:19-20. Jesus informed them that it was because of their lack of faith.

7. **Contributing to people's depression in the face of terminal illness rather than offering them "Grace" (2 Cor.12:9,10).** Sects that claim to exercise miraculous gifts have been scientifically proven to have higher levels of depression compared to people from other backgrounds. Keith Meador, Professor of Psychiatry at Vanderbilt University, U.S.A., undertook a major study analyzing the relationship between depression and religious background. He found that "the rate of serious depression...among Pentecostal Christians was 5.4% compared to 1.7% for the entire survey group". The results of his work are written up in the journal, 'Hospital and Community Psychiatry', Dec. 1992. This is very interesting.
8. **Distorting the God ordained purposes for healing.** The claim that it's "God's will to heal 100% of the time" doesn't stand up when you actually think through the ultimate ramification of this, which is, death should never come to us. Every person Jesus healed eventually died. Death is inevitable (Rom.5:12) for all, the only exception is those who are alive at the rapture of the church (1 Thess.4:15). Our hope is a new resurrected /transformed /changed body (Rom.8:22,23; 1 Cor.15:51-57 ; 2 Cor.5:1-4; Phil.3:20-21). Even Lazarus who was raised from the dead had to physically die a second time (John 11). God instructed Moses that an average life span is 70 years (Ps.90:10) and scripture promises a long life for those who honor their parents (Eph.6:2,3; Ex.20:12; Deut.5:16)
9. **Neglecting to help people discern the purpose for their sickness.** Church leaders need to help sick people in their congregation discern the kind of sickness they are experiencing: Is it a sickness unto death (1 Jn.5:16), a sickness unto chastisement (1 Cor.11:28-33; Jms.5:16), a sickness to manifest the work and glorify of God (Jn.9:2,3) or to teach contentment with the sufficiency of God's Grace in the midst of illness (2 Cor.12:7-10)? We should always be asking, "What is God doing here in this situation?"
10. **Claiming "authority" [Gr.exousia] and "power" [Gr.dunamis] that was uniquely given to the original "Twelve" and the apostolic community.** "The Twelve" (Matt.10:1-3; Lk.9:1) by name were given power [Gr.dunamis] and authority [Gr.exousia] over all demons and to heal diseases. "Dunamis" is the God given ability to perform this miraculous power, while "exousia" is the right or jurisdiction to exercise that power. The "Twelve" after being given this power and authority are commanded (4 Greek imperatives) to "heal the sick", "raise the dead", "cleanse the lepers" and "cast out demons". This function of ministry wasn't an option but an imperative. Matt.10:1-3; Lk.9:1; Mk.16:17-20. Mark 16:17,18 promises that the sign miracles that are listed (including "lay hands on the sick, and they will recover") will be performed by those "who have believed" (Mk.16:17). It doesn't say all those who will believe. It is an aorist tense rather than a future tense. He's talking specifically about the disciples and the apostolic community. This, by the way, is why Hebrews 2:3-4, and 2 Cor. 12:12 says what it does about the Apostles and their work in the 1st century.
11. **Accepting "slight improvements" in people's health as miraculous recoveries.** This undermines the undeniable nature of biblical miracles. It creates another occasion for skeptics to mock our claims of a supernatural God. The miracles of Christ were so undeniable that the Pharisees who hated Christ could not discredit His miracles but attributed His power to perform them to Satan, Beelzebub the ruler of the demons (Matt.12:22-24 cp. Jn.3:2; 7:25-46; 11:47-48; Acts 2:43; 4:15-17; 14:3).

12. Thinking that it's God's will for everyone to be healthy. It is interesting to note that Paul did not use this gift for his own selfish purposes. He did not heal his friend Epaphroditus who was sick unto death (Philippians 2:25-27). Paul left his traveling companion Trophimus sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20). Paul did not even heal his son in the faith, Timothy (1 Timothy 4:23). He sent him a letter but no handkerchief was carried from his body to sick Timothy so he could be healed (Acts 19:12). Why did Paul choose not to heal these friends? We believe it was because he realized that the real importance of the gift was to authenticate the message, not to simply alleviate the sufferings of his friends. Phil.2:30; 2 Tim.4:20; 1 Tim.5:23; Jms.4:14,15. He saw where suffering can be a vehicle to display God's power, 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

An interesting counterpart to this is what happened in John 5. Here Jesus walks by a whole bunch of sick people and heals only one of them, leaving the rest in their sickness. So while Jesus never turned anyone away from healing, there were some He walked right by who He did not heal. We can infer from this that it must not be God's will for everyone to be healed 100% of the time, as there is no record He healed any of the others there in John 5.

Also, under this point, please refer to what is written in James 5, in Conclusion #2

13. Telling people who want to go to a medical doctor that they aren't trusting God or to stop taking medication. Paul wasn't opposed to physicians (doctor Luke was numbered among Paul's traveling companions!), nor medication (1 Tim.5:22; Jms.5:14). Paul encouraged young Timothy who abstained from wine to use some for medicinal purposes since he was experiencing some stomach ailments. James instructed the elders of local assemblies to anoint the sick "with oil" (Jms.5:14). D. Edmond Hiebert [The Epistle of James, Moody Press, 1979, pg.320,321] points out that "The verb anoint [Gr. aleipho], one of two Greek verbs so rendered, is a general term used for an anointing of any kind. The Twelve (apostles) anointed the sick with oil (Mk.6:13) and the Good Samaritan poured oil into the wounds of the man who fell among thieves (Lk.10:34). The efficacy of olive oil as a medical agent is well known. The fact that James did not regard the oil as the healing agent is clear from the assertion in verse 15 that "the prayer of faith heals the sick." The participial phrase "anointing him with oil", denotes an activity subsidiary to the praying. The "anointing him with oil" may well refer to the simple obligation of the elders to make sure the sick person has had medical attention.

14. Asserting that healing is "guaranteed" in the Atonement, based on Isaiah 53:5 & 1 Peter 2:24-25. The context of this passage is not physical infirmities, but spiritual ones. Jesus' public healing ministry was not part of the atonement but is spoken of in Isaiah 53:4 – "Surely our griefs [Lit. sicknesses] He Himself bore, and our sorrows [Lit. pains] He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted." This verse was fulfilled during Jesus' incarnation as seen in Matthew 8:16,17 – "When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "he himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases." Healing comes through the work of Christ, but is nowhere guaranteed from it.

Also, asserting that healing is guaranteed from the Old Testament covenants of Genesis 12, Deuteronomy 28-30, and others. These were promises God gave to His people as a result of their obedience, with the promise of cursing if they didn't obey. According to Hebrews 8:13, these covenants are obsolete with the coming of the new covenant we have with Christ.

15. To expect that miraculous healing be a huge issue in the church or that the church should be focused on this ministry in a major way, does not square with the two-thirds of the New Testament, from Romans onward, where Paul and others write to churches about their ministries, and to Pastors and church leaders about the ministry. If this is to be such an issue that we are to focus on, as much as some do today, wouldn't it be everywhere? It's not and is rarely mentioned in this part of the New Testament. Praise God for His healing power, but there is much more to the Christian life than this issue!

VI. HEALING PERSONIFIED in the New Testament:

- Jesus – Matthew 8:8,13; Mark 5:29; Luke 5:17; 6:18-19; 9:42
- Apostles – Luke 9:1-6, including Philip and Stephen
- Peter – Acts 3:1-10,16; 4:7-16; 5:15-16; 9:32-43
- Paul – Acts 19:11,12; 28:8

The subject of "healing" is a fascinating one in the Scriptures. God has performed healing miracles for people from nearly the opening pages of the Bible. Healing is the sovereign work of God. None of us deserve healing, and God is not obligated to heal anyone. All of us have seen God heal us and others. It is a joy to pray to God and seek healing for God's people and others.

This paper is not the final word on the subject of healing in the New Testament, nor is it completely exhaustive, and nor is it perfect 😊 Some will find inaccuracies, and if we are wrong about anything we put forward, we will seek to be quick to correct our error, We are all just fellow learners in this great walk called the Christian faith. Others have written more extensively and with greater expertise. It is our hope that this paper would shed some light on this great subject, and give the people of COD some wisdom from God's Word.

SOURCES:

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