



L I F E S C H O O L
I N T E R N A T I O N A L

Learning to Pray for the Sick

“And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come”

-Matt.

24:14

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Session 1

Why Not Now?

This session covers:

- A brief summary of how the Church lost its ability to effectively pray for the sick.
- A journey throughout the scriptures and Church history to build the case that healing is for today.

I. Introduction

Our God is a miracle working, all-powerful God who is the same today as He was thousands of years ago. Just as He healed the sick in days gone by, He longs to be our healer in these End-times. In this session, as we take a journey through history observing God's desire and ability to heal, let's ask ourselves this critical question, "Why not now?" Let's strike a blow to the religious spirit that has said that God no longer moves in healing; let's move beyond the traditions of man and the logic within our minds; let's allow our faith to arise; and let's once and for all accept the truth that our God wants us to live in divine health *and to minister in divine healing.*

1. As one reads the Bible, it is clear that God in His great compassion and mercy desires for people to experience healing and to live in divine health.

- Even a cursory reading of the gospels reveals that much of Jesus' earthly ministry involved ministering healing to the sick and oppressed. Note this defining verse of scripture, "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people*" (Matt. 4:23).

- Of the thirty-seven recorded miracles in Jesus' earthly ministry, twenty-six involved physical healing. Of the 3,779 verses recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, 727—almost 20 percent—speak of physical and emotional healing and the raising of the dead.¹
- Jesus healed the sick from a heart of compassion. He also healed to demonstrate the Kingdom of God.
- Graeme and Sabrina Walsh write,

Healing the sick was a top priority in the life of Jesus...Scripture makes it clear that God stands against human suffering. Sickness and disease are oppression from Satan and have affected mankind since Adam and Eve's original sin in the Garden of Eden. Because of the separation of relationship between man and God after Adam and Eve's disobedience, God sent His Son Jesus to die on the Cross to restore that relationship. One aspect of the restoration accomplished on the Cross was the exchange of sickness and disease for health and healing.²
- Both the Old and the New Testaments record testimony after testimony of God's desire to heal and His power to do so. Throughout the scriptures, people sought and received God's healing power.

2. Yet, as Church history unfolded, signs, wonders, and divine healing decreased.

- The early years of the Christian Church were characterized by God's healing power. Signs, wonders and specifically, healing, were commonplace in the early Church.
- This began to change in fourth century AD when Constantine became emperor of the Roman Empire. In 324 AD, he proclaimed Christianity to be the official religion of the Empire, thereby, initiating a merging of the pagan worship that was practiced in Rome and Christianity which had until that time been persecuted by Rome. As this happened, the Church began to transition *from a power based organism to a politically driven organization*. As a result, much of the power to heal evaporated from Church life.
- In their workbook, *Christianity and Healing*, Graeme and Sabrina Walsh write,

Over the centuries, three major factors contributed to the departure of the Church from the original Gospel teaching of prayer for the sick. The first factor involved a papal edict from Pope Gregory the Great, who was Pope from 590 to 604 AD. His writings were called the "Book of Pastoral Rule." This book was required reading for all the ministers of the Church. Pope Gregory made the following statement: "The sick are to be admonished (disciplined) that they feel to be sons of God in that the scourge of discipline chastises them."...Sickness came to be identified with the sufferings of Jesus, and to be seen as a discipline resulting in blessing....This papal ruling influenced all the Church's thinking about sickness. No longer was it seen as the work of Satan as stated in the Gospels, but as a mark of correction by God, sometimes inflicted by evil powers to bring about moral renewal.³
- Walsh also states two other factors that have negatively influenced thought about divine healing. One is the incorrect translation of Scripture by two noted early theologians, Augustine and Jerome. Neither saw the need for healing. Jerome translated the original Hebrew and Greek Bible into Latin. In so doing, he mistranslated James 5:14 concerning healing. Because of his work, in times of illness many began to receive prayer for salvation of their souls rather than for the healing of their bodies.⁴

- The third factor occurred in the 12th Century when official Church decrees restricted the practice of medical and physical healing. People were forbidden from surgery and the focus shifted toward repentance and penance for their sins from all who sought relief from sickness.⁵
- A long tradition of theological thinking slowly developed that believed that God no longer healed. Many began to teach that miracles and, specifically, divine healing ceased to be a part of normal Church life. John Wimber in his book, *Power Healing*, writes,

Depending on which theologian one reads, they say healing (and signs and wonders in general) ceased after the authority of the apostles was established (the end of the apostolic age) or after the church was widely established and officially sanctioned. Regarding the latter, the purpose of signs and wonders was to validate the authenticity of the Christian message. They were not needed after the church was officially and widely established, many theologians claim, after the Council of Carthage in A.D. 397, where bishops gathered and clearly defined the contents of the New Testament.⁶
- Wimber also writes that two of the great reformers, John Calvin and Martin Luther both taught the cessation of the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit. Wimber Quotes Calvin from his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*,

The gift of healing, like the rest of the miracles, which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the preaching of the gospel marvelous forever... Healing now has nothing to do with us, to whom the administering of such powers has not been committed.⁷
- Wimber also quotes Martin Luther from his *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John*,

The day of miracles was confined to the early church and that "the apostles have preached the Word and Have given their writings, and nothing more than what they have written remains to be revealed, no new and special revelation or miracle is necessary."⁸ [Note: Luther in later writings confirmed a belief in contemporary miracles].
- Because of the shift from a power based organism to a politically based organization and the theological thought that developed at the same time, miracles—including divine healing—greatly decreased.
- Even though there seems to have always been throughout Church history a remnant that believed in and practiced praying for the sick, the general atmosphere in the Church was to ignore or even deny the truth of God's word related to God's healing power.

3. Even so, we live in a day in which God is restoring faith for His miraculous works and, specifically, in His healing power.

- These long held traditions of man have done much damage in diluting the word of God as it relates to healing. Unbelief has infiltrated much of the Church, and the healing power of God has dried up in many places.
- However, the good news is that God is bringing change. He is awakening His Church around the world to the truth that God is still the same, yesterday, today and forever, and that He still desires to heal and still *is* healing those who seek Him diligently for His healing power.
- The purpose of this class is to be a tool to awaken faith in *your* heart to live in God's divine health, believe for healing when you are sick, and to be equipped as God's able bodied minister to pray effectively for the sick.

II. Divine Healing and Health in Every Age

From the first chapters of the Bible until the last, God reveals His desire for mankind to live for Him and as they do to live in good health of body, soul and spirit. In every age, God's plan has been for man to live in health and to be healed when sick. Divine healing and divine health are scriptural truths that apply to every age.

1. God's original plan for man included living eternally on the earth in complete health.

- "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and *death through sin*, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).
- As the above scripture clearly states, death—and sickness that accompanies death—did not enter the world until Adam and Eve sinned. God's original plan did not include sickness and disease but was for mankind to live eternally in the paradise of the Garden of Eden, to eat freely of the fruit from the garden, to partake of the tree of life and to take dominion over the earth.
- Death did not enter the world until man sinned, at which time God allowed the curse to plague the earth. Satan was cursed; the ground was cursed; and mankind was cursed. Thus, sickness, which followed the origination of sin, is a result of the curse and was never a part of God's original plan for the earth. From the beginning of time, God planned for man to live totally free of disease.

2. Throughout the Old Testament, God reveals His desire for His people to live in divine health.

- Notably, we see God's desire for healing and health stated as His people left Egyptian bondage. Shortly after leaving Egypt, God revealed to them one of His covenant names—Jehovah Rapha. He said to His people, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer" (Ex. 15:26).
- Forty years later as they were preparing to enter into their inheritance, God once again promised to be the healer for the His people. He said, "The LORD will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you" (Deut. 7:15).
- During this same time period, God spoke these words, "The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The LORD will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart; and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you" (Deut. 28:27-29). In speaking these words, God was not stating that these things were His desire for His people. Instead, He was warning the people of the consequences of disobedience. His plan for His people was to live blameless before Him so that they might live *free from these infirmities!*

- Several other Old Testament passages speak of God's healing purposes. Leviticus 14 speaks of the priests' ministry to the leper so that the leper might be healed. "The priest shall offer up the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be clean" (Lev. 14:20). Also, during his reign as king, Hezekiah prayed for the people and they were healed (2 Chron. 30:20). And in another example, David wrote, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities, *who heals all your diseases;*" (Ps. 103:1-3).
- Once again, we see that the plan of God in the Old Testament was for the healing and health of His people.

3. As we journey to the New Testament, we recognize that the earthly ministry of Jesus was characterized by healing of disease.

- As Jesus emerged from the forty days in the wilderness, before beginning His public ministry, He went to Nazareth and proclaimed that His purpose on earth included healing the sick. Luke wrote, "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 'THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD. And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'" (Luke 4:16-21).
- But not only did He announce that He was going to heal the sick, much of His ministry was devoted to healing the sick. Note the next three verses of scripture. "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people*" (Matt. 4:23).
- And also, "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest'" (Matt. 9:35-38).
- And a third supporting verse, "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" (Acts 10:38).

4. Not only did Jesus heal the sick, He commissioned His followers to heal the sick.

- As He commissioned the twelve, "Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and *to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness*" (Matt. 10:1).

- As He released the seventy into ministry, the following is recorded, "Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come...Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and *heal those in it who are sick*, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Luke 10:1, 8-9).
- As Jesus commissioned all believers for all generations, "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. 'He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. 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.*' So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and *confirmed the word by the signs that followed*" (Mark 16:15-20).
- As Jesus commissioned His disciples during His earthly ministry and the Church following His resurrection, He called His followers to heal the sick.

5. The healing of sicknesses and disease was a common occurrence and a part of normal Christian practice in the early Church.

- "And it happened that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him. After this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who *had diseases were coming to him and getting cured.* (Acts 28:8-9).
- "At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, to such an extent that *they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.* Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, *bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed*" (Acts 5:12-16).
- Signs and wonders, including miraculous healings, were a normal part of the Christian life in the early Church. "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles" (Acts 2:43).
- In addition, as they went about their daily routine, the early Church ministered in healing. "Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer... But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene--walk!" (Acts 3:1,6).
- Also, as they beseeched the Lord in prayer, *miraculous healing* was a significant aspect of how they expected God to move on their behalf. Note the following, "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:29-30).
- Divine healing was a common occurrence and a routine part of Church life in the days of the early Church.

6. Throughout Church history, God has had a remnant who have ministered divine healing through the power of the name of Jesus.

- John Wimber in his book, *Power Evangelism*, presents an excellent discussion of signs and wonders throughout church history. Drawing from his book, the following excerpts from key leaders reassure us that God has healed throughout Church history.⁹
- Justin Martyr (AD 100-165) writes "for numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city, many of our Christian men exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists, and those who use incantations and drugs. (Coxe 6:190).
- Tertullian (AD 160-220) writes, "How many men of rank (to say nothing of common people) have been delivered from devils, and healed of diseases! (Coxe 3:107).
- Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa (AD 328-380) tells of a healing, "There was with us our little girl who was suffering from an eye ailment resulting from an infectious sickness. It was a terrible and pitiful thing to see her as the membrane around the pupil was swollen and whitened by the disease...Nothing of what was promised to us has been omitted, but the true medicine that heals diseases, the cure that comes from prayer, this she has given us, and has already worked; nothing at all is left of the disease of the eyes."
- Gregory of Tours (AD 538-594) offers many accounts of healings that occurred in his time.
- St. Francis of Assisi (AD 1181-1226) who was the founder of the Franciscan order had an extensive healing ministry in which a number of miracles were recorded.
- The Waldensian Community was a movement in the Middle Ages who included prayer for the sick as a part of their practice.
- Also, Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), the Quakers (1640 to present), John Wesley (1703-1791) all record the experience of miracles and healings.
- Many others in more recent history have moved powerfully in the healing gifting. John G. Lake, John Alexander Dowie, Maria Woodworth-Etter, Smith Wigglesworth, and Aimee Semple McPherson in the early 1900's. A.A. Allen, William Branham, Jack Coe, Oral Roberts and Katherine Kuhlman in the later 1900's are all examples.

7. In the ages to come, divine health will fill the earth.

- Observe these passages which speak of the ages to come. "I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; and there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying. No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed...They will not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, and their descendants with them" (Isa. 65:19-20,23).
- "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4).

- “There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads” (Rev. 22:3-4).
- At some point in the future, the Lord Jesus Christ will return and establish His kingdom upon the earth. The curse will be removed from the earth. The enemy will be bound and ultimately removed. Sicknesses will be healed and eventually removed from the new earth that God will establish.
- In the future, every believer will possess a glorified body that will display the glory of God (1 Cor. 15:51-53, 1 John 3:2). Sickness will be far from us in that day as we walk in the fullness of God’s divine health.

In every age, God has expressed His will for His people to live in health and has moved in healing. So, why not now? Why not in this generation? Why not in you? Why not through you?

III. Why Not Now? Why Not Through You?

1. Not only has the Lord Jesus commissioned you to continue His work of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and healing sickness, He has promised to empower you to do so.

- His famous words of John 14:12-14 offer a great promise to give us confidence to follow His example in doing the same works He did while on earth. He said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”
- Not only has the Lord Jesus promised that we would do His works, He has given us the gifts of the Holy Spirit--which includes the gifts of healing and the working of miracles--to help us accomplish His works (1 Cor. 12:9-10).

2. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever and He is no respecter of persons.

- Because He is the same yesterday, today and forever and He has promised to work through us all. Why not now? Why not in you? Why not through you?
- Why not follow in the steps of Jesus and go about healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.
- As we study this vital and timely topic, let’s allow our faith to be stirred afresh so that we might do the mighty work of healing that God so desires.
- Let faith arise!

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1. Graeme and Sabrina Walsh, *Christianity & Healing*, Copyright 2006 by Graeme Walsh, p. 4.
 2. Ibid, p. 4.
 3. Ibid, p. 10.
 4. Ibid, p. 10.
 5. Ibid, p. 10.
 6. John Wimber, *Power Healing*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1987, p.10.
 7. Ibid, p. 11.
 8. Ibid, p. 11.
 9. John Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1986, p. 157-174.

Session 2

Biblical Foundations For Healing

This session covers:

- The truth that it is God's will for believer's to live in health and to be healed when they are ill.
- Five foundational truths that demonstrates God's desire for His people to live in divine health.

I. If It Be Thy Will

1. Many people pray for the sick in this way.

- Most likely, all of us have attended a Church prayer meeting during which someone prayed a prayer for the sick somewhat like the following, "Lord, if it be thy will, heal this person."
- Although this manner of praying for the sick is the most common, it is also the least effective—and the least scriptural! It is the prayer of faith that will cause mountains to move, and it is the prayer of faith that will result in the healing of the sick.

2. Many people are perishing because of a lack of knowledge.

- "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). Literally, many people are destroyed because of a lack of knowledge. Many people do not experience eternal life because they do not know the truth about the saving power of Jesus Christ. *And many people are not healed because they do not have knowledge of what the Bible teaches about God's will for healing.*
- "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Essentially, this scripture teaches that faith is the result of *knowledge of the Word*. And, accordingly, faith for healing comes from knowledge of the Word as it relates to God's healing power.

- It is knowledge of God's *will* to heal that produces the faith to believe for healing. The more knowledge we have of God's desire for us to live in health and experience His healing power, the easier it will be to believe Him to heal.

3. The Bible clearly teaches that it *is* God's will for His children to live in health and to be healed when they are sick.

- Examples are many of people who have believed for God's healing power and have not been healed. Because of the experiences of many who have not received God's healing touch, much of the Body of Christ has developed a theology about healing that is rooted in doubt and unbelief rather than in faith and expectancy.
- Many believe that God may not want us to be healed or that it may be God who desires us to be ill. However, this view is not what the Bible teaches. For the Bible teaches clearly and repeatedly that it is God's will for His people to live in health and to be healed when they are sick. The Bible says, "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" (Acts 10:38). It also states, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).
- Sickness, disease, and infirmity are not from God, but from the devil. It is not God, but the devil who comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). It is the devil who would have us sick, weak, and infirmed.
- God's will is for us to live in His divine health and to be healed when we are sick. Even though in an imperfect world there will always be cases in which God does not heal, the Bible teaches that healing is God's will for our lives. Our God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever still heals and desires health for His people.
- In this session, we will examine five Biblical foundations that assure us that it is God's will for us to live in health and to be healed when we are sick. These five threads formulate the Biblical basis for God's desire to heal so that we will no longer pray, "Lord, if it be thy will, heal this person" and for us to pray in faith believing God to move the mountains of sickness from our midst.

II. Five Foundations for God's Healing Power

1. The first foundational reason that God's will is to heal is His *compassion*.

- On ten different occasions in the Gospels, Jesus was noted to have had compassion on the people leading Him to minister to the people's needs. In several instances, His compassion led Him to heal their diseases.
- There is not a single example in the scriptures in which someone came to Jesus for healing that He denied their request. There may have been times when He did not move in healing. For example, Luke 5:17 records that on that particular day *the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing* suggesting that not on every occasion was the power of the Holy Spirit present for Jesus to heal. In other Biblical examples, the scriptures record that Jesus healed *many* (Mark 1:34, Mark 3:10) possibly suggesting that not everyone gathered around Him on that particular occasion was healed. The scriptures also record that in Nazareth He could not perform many miracles due to their unbelief (Matt. 13:58).

- But the Biblical record is clear that the compassion of God led Jesus to heal the multitudes. "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt *compassion* for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:35-36).
- "When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt *compassion* for them and healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14).
- "As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, 'Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!' The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Lord, we want our eyes to be opened.' Moved with *compassion*, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him" (Matt. 20:29-34).
- "And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' Moved with *compassion*, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed" (Mark 1:40-42).
- "Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He felt *compassion* for her, and said to her, 'Do not weep.' And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise!' The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother" (Luke 7:11-15).
- As you can see, the scriptural examples are numerous. Therefore, it is easy to conclude that, as much as any other reason, God desires for His people to live in health because He loves us dearly and, out of His compassion for us, longs to see us set free from suffering, pain, heartache, illness and disease.
- God is love, and out of His love, His *will* is to heal us when we are sick and cause us to live in His divine health.

2. The second foundational reason that God's will is to heal is that healing is an expression of His *character*.

- In Hebrew thought, a person's name meant much more than it does to us today. For most westerners, a person's name is merely a way to identify them and distinguish them from others. For most, there is little meaning attached to a name beyond simple distinction.
- However, in Bible days, the name meant much more. Note how the International Bible Encyclopedia describes the purpose of a name.

While our modern names are almost exclusively designatory, and intended merely for identification, the Biblical names were also descriptive, and often prophetic. Religious significance nearly always inhered in the name, a parent relating his child to the Deity, or declaring its consecration to the Deity, by joining the name of the Deity with the service which the child should render, or perhaps commemorating in a name the favor of God in the gracious gift of the child, e.g. Nathanael ("gift of God"); Samuel ("heard of God"); Adonijah ("Yahweh is my Lord"), etc.¹

- In the same way the names that God called Himself are much more than a way of designating who He is. They describe His character, His attributes, and how He desires to express Himself to His people. Throughout the ages, divine names have manifested the virtues of God and also revealed the purposes of God encapsulated within the name itself. To the Hebrews of old, the name of God meant the revelation of His nature.²
- It is very interesting that when Moses asked God what name should he tell the people to describe God. God answered saying, "Thus, you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Ex. 3:14). Yes, God's name reveals who He is.
- As we take this general concept of a divine name into the realm of divine healing, we quickly realize that God calls Himself Jehovah-Rapha, which is a compound word comprised of *Yahweh* which means the self-existent one and *rapha* which means to heal.
- We see this compound name of God, Jehovah-Rapha, used in Exodus 15:26. It reads, "And He said, 'If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer [Jehovah-Rapha].'"
- Isn't this exciting! God says that one of His names is "healer". Remember that divine names describe God's virtues and His purposes. One of His virtues is healer and one of His divine purposes for mankind is health and healing.
- The healing virtue of God is not only revealed in His name but also in other dimensions in the scripture. The prophet Ezekiel speaks of a life-producing river that flows from the house of God, *next to which the trees bring healing*. Note the following, "So everything will live where the river goes. By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and *their leaves for healing*" (Ezek. 47:9, 12).
- Similar in concept, the Apostle John writes of the Tree of Life in the center of the Eternal City called the New Jerusalem. He writes, "Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the *healing of the nations*. There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him" (Rev 22:1-3).
- God also revealed to John that in the New Jerusalem there will be no sickness, pain, or suffering. John writes, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will *no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain*; the first things have passed away'" (Rev. 21:3-4).
- It is only because of the curse that mankind experiences sickness, infirmity, disease, and death. And because of Jesus' finished work on the cross, it is only Satan who attempts to bring the curse on God's people. It is Satan who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus came that we might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10).

- And, because God desires to reveal His nature through the virtue of healing and health, a significant part of the abundant life that God offers to mankind *is* divine healing and health.

3. The third foundational reason, and possibly the most important, by which we know that it is God's will to heal is the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

- There has been much debate over the years of whether or not healing is in the atonement. Many have said that it is not. But, the Scriptures teach that it is. All of God's New Covenant blessings are secured by the finished work of Jesus at the cross. And, because of the cross, that is, the atonement, God promises us health and healing.
- As Jesus hung upon the cross, a three-hour period of darkness came upon Jerusalem. At the end of this agonizing time, "Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?' that is, 'MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?'" (Matt 27:46). He was crying out in despair as He quoted Psalm 22. The pressure must have been overwhelming. Not only was He dying, during the three hours of darkness, Jesus was also taking upon Himself the sin of all of mankind for all of history past, present, and future. He was becoming the substitute, the Passover Lamb, the scapegoat for all of us.
- As He hung there in darkness, He not only took on the sin of the world, He also took upon Himself all sickness, defilement, perversion, oppression, and death. Upon the cross, Jesus not only took our sin away, He took away our sickness. Healing is in the atonement, paid for and accomplished at the cross.
- To illustrate how healing is in the atonement, let's examine Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53:4-6 reads, "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."
- Let's look more closely at the word translated "griefs". Almost all of the major English versions translate this word as "griefs" with one exception. The New International Version reads that "surely He took up our *infirmities*". The Hebrew word translated griefs is *choliy* (khol-ee'). The basic meaning of this word is sickness.³ This Hebrew word appears twenty-three different times in other places in the Old Testament. The word is translated *sickness* or *disease* in twenty-one of those twenty-three instances.
- One of the most notable places in which *choliy* is translated sickness is Deuteronomy 7:15 which reads, "The LORD will remove from you all *sickness* [*choliy*]; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you". This word is also translated as sickness or disease in Deuteronomy 28:61, 1 Kings 17:17, 2 Kings 1:2, 8:8 and other texts as well.
- Next, let's examine the word translated "sorrows". The Hebrew word translated sorrows is *makob* (mak-obe'). *Makob* means both physical or mental pain and sorrow.⁴ This Hebrew word appears sixteen times in the Old Testament and is translated as physical pain in at least two of those occasions. Thus, *makob* suggests both physical pain and suffering and mental anguish that result in sorrows.

- Third, let's dig a little deeper into the word translated "bore". The Hebrew word used here is *nasa* (naw-saw'). *Nasa* means among other things to lift, to bear up, to carry off, or to take away. Speaking of the scapegoat, this same word is used in Leviticus 16:22 to typify what Jesus did as our substitute at the cross. Leviticus 16:22 reads, "The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness." Just as this word is used in Leviticus, when Isaiah speaks of the Messiah bearing our grief, we see that *He "bore" them so as to take the completely away from us.*
- So does Isaiah 53 prophesy physical healing as part of Jesus' sacrifice at the cross? Most Bible scholars would agree that the best commentary on the scriptures is the scriptures themselves. Drawing from this principle, the Book of Matthew answers our question. Matthew quotes from Isaiah 53:4. Recorded in Matthew 8:14-17, he writes, "When Jesus came into Peter's home, He saw his mother-in-law lying sick in bed with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she got up and waited on Him. 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.'" From this passage, we note that Jesus performed many acts of *physical* healing to demonstrate that He was the one who fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. Scripture commenting on scripture concludes that physical healing *is* a part of what Isaiah prophesied as he wrote about Jesus' work on the cross.
- But this is not all that Isaiah wrote relating to physical healing. He continues, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are *healed*" (Isa. 53:5). In referring to this same passage, Peter writes, "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness -- *by whose stripes you were healed* (1 Peter 2:24, NKJV).
- In writing about healing coming through the stripes of Jesus, Isaiah speaks of the wounds inflicted upon Jesus through the scourging that He endured before going to the cross. Scourging was a severe punishment used by the Romans, many times to precede capital punishment. To scourge their victims, the Romans used an implement consisting of a handle, to which several straps were affixed. Each strap was weighted with jagged pieces of bone or metal, to make the blow more painful and effective. The person to be scourged was tied to a post and the blows applied to the back and loins. The punishment was considered so severe that Roman citizens were prohibited by law from being scourged. Jewish law prohibited no more than forty lashes for any form of scourging or beating.⁵
- Isaiah recorded that Jesus was to be stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, that He was to be pierced (or wounded) for our transgressions, crushed for our inequities, chastened for our well-being (or peace), and *scourged for our healing*. Writing after the cross event, Peter confirms that Jesus' scourging was for our healing. He states that by the stripes of Jesus, we have—past tense—been healed. There is no doubt about it. God intended, and Jesus accomplished, healing for mankind through His atoning death upon the cross.

- In essence, Isaiah predicted that Jesus' death on the cross was to be for the whole man. Jesus died so that we might be made whole in body, soul and spirit. Observe what F.F. Bosworth wrote,

Jesus went to the cross, spirit, soul, and body, to redeem man, spirit, soul, and body. Therefore, the Cross is the center of the plan of salvation for man, spirit, soul, and body. Every form of sickness and disease known to man was included, and many of them even mentioned particularly, in the "curse of the law," (Deut. 28:15-62, and other Scriptures). In Galatians 3:13, we have the positive statement that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree". What plainer declaration could we have than that Christ, who was born under the law to redeem us, bore its curse, and therefore did redeem us from all sickness and disease.⁶

- Healing *is* in the atonement, and by His stripes we have been healed.

4. The fourth foundational factor indicating God's will for healing is God's covenant with man.

- God is a covenant making, covenant keeping God and in His great mercy has entered into a covenant relationship with man. Each of us who are born again have entered through our relationship with Jesus Christ into covenant with God--specifically, entering the New Covenant.
- In general, a covenant makes two become one, binding the two together so that they no longer live independently but as one. Specifically, a covenant relationship with God binds us to Him, but it also binds God to us. In covenant, both parties vow to do what they have promised so as to bless the other.
- With that background, read what the author of Hebrews writes about the New Covenant. "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (Heb. 8:6).
- Hebrews makes two powerful statements about the New Covenant in this short verse. First, it is a better covenant than the Old Testament covenants and, second, it contains better promises than these covenants.
- Now, the question becomes, "Is healing a promise of the New Covenant?" The answer is most definitely yes! Let's examine briefly why we say yes (for a complete explanation see our Lifeschool materials *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ*).
- One of the central Old Testament covenants is the Abrahamic Covenant. Remember in Genesis 15 that God cut a covenant with Abraham. The covenant God made with Abraham is called the Abrahamic Covenant. Because of the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised to the descendants of Abraham the blessings of Abraham. You can read about them in the Book of Deuteronomy.
- One of the blessings promised to the descendants of Abraham is divine health and healing. Notice this cornerstone verse of scripture—one of the blessings of Abraham, "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who *keeps His covenant* and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;... "Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers...The LORD will *remove from you all sickness*; and *He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known*, but He will lay them on all who hate you" (Deut. 7:9-15).

- Now that we see that healing was a promise made to Abraham, let's determine if New Covenant believers are promised the blessings offered to Abraham and his descendants. Again, the answer is yes. Read the following, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE'--in order that *in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles*, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal. 3:13-14).
- The good news is that partakers of the New Covenant are heirs to the blessings of Abraham, and the blessings promised to the descendants of Abraham include health and healing.
- Now, let's go back to the Book of Hebrews. The author of Hebrews also writes, "...Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to *save forever* those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:22-25).
- The preceding passage makes another powerful statement about the New Covenant. Because of the New Covenant, Jesus is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him.
- Let's look a little closer at the phrase "save forever". The Greek word translated "forever" is the word *panteles*. The primary meaning of this word is all-complete or perfect.⁷ This word is used only twice in the Bible; however, outside the Bible it was used more frequently having the meaning of whole, unblemished, full, perfect, actualized, efficacious, mature, supreme, and dedicated.⁸
- The Greek word translated "save" is the word *sozo* (*sode'-zo*) which means to save, to keep safe and sound, to rescue from danger or destruction, to save a suffering one from perishing, to make well, heal, and restore to health.⁹ This Greek word appears 109 times in the New Testament. Although by far the majority of the time, it is translated "saved", in the New American Standard translation eleven times it is translated "whole" and three times as "healed" (Mark 5:23, Luke 8:36, and Acts 14:9).
- Although the English translation of Hebrews 7:22-25 is accurate, it is also an appropriate interpretation to read Hebrews 7:25 as follows. Because of the New Covenant, Jesus is able through His intercession to make for all time His people completely whole—and included in the making a person whole is *to heal their diseases!*
- We know that it is God's will for us to live in health and to be healed when we are sick because God is a covenant making, covenant keeping God, and we are in covenant with Him through our relationship with Jesus Christ.

5. The fifth foundational factor supporting God's desire to heal is His desire to demonstrate His *kingdom* upon the earth.

- Over much of Church history, believers have viewed sickness as God's discipline, as one of God's methods of fellowshiping with the sufferings of Christ, or as God's judgment upon the sin in one's life. However, as we examine the New Testament in general and the gospels specifically, we see a completely different cause of sickness and a totally different purpose for God's healing power.
- One reason God heals is to demonstrate His kingdom coming to earth. Paul writes, "For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in *power*" (1 Cor. 4:20). The kingdom of God is not just a message, it is also a demonstration of that message—a demonstration to reveal that God's kingdom is greater and more powerful than any other spiritual force or any other realm.

- And healing demonstrates the kingdom of God. The gospels repeatedly tell us that Jesus went about the land preaching the kingdom of God and healing the sick. Look at one example, “Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and *proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom*, and *healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people*. The *news about Him spread* throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan” (Matt. 4:23-25).
- It was not just His words that caused His fame to spread throughout the land, it was also His works. News about Him spread and people brought the sick and demonized to Him to be healed and restored. He ministered to the people, and, thereby, demonstrated His kingdom.
- Much of the Church needs a totally different mindset toward healing. God doesn’t want us sick to teach us something. He desires to heal the sick to demonstrate something--His power and authority *over* disease and every other work of the devil. Our God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever wants us to go and do likewise. He wants us to pray for the sick believing God to heal—*that we might demonstrate His kingdom upon the earth*. Heavenly Father, your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Conclusion:

These five foundational truths tell us that it *is* God’s will to heal and to provide divine health. It is God’s will to heal because of His compassion, His character, the cross, His covenant, and His desire to demonstrate His kingdom. So how do we respond?

III. The Proper Response

1. The example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego illustrates how to respond in situations requiring God’s healing touch.

- The third chapter of Daniel records a great way for each of us to respond toward the enemy’s attacks upon our health and the health of those to whom we would minister. In Daniel 3, King Nebuchadnezzar, made an image of gold and ordered all of the people to bow before the image in worship. The king warned all of the people that anyone refusing to bow before the image was to be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire. Even though they knew the consequences, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego refused to bow down to the image.
- These three young men spoke these famous words, “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up” (Dan. 3:17-18).

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego made three statements of faith in the midst of their fiery ordeal. First, they declared their faith in God's *ability*. They knew that their all-powerful God was not limited in any way and was fully able to deliver them. They believed in God's ability to deliver them from the fire. Second, they stated without hesitation that they knew God would deliver them. They expressed their faith that not only was God able to deliver; it was His will to deliver them. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego knew that the fiery furnace was not what God wanted for them. They knew this agonizing ordeal was a work of their enemy. They believed that God wanted them delivered. And, finally, they acknowledged that even though they had strong faith that God would move on their behalf, if He did not they would not deny Him or turn from Him. They would not serve another God. They were submitted to God no matter what. They believed God was able and willing yet they surrendered the results to Him.

2. Our proper response in those times when we need God to heal is much the same as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

- When we pray for the sick or when we seek God's healing power for ourselves, we must believe that God is *able* to heal the infirmity we face. We must know without a doubt that no matter what we face God is able to overcome it. We must have that certainty in our life that no matter how high the mountain, our God is able to cast it into the sea.
- Second, and even more important, we must believe that God *will* move in our situation. We must believe that it is *God's will* to heal and that He desires for the person we are praying for to be healed.
- And, third, we must surrender the results to God. Our task is to pray. God's responsibility is to heal. Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego said even if God did not come through, they would not bow down to idols. We must do likewise. We believe He is able. We pray with fervency believing He will move in response to our prayers. Yet we must also surrender the results to God continuing to worship Him when He does move in a situation and when He does not.
- In believing God for healing and health and in praying for those who are sick and diseased, there are two lines we dare not cross. First, we must not pray with presumption demanding that God heal and move in every situation. Presumptuous faith has harmed many people when for whatever reason God did not heal.
- But we must also not allow unbelief to enter our hearts. Even Jesus could not do many miracles when there was not an accompanying atmosphere of faith. We must not move in presumption, but we must not allow unbelief to dominate us.
- Instead, we must pray believing God is able and that He is willing while we surrender the results to God.
- Let's call upon our God, Jehovah-rapha, to destroy all the works of the devil and heal every type of disease.

1. "Names of God", International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database, 1996, Biblesoft.
 2. Herbert Lockyer, *All the Divine Names and Titles in the Bible*, Lamplighter Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975, p. 1-2.
 3. The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, 1993, Woodside Bible Fellowship, Ontario, Canada. Licensed from the Institute for Creation Research.
 4. Ibid.

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5. International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft.
 6. F.F. Bosworth, *Christ the Healer*, Fleming H. Revell Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 2004, p. 40.
 7. Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2000 by Biblesoft.
 8. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abridged in one volume by Geoffre Bromily, William Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p. 1164.
 9. Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2000 by Biblesoft.

Session 3

Issues That Affect Health and Healing

This session covers:

- The importance of closing the door to the enemy's entry points that may be the root of infirmity.
- An exploration of eight specific issues recorded in the Bible that affect health and healing.

I. Closing the Door to the Enemy

1. In this session, we transition from exploring the Biblical basis for healing to looking at principles that affect effective prayer for healing.

- In this session we will examine eight different issues that the Bible states as possible causes for illness and, thereby, potentially hinders God's healing touch.
- Any of these eight areas may become an open door allowing the enemy to bring sickness. Since each of these issues open a door to the enemy for infirmity, many times our prayers for the sick will become more effective when we help those for which we are praying close these open doors.

2. A variety of issues can "open the door" to the enemy's work in our lives.

- A familiar verse of scripture from Paul's letter to the Ephesians illustrates the idea of opening the door to the enemy. "BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and *do not give the devil an opportunity*" (Eph. 4:26-27, italics mine). Note the word "opportunity". One of the definitions of the Greek word for "opportunity" is an inhabited place, such as a city, village or district.¹

- In this example, Paul explained to the Ephesians that anger must be dealt with or else it will give the devil a place of occupation or habitation in their life. In a similar way, there are a variety of issues—all of which are mentioned in the Bible—that will open the door to the devil to oppress us with disease or infirmity.

3. God's healing ministers must help people close these "doors" to the enemy.

- As we pray for the sick, we must be aware of these potential openings to the enemy and help those we are praying for deal with these issues. As they deal with the truth through repenting of sin, forgiving those who have wronged them, renouncing the work of the enemy, and claiming God's promises, we can see God do mighty works of healing.
- Read this confirming quote from the *Christianity and Healing*,

The spiritual cause of sickness and disease must be dealt with before that person can be healed. We have seen this happen time and time again over the years. Many have prayed for healing and have been discouraged because nothing has happened. This principle applies both to physical and inner healing. When we pray for someone, we always ask the Holy Spirit, "How do you want to touch this person today, Lord? What is behind this condition?"²

Important:

In addressing these issues, one caution is important. *These issues are not to become rules. God is full of mercy. His compassion far outweighs His judgment, and on numerous occasions, He has healed people in spite of these issues being present in their lives.*

- As God's ministers, we should approach these issues as very real and serious, but also as *potential* concerns that affect healing and health--not as absolutes that unless dealt with will without exception prohibit God from healing. Just as God's mercy triumphs over judgment, our compassion must surpass our judging the person for whom we are praying.
- However, on the other hand, the more we keep the door closed to the enemy, the more we can expect to live in good health and be healed when we are sick, *and the more we can expect to see those for whom we pray be healed.*
- With that stated, let's explore eight issues that affect health and healing.

II. Sin

1. The Abrahamic Covenant speaks of a curse of sickness as a consequence of man's sin.

- Concerning the promises given to Abraham and His descendents, God said, "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God" (Deut. 28:1-2).

- But God also said that, if His people did not fully obey the Lord, curses would come upon them, "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you" (Deut. 28:15).
- These curses address many issues but most definitely include sickness and infirmity. "The LORD will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they will pursue you until you perish" (Deut. 28:21-23).
- And, "The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The LORD will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart" (Deut. 28:27-28).
- Also, "The LORD will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils, from which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head" (Deut. 28:35).
- God summarizes these curses of sickness by stating, "If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you. Also every sickness and every plague which, not written in the book of this law, the LORD will bring on you until you are destroyed" (Deut. 28:58-61).

2. Because Jesus redeemed us from the curse of sin, death, and the law, God no longer curses believers due to sin.

- As New Covenant believers, we are heirs to the promises made to Abraham, but redeemed from the curses. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"--in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Gal 3:13-14).
- Christ redeemed us from the curse of sin, death, and the law—the very same curse that includes sickness.
- Thus, because of the New Covenant initiated by Christ Jesus at the cross, we are no longer subject to curses from God due to sin.

3. However, habitual sin still opens the door for the enemy to oppress us with sickness.

- Notice this verse from Proverbs. It reads, "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to you body, and refreshment to your bones" (Prov. 3:7-8).
- Also, throughout the New Testament we are urged to not take the grace of God as permission to treat sin lightly. Romans Chapters 6 through 8 deal extensively with this issue. Paul writes that we should not *let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts* (Rom. 6:12).
- He also writes that the wages of sin are death (Rom. 6:23), death that may include sickness.

- Quoting again from *Christianity and Healing*, by Graeme and Sabrina Walsh, Our sins and ungodly actions have consequences. If you continue in sin, you will get into trouble, and God will lift His protection from you. This gives Satan legal ground to harass you. Sin always opens the door to Satan and demonic oppression. Often believers from a rebellious or lawless background have no fear of the Lord. They know that Jesus forgave their sins but they are not aware of how much Jesus hates sin. They love Jesus but don't fear Him and often continue in habitual sin, without fear of consequences. Habitual sin has to be removed from our lives. We need to close every doorway that allows Satan to walk in and out of our life at will. We cannot be 80% for God and 20% for the world. Sin opens the doorway for sickness and disease to come into our lives.³
- Thus, habitual sin in a person's life opens the door to sickness and infirmity, and as God's healing ministers we must help those for whom we are praying turn from habitual sin.

III. Willful Rebellion

1. Willful rebellion to God, His Word, and His ways may move God to turn a person over to the dealings of the enemy.

- Several New Testament passages speak of people who have openly and willfully rebelled against God being turned over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh.
- Paul writes to the Corinthian Church concerning a man involved in sexual immorality with his father's wife, "I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5).
- Paul also writes, "Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:20).
- Although the circumstances are somewhat different in that Paul is not dealing with a believer, empowered by the Holy Spirit, he turns a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus over to Satan because of his open rebellion to God. The book of Acts records this encounter. "But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, and said, 'You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time.' And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand" (Acts 13:9-11).
- And also the familiar story of Ananias and Sapphira, "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God. And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it" (Acts 5:4-5).
- John also alludes to sin that leads to death as he writes, "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this" (1 John 5:16).

2. Willful rebellion may allow the enemy to bring sickness and infirmity into a life.

- The scriptural examples of God turning the willfully rebellious over to Satan are numerous. The question arises, however, "Does God's turning people over to Satan in their rebellion include the permitting of sickness and disease to overtake them?"
- Of the five examples listed previously, only one specified that the turning over to Satan involved infirmity—blindness in the case of Bar-Jesus—whereas two referred to death and two made no reference to the manner in which Satan was allowed to deal with them.
- However, there is another New Testament scripture which connects serious sin to sickness and death. Paul writes, "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. *For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep*" (1 Cor. 11:27-30).
- Commenting on this passage of scripture, Gordon Fee writes,

"As noted throughout, this paragraph has had an unfortunate history of understanding in the church. The very Table that is God's reminder, and therefore, his repeated gift, of grace, the Table where we affirm again who and whose we are, has been allowed to become a table of condemnation for the very people who most truly need the assurance of acceptance that this table affords—the sinful, the weak, the weary. One does not have to 'get rid of the sin in one's life' in order to partake....On the other hand, any magical view of the sacrament *that allows the unrepentant to partake without 'discerning the body' makes the offer of grace a place of judgment*".⁴
- Let me comment on Fee's commentary. Whereas he wrote that the communion table should not be a place where the sinful, weak, and weary should fear God and subject themselves to condemnation, he also stated that the unrepentant, that is the openly rebellious, can turn the Lord's Supper from a table of grace into a table of judgment. And the judgment that comes upon one who treats God in such a way includes sickness.
- Thus, open and willful rebellion in a person's life—especially one who confesses faith in Christ—can open the door to sickness. Again, as God's healing ministers we must help the rebellious turn back to God and His ways.

IV. Bitterness and Unforgiveness

1. The Bible speaks frequently about unforgiveness and bitterness.

- The Dictionary defines "forgive" as to stop being angry about something, to pardon someone for a mistake, misunderstanding, or wrongdoing, or to cancel an obligation. Thus, unforgiveness is the refusal to do these things when either a real or imagined offense has been perpetrated against you.
- Bitterness occurs when unforgiveness is allowed to continue to the point that one gets resentful, angry, or even moves to hatred of one who has offended. Bitterness is the result of holding on to intense feelings of hostility so as not to be able to release the offender.

- The New Testament deals often with the idea of forgiveness and bitterness. The Lord's Prayer reads, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12).
- Jesus said also, "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions" (Mark 11:25-26).
- Paul writes, "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you" (Col. 3:12-13).
- He also writes about bitterness, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice" (Eph. 4:31).
- The author of Hebrews writes, "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled" (Heb. 12:14).

2. Jesus tells us that the refusal to forgive and the bitterness that often accompanies unforgiveness open the door to the torment of the enemy.

- Speaking about the need for forgiveness, "Then Peter came and said to Him, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven'" (Matt. 18:21).
- After using a parable to illustrate this truth, Jesus drew the following conclusion. "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. *My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart*" (Matt. 18:34-35).
- This powerful parable of Jesus teaches a twofold truth concerning the one who is commanded to forgive. First, he is not to hold on to the offense but is to forgive from his heart, and second, he is to release the offender from the consequences of the offense. Failure to do these two things causes the one who refuses to forgive to be turned over to the tormenter.
- Thus, the truth is evident. Prolonged unforgiveness opens us up to the tormenter, that is, the devil. He is granted an open door to oppress the person who will not forgive.

3. Unforgiveness, especially as it leads to bitterness, often causes infirmity.

- Read the following quote from Graeme and Sabrina Walsh,

Many people associated with the healing ministry know that unforgiveness can prevent physical healing and that releasing forgiveness can result in physical healing. People in the medical field also know this, though they may use the term bitter or bitterness. People who hold onto bitterness can become sick and diseased and die. Toxin levels rise, anxiety levels rise, stress levels rise, all of which affect the physical body.⁵
- The testimony of those who minister in the area of healing is consistent. Unforgiveness often leads to sickness and infirmity.

- As ministers of God's healing power, we must lead people to forgive from their heart those who have offended them *and* release them from being responsible for any consequences that the offense has caused in the life of the person being prayed for. As we lead people through the process of forgiveness, healing often comes.

V. Demonic spirits

1. The scriptures state unequivocally that sickness can be caused by a demonic spirit.

- As we observe the gospels, and specifically Jesus' prayers for the sick, we quickly note that at times He prayed for the sick to be healed and at other times He cast out demons which resulted in healing. In the same way, as we pray for the sick, some will be healed through prayer and others by casting out demonic spirits.
- Note some scriptures. "Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, 'This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?' But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, 'This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons'" (Matt. 12:22-24).
- Also, "When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again'" (Mark 9:25-26).
- And, "And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, 'Woman, you are freed from your sickness.' And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God" (Luke 13:11-13).
- And one more reference, "And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, 'Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy, and a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves. I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not. And Jesus answered and said, 'You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.' While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father" (Luke 9:38-42).

2. As we pray for the sick, we must discern if the sickness is the direct result of a demon and, if so, pray accordingly.

- Simple prayer will not heal people who are demonized. Instead, they must go free from the demonic spirits. If the sickness is the result of demonic activity, the demon must be cast out.
- People can become demonized in a number of ways. In our Lifeschool *Basic Deliverance Seminar*, we identify nine common entry points for demons. They are:
 - Habitual sin
 - Prolonged unforgiveness and bitterness
 - Trauma

- Abuse of all types
 - Prenatal issues
 - Soul ties
 - Rejection
 - Involvement in the occult, a cult, or a false religion
 - Generational sin and generational curses
- Any one of these nine entry points can result in a spirit of infirmity or sickness demonizing an individual. When praying for someone and having discerned that the infirmity is from a demon, we must lead the person for whom we are praying to deal appropriately with the entry point by repenting, forgiving, or renouncing and then cast out the spirit. See the Lifeschool class, *Going Free Basic Deliverance Seminar*, for more detailed information on how to do this.
 - Read again a quote from Graeme and Sabrina Walsh,

Here is a significant key about the demonic realm and healing. Sin, curses, and spirits of infirmity are spiritual realities that negatively affect our lives mentally and physically. If they are not removed in the spirit realm by confession, repentance, and, if necessary, by casting out the associated demons, people with these conditions will not be healed.⁶
 - As we see, in many cases in the Gospels healing resulted from a demon being cast out of the sick person. As we pray for the sick, we must be sensitive to the root cause of the illness and if it is caused by a demon, then cast it out.

VI. Generational Sin

1. The scriptures teach that the sins of forefathers have an effect on subsequent generations.

- “Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations’” (Ex. 34:6-7).
- Several other Old Testament passages tell us that the iniquities of the fathers are passed on for three or four generations and even further unless dealt with. Note Exodus 20:4-5, Numbers 14:18, and Deuteronomy 5:9.
- The Hebrew word translated “iniquity” is *avon* or *avown*. This word carries the meaning of perversity, depravity, iniquity, guilt or punishment of iniquity.⁷ Iniquity is a deviation from or twisting of the divine standard.⁸ In other words, iniquity is another word for “sin”.
- Thus, the effects of the sins of our forefathers are continually passed on from one generation to another until someone breaks the cycle.
- For Old Testament saints, these sins produced curses in the lives of the person committing the iniquity and also in the lives of subsequent generations. Let me explain. According to the law, if an Old Testament saint lived in obedience to the law, they were blessed, and, if they disobeyed, they were subject to curses. The entire book of Deuteronomy deals with these issues—especially Deuteronomy 28.

- When God said He would *visit the iniquity of the fathers on the children, grandchildren and even to the third and fourth generation*, He was saying that subsequent generations would experience these same effects of the curse due to the sin of their forefathers.
- Even though the curses listed in the scriptures affect every aspect of life; a significant number relate directly to sickness and infirmity. Therefore, we can conclude that subsequent generations of Old Testament saints experienced sickness due to the sin of their ancestors.

2. Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law.

- According to Galatians 3:13, Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law. Thus, in Christ we are set free from these curses that include sickness and disease. Because of Jesus' work on the cross, New Testament saints are also set free from generational curses that might be incurred due to the sins of forefathers.
- However, as with everything that Jesus did for us, we must appropriate His finished work in faith--and generational curses are no exception.
- God no longer curses us due to the iniquity of our forefathers because Jesus paid the price that we would go free from this consequence of sin. But the enemy still has legal access to bring curses on us due to the sins of our ancestors.

3. The solution for generational curses includes repentance for our involvement in the sin, identificational repentance for the sins of our ancestors, and then prayer for removal of the infirmity.

- In Daniel Chapter 9, Daniel confessed his own sin and the sins of his forefathers. So did Jeremiah (Jer. 14:20) and so did Nehemiah (Neh. 1:6-7).
- Read what Graeme and Sabrina Walsh write,

The key [to breaking generational curses] is to repent for your ancestral sin. Even though it is not your own personal sin, you and your family are affected by it. Jeremiah took responsibility for his sin and his father's sin and we need to do the same. By doing this, we legally close the doorway in the spirit for this sin to continue, and then the curse is broken.⁹
- Once the generational curse has been broken, we may pray for healing, cast out demons if necessary, and believe for the infirmity to be removed.

VII. Acceptance of Infirmity or Disease

1. The gospels reveal stark contrasts in peoples' willingness to live with disease.

- "Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted. A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, 'Do you wish to get well?'" (John 5:2-7).

- Of course the man said “yes” and Jesus healed him. At first reading, it appears that because of the man’s illness, he was unable to get into the pool before anyone else; and, thus, had tried repeatedly yet unsuccessfully for 38 years to get into the pool.
- However, if this had been the case, Jesus would not have asked him if he wished to get well. Instead, the Lord Jesus, discerning the man’s heart, knew that he had grown comfortable in his infirmity. Possibly, there were several advantages to remaining in his condition. He did not have to work. People felt pity on him and provided for him. He made many friends at the pool. The possibilities are endless. But one thing is certain. He had grown accustomed to his illness—life with his condition became normal.
- On the other hand, the woman with the issue of blood paints a totally opposite picture of a person’s desire for healing. She had lived with an incurable infirmity for 12 years. When Jesus came to town, in contrast to the man at the pool of Bethesda, she was determined to get her healing. She thought, “If I just touch His garments, I will get well” (Mark 5:28).
- A few minutes later, Jesus’ disciples revealed an interesting fact when they said, “You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’” (Mark 5:31). In the midst of the multitudes pressing in around Jesus to receive His healing touch, she pushed through the crowds and touched the hem of His garment and was healed.
- In another example, a Canaanite woman encountered Jesus and cried out for the healing of her daughter. Note how the passage reads, “And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and *began to cry out*, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed’” (Matt. 15:22). Initially, Jesus had no intention of ministering to her daughter because His ministry at that time was only to the Jews. But, because of her persistence, He changed His mind, cast out the demon from her daughter and the girl was healed (Matt. 15:21-28).
- Throughout the scriptures, determination to pursue God’s healing power was a key to being healed. Those who fervently pursued God’s healing touch got healed whereas those who didn’t did not receive their healing.

2. Even today, willingness to accept infirmity hinders God’s healing touch.

- There are many reasons that we might accept an infirmity or disease. Doctors may tell us there is no cure, and as a result we accept their diagnosis as the final word. Or, we have lived with the infirmity for so long that we just assume there is nothing that can be done. It is just easier to take a pill and suffer a few side effects than to pursue healing from God.
- Many who suffer with infirmity have been taught that God no longer heals as He did during the days of the early Church. For those who believe as such, the traditions of man have made the word of no effect (Matt. 15:6). Others have been taken captive through the deceptive philosophies of the world rather than living according to the Word of Christ (Col. 2:8).
- The reasons for passively accepting illness and infirmity are numerous. But the consequences are the same. When we just accept the disease, infirmity, or illness, our complacency hinders God from moving in our lives with His healing power.
- As those who will minister to the sick, a significant aspect of our ministry will be to awaken people’s confidence in God’s ability to heal, stir their faith afresh for healing, and motivate them to pursue divine healing.

VIII. Diet and lifestyle

1. Old Testament law addresses a saint's diet and lifestyle.

- Even from the beginning, God spoke to man about food. He told him what he was permitted to eat and what he was not. In the beginning, man was permitted to eat food from plants, most likely, fruit, grains, nuts, vegetables, and the roots of the plants. After the flood, man was allowed (though not required) to eat certain types of meat.
- Later, the Mosaic Law specified foods that were prohibited. Four footed animals that do not chew the cud or have cloven feet were prohibited (Lev. 11:4-8; Deut. 14:7-8); fish without scales and fins, eels and all shellfish were prohibited (Lev 11:9-12); birds of prey and such as feed upon worms and rotting flesh were to be avoided (11:13-19); serpents and creeping insects also were prohibited. Also the eating of all blood of cattle, birds, and bloody flesh were off limits (Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14; Deut. 12:16,23; Gen. 9:4; 1 Sam. 14:32-34); the fatty portions that, in the sacrifice of oxen, sheep, and goats, were burned upon the altar were not to be consumed (Lev 3:17; 7:23,25); and, also, everything consecrated to idols (Ex. 34:15).¹⁰

2. The New Testament reduces the restrictions on what can be eaten to the point, that many believe, of declaring all food permissible to eat.

- For those who would desire to eat all foods, a favorite passage is 1 Timothy 4:1-5. It reads, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. *For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer*".
- There are also other New Testament passages easing the restrictions upon the foods we can eat. Acts 15:27-29 (TLB) reads, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden of Jewish laws on you than to abstain from eating food offered to idols and from unbled meat of strangled animals, and, of course, from fornication. If you do this, it is enough. Farewell."
- Acts 21:25 reinforces the preceding principle established by the early Church for Gentile believers. And 1 Corinthians 8 deals with eating foods sacrificed to idols. In the process of dealing with this issue, it appears that Paul suggests that we are free to eat all foods.
- And Romans 14:14-17 summarizes the concept very well. "I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

3. However, the New Testament never declares all foods healthy for us.

- Although there is much disagreement in the Body of Christ on this point, it appears clear that the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and, later, Paul stated that in light of the coming of the New Covenant, virtually all foods are permissible to eat.
- But, nowhere in the New Testament does any Biblical writer suggest that all foods are equally good or healthy for us.
- Therefore, how do we apply the Old Testament dietary laws, the New Testament writings concerning food, and the present day nutritional research that seems to support the wisdom of the dietary laws?

4. Eating healthy and pursuing a healthy lifestyle help us stay healthy.

- With the realization that a full discussion of the nutritional value of food is far beyond the scope of this session and of our expertise, the answer to the question in the preceding section is that the Bible teaches that our diet and lifestyle affect our health!
- The Book of Deuteronomy makes it very evident that there is a relationship between the law and sickness. There are also other examples in scripture to support the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Daniel offers an excellent example. Daniel and his Jewish friends abstained from the king's choice food and, after a ten day test period, they were found with a better appearance and stronger than those who ate the king's food. Their diet affected their health.
- Many Christians have presumed that New Testament liberty and God's promises of health and healing give them permission to eat anything they wish as often as they wish, to over eat, and to avoid exercise—and then to expect God to keep them healthy and heal them when they incur infirmity.
- In sharing why some people are not healed, F.F. Bosworth writes this,

The failure of some to receive healing is because of the breaking of natural laws. Let it be remembered that natural laws are God's laws and that they are as divine as are His miracles. Nature is God in action, but not miraculously. Because of their ignorance of natural laws some are not supplying their bodies with the required nourishment, or they may be over eating, while asking God to heal them of stomach trouble, and thereby hindering the answer to their prayers. After God had revealed Himself as Jehovah-rapha, our Healer, the conditions He imposed were that the people observe His laws of health.¹¹
- God speaks significantly about diet and healthy living as principles that help us maintain good health and avoid many of the chronic illnesses of today.

IX. Believing God Is Glorified in Infirmity

1. At times, illness is the result of none of the above issues.

- We only have to observe the events around us to know that without a doubt we live in a fallen world. Sin permeates every city and nation of the earth. We see the effects of the curse all around us. And because we live in a fallen world, sometimes sickness happens. It occurs, and it cannot be attributed to any of the reasons discussed above.

- Jesus dealt with this same issue. Read what He said, "As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world'" (John 9:1-5).
- Essentially, Jesus explained that this man's infirmity was not attributable to any particular opening to the enemy; instead, he was blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

2. God is glorified when He works in the lives of people.

- Many believers, especially in the west, hold to the view that God is glorified through sickness. Some believe that infirmity is a thorn in the flesh and that how we deal with this "thorn" glorifies God. We should note that the scriptures never teach that Paul's thorn was any form of infirmity. Nonetheless, in one sense, God is glorified when we endure any adversity with patience.
- However, as the preceding story reveals, God is glorified *the most* when He demonstrates His works in and through us. After Jesus healed this blind man, the Pharisees were discussing this powerful miracle. It was noted in the discussion, "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind" (John 9:32).
- It was not the man's infirmity that stirred the discussion and brought awareness of the greatness of God; rather, it was his miraculous healing.
- The same is true today. God is glorified when we don't let affliction keep us from praising and following Him; however, His higher purpose is to display His works—in this case, healing—in us that the world might believe that He is the light of the world!
- So, let's help those we pray for close all of the open doors to the enemy so that they might experience God's miraculous healing power.

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1. Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2000 by BibleSoft
 2. Graeme and Sabrina Walsh, *Christianity & Healing*, Copyright 2006 by Graeme Walsh, p. 17.
 3. *Ibid*, p. 42.
 4. Gordon D. Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987, p. 566-567.
 5. Walsh, p. 29.
 6. *Ibid*, p. 16.

7. The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, 1993, Woodside Bible Fellowship, Ontario, Canada. Licensed from the Institute for Creation Research.
8. Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p. 566.
9. Walsh, p. 38.
10. The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright (c) 1988.)
11. Bosworth, p. 183-4.

Session 4

The Creative Power Of God's Word

This session covers:

- A look at the truth that God's Word is more than informative, but it is also creative.
- A look at the life of God and at how God creates all things through His Word.

I. More than Information

1. The Word of God contains all that we need for life and godliness.

- Virtually every born again believer knows that the Bible is powerful. We understand that God has granted us everything we need for life and godliness. We witness with writings of Peter as he states that God's "divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." (2 Peter 1:3-4).
- And the Bible is the primary source of our having access to the divine power of God.
- The Bible is God's Word to mankind to tell us of God's love, care, and concern for His people. God's Word is a guidebook for life; it is a story of God's love; a source of historical information; a list of do's and don'ts; and a set of principles for success.
- But, it is even much more than this. The Bible is not merely words that offer wisdom and guidance; moreover, it contains God's words of life, words of life that actually release the life of God into our lives.

2. The Bible is alive with spiritual power--the living and active Word of God.

- The Bible is not only a reservoir of profound information; it is also a source of life. It doesn't just tell us about the abundant life; it actually releases the life of God into our lives. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63).
- In so speaking, Jesus explains that there is a spiritual power encapsulated in the Word of God that when properly used overcomes death of all forms and produces life in abundance.
- Reinforcing the words of Jesus, the Book of Hebrews records, "For the word of God is *living and active* and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).
- The Word of God is much, much more than a source of valuable information. It actually contains a living spiritual power and when received in our hearts in faith actually releases the life of God into our lives, families and situations we face. The Word has the power to create life where it does not exist, uphold us in difficult situations, and sustain a life of victory in all who receive it. The Word is alive and active to bring about life and godliness wherever it is believed and received.
- Yes, the Word of God is much more than information.

II. The Life of God

1. The living Word of God releases the life of God to all who receive it.

- In John 6:63, that verse in which Jesus stated that His words are spirit and life, the Greek word for life is *zoe'* (dzo-ay'). *Zoe'* is one of three Greek words commonly translated life in the Bible. *Bios* refers to length of life, the facts about a life, or the externals of life. *Psyche'* speaks of life in the context of life as a living being or soul.¹
- But, *zoe'* life is different. *Zoe'*, which is used 134 times in the New Testament, is the *life of God* experienced by an individual. It refers to a quality of life found only in God; that is, resurrection life. *Zoe'* life refers to a unique quality of life that spans eternity and brings the power of God to flow within the individual so that they are lifted beyond limitations to experience the life that God offers.²
- Leon Morris in his commentary on the Gospel of John writes this concerning *zoe'* life, "It [*zoe'*] means that Jesus' words are creative utterances. They bring life. They do not only tell of life."³
- F.F. Bosworth writes,

All things are possible to *zoe*. When it is received in sufficient measure, it can fulfill in us any promise or any requirement in the Bible. To fulfill in us all that the Bible requires or promises is precisely what the "Life of God" in us was to accomplish. By receiving enough of the "Life of God," we can be made "more than conquerors," "spirit, soul, and body." God wants to do in us, all that He did in Christ *for* us.⁴
- In this same passage of scripture (John 6), Jesus states that He is the true manna from heaven and the real Bread of Life. So, in this context, when Jesus says that His Words are spirit and life, He is telling us that His Words are sources of God's spiritual power intended to nourish us, sustain us, and restore us--to release the life of God into those who believe.

2. The Word of God penetrates deep within our spirit to release the life of God into our whole man—body, soul, and spirit.

- A few paragraphs ago, Hebrews 4:12 was quoted. As we read this verse we see that the Word of God is not only active and living but that it penetrates beyond the soul into the spirit of a person. To illustrate this truth, the author of Hebrews compares this wonderful promise to the Word penetrating beyond the joints even into the bone marrow, "piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit...of joints and marrow."
- The use of bone marrow is an interesting way to illustrate this truth. The bone marrow is that place deep inside the bone in which blood cells are produced. Red blood cells produced in the bone marrow carry life-giving oxygen from the lungs to body tissue throughout the entire body in exchange for carbon dioxide.⁵ White blood cells, also produced in the bone marrow, have the primary purpose of fighting all types of infection. As the Bible tells us, life is in the blood. Without the blood performing this nurturing, cleansing, sustaining task, life would quickly cease.
- In the spiritual world, the Word functions much like the blood cells. The Word penetrates deep into our spirit producing the life of the Word and then the life of the Word is carried throughout our body and our life in general to accomplish what it is needed to do. Just like the blood carries oxygen throughout the body to bring life, the blood of Jesus brings the Word to give *zoe'* life. The Word acts as do the red blood cells to take the breath of God throughout the body and as the white cells to fight off disease and sin.
- Thus, the Word of God is alive to release the life of God in us and the situations we face.

III. The Creative Power of the Word

The living and active Word of God—that is, the Word that releases the life of God—is creative in nature. The Word of God is filled with the power to bring into being those things that do not exist. Now that we have spoken about the Word being alive, active, and powerful, let's discuss *how* powerful the Word is as we examine the creative power of the Word.

1. The heavens, the earth, and everything in them were created by the Word of God.

- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light" (Gen 1:1-3).
- And to confirm the truth that the world was created by the Word of God, notice the following. "In these last days God has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, *through whom also He made the world*" (Heb. 1:2). Jesus, who is the Word of God (John 1:1), created the world from nothing. He made light out of darkness and life out of emptiness. All of the creative order obeyed the voice of God—that is, His Word.

- The Psalms support this same concept. *"By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done"* (Ps. 33:6-9).
- We see from the Genesis account and from these supporting passages that God created the heavens, the earth and all forms of life by His Word. Even though God has always existed, the heavens and the earth have not. They were void of any form of light or life. As God spoke, that is, released His Word, the heavens, the earth, and the life they house came into being.

2. The Word calls into being things which do not exist.

- Not only did God's Word create life out of nothing at the time of creation, it continues to do the same today. God's Word calls into being things which do not presently exist.
- Speaking about Abraham, Paul writes of his faith toward God's promise. He records, "as it is written, 'A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU' in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, *who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist*" (Rom 4:17).
- Yes, God gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that do not exist.
- In Ephesians 1:3, Paul writes that in Christ we have access to all spiritual blessings, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ...". In other words, every promise for every need, for every struggle, and for every infirmity has been granted to us in the spirit realm even from the beginning of our walk with God. And just as in the case with Abraham, God's Word can bring these promises from the potential of the spirit realm into realization in our lives.
- The natural world does not drive the spiritual world. In fact, the opposite is true. The spirit world drives the natural world. Observe the following quote from a prophetic message issued by Prophet Bob Jones in 2006. He writes,

The earth will continue to experience great turmoil as this spiritual conflict rages. There will be many earthquakes, volcanoes, viruses and diseases, disruptions in the seas, and other forms of natural calamities. God's people must learn to take authority over these issues and exercise dominion. *Because mankind is out of harmony with God, so also is nature. The indications in nature are a reflection of the condition of mankind in general.*⁶

- Although he uses different phraseology, he is stating the same basic principle. The natural world tracks the events occurring in the spiritual world. We are not driven by what we see, feel, or hear. We are guided by the Word of God. And God's Word calls into the natural realm those things that only exist in the spirit realm. God's Word when used in faith, calls life from death, health from sickness, and light from darkness.

3. The Word of God as seed sown in fertile soil illustrates the creative power of the Word.

- The Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15) describes the power of the Word as seed. Briefly, when seed--which is the Word of God--is sown into fertile soil, it produces a harvest, sometimes a thirtyfold, sometimes sixtyfold, and sometimes one hundredfold. The seed when left alone (John 12:24) produces nothing, but when planted into good soil bears much fruit.

- In the picture of the seed we see the creative power of the Word. There is creative power in the seed to produce a great harvest. A small seed has the capability to produce a great fruit tree that bears much fruit for years and even produces more seed that can be used by others to produce even more fruit. In the same manner, there is creative power in the Word to produce a great harvest—a bountiful harvest that can last for years and multiply to bless others with the blessings of God.
- For the seed to produce a harvest, we must do something with the seed. If left alone, even though there is great potential in the seed, it accomplishes nothing. But, when received, believed, and declared over our needy situations, it produces a great crop.

4. The Word of God as seed in a fertile womb also illustrates the creative power of the Word.

- The angel Gabriel was sent to Mary to tell her of God's mighty plan to birth the Messiah through her. Even though she must have been very frightened and unsure of many things, she responded, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).
- The Spirit of the Lord came upon Mary depositing the seed of the eternal Word in her womb of faith, and the Messiah was born.
- When Abraham faced a crisis of his faith, the scriptures record this encounter with the Lord, "And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be" (Gen. 15:3-5, KJV).
- And we see Sarah's part—to receive the seed of God's Word to Abraham in faith. The Book of Hebrews notes about her, "By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised" (Heb. 11:11).
- Mary's faith in the Word produced Jesus who touched the world in ways only God could do. Abraham's seed—the seed of God's word to him—in Sarah's womb of faith produced the child of promise who also touched the entire world.

So whether we draw upon the analogy of the Word as seed into a fertile soil or a receptive womb, we see that God's seed--His Word—produces life when received and believed.

IV. The Creative Word to Heal

1. Among the many applications of this truth, the creative Word of God heals our diseases.

- The creative power of the Word can create light out of darkness to enable a believer to overcome sin, strongholds, and issues that torment.
- The creative Word of God can birth life out of barrenness. It can produce children where there are none. It can fulfill a ministry calling where there is only hopelessness.

- The creative Word of God can produce a harvest where there is lack. It can take a believer from the wilderness to the Promised Land and cause us to live in a land of plenty rather than a land of meager existence.
- And the creative Word of God can create a life that overcomes death, offering resurrection power to heal sickness, disease, and infirmity.

2. The Word is medicine to our body.

- Proverbs Chapter 4 offers great insight into the power of obeying God's Word. Contained in this powerful section of scripture, this Proverb reads, "My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight; Keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them and *health to all their body*" (Prov. 4:20-22).
- The Word of God is medicine to our bodies. It is as medicine to heal us when we are sick and to sustain in good health when we are well.
- As we partake of the creative, healing Word of God digesting it into our spirit, keeping it on our lips and in our heart, the healing Word becomes as medicine to our bodies, keeping us well and healing our diseases.

3. The healing Word produces health.

- One of the first principles taught in the Bible is that everything reproduces after its kind. "Then God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth *bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them*'; and it was so. The earth *brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind*; and God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:11-12).
- And the Word brings forth fruit after its kind also. The Word of righteousness brings forth righteous behavior. The Word of provision brings forth prosperity. And the healing Word brings forth health and healing.
- The healing word is a seed that produces a crop of health. The healing word creates healing and health where there is none. The healing word resurrects the sick and weak from their sickbed. The healing Word causes the believer to be healed when they are sick and walk in health in order to maintain good health.

V. Ministering the Healing Word

1. We are God's chosen instrument to release God's healing Word.

- "But the *word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart*, that you may observe it. See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it" (Deut. 30:14-16).
- God has chosen us as His instruments to release God's creative Word of healing and health. Whether it is to be spoken over ourselves or over others for whom we will pray, the call is to *believe* the healing Word in our heart and to *speak* it, *proclaim* it, *declare* it, and *pray* it.
- Like the Bible says, life and death is in the power of the tongue. As we speak life over ourselves and those to whom we are ministering from a heart that truly believes God's healing Word, then we can expect the creative Word to do its work.

2. For God to use us mightily to release His healing power, the healing Word must be believed in our heart and spoken with our mouth.

- When we first begin to hear a Biblical truth, we either don't receive it at all, or we receive it for a brief while, then we forget it. When we do begin to receive truth, it almost always comes first to our mind. But as the Parable of the Sower states, the Word bears fruit when we receive it in our heart.
- We will speak much more about faith in the next session, but for now know this. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Heart level faith comes as we hear the Word. Whether it is spoken by someone else or whether we confess the Word over ourselves, faith comes by hearing. As we declare the Word over our own life and meditate on that Word, keeping it in our remembrance, it begins to move from our mind to our heart; to our heart, where we begin to take ownership of the Word.
- As we repeatedly deal with the healing Word in such a manner, it begins to take root and produce a bountiful crop of health and healing. And when we begin to live this way, we position ourselves to become effective as God's ministers to heal the sick.

3. Healing prayers from a believing heart such as described above become prayers that "thank", "remind", "release", and "bind".

- One way to pray from a heart that believes God's healing power is to thank God that He heals. For example, we can pray something like this. "Father, I thank You that You sent your Word to heal (Psalm 107:20). Or we can thank Jesus for His healing work at the cross. We can thank God that we are heirs to the covenant promise of God's healing power. We can thank Him that He has redeemed us from the curse. The variations are endless; however, the idea is that, drawing upon the Word, we thank God for what He has already accomplished on our behalf.
- Another way to pray in this way is to remind God of His promises. These are the "You said" prayers. Lord, You said that "by the stripes of Jesus, I have been healed". You said "that Jesus had compassion upon the multitudes and healed them". You said that "we have been redeemed from the curse of sin, death, and the law". Essentially this approach is to remind God of His Word by repeating His Word back to Him.
- A third way to pray in this fashion is to release the anointing of the healing promises over the individual for whom we are praying. Prayers such as, "we ask you Lord to release the promises of Your Word over this person". Or, "we ask You to release Your anointing to heal" in the life of this sick person.
- Finally, a fourth way to pray in this way is to bind the work of the enemy over the person's life and then loose the healing Word. A method of doing this is to pray that the particular sickness would be bound or that the cause of the sickness would be bound and, again drawing upon the Word, loose the healing promises over the person.
- Appendix 1 presents a list of some of the common healing scriptures found in the Bible. Meditate on them. Get familiar with them and then use them as you pray for the sick.

In conclusion, as we pray for the sick or pursue a life of health, we should always remember that God's Word is accompanied by a creative power that actually brings the healing power of God into the area of need. Let it sink deep within your spirit and from that heart of faith declare God's creative Word over yourself and those you will pray for.

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1. Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, MI., 1985, p. 410.
 2. *Ibid*, p. 412.
 3. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, 1971, p. 385.
 4. Bosworth, p. 153.
 5. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_blood_cell
 6. www.elijahlist.com, Shepherd's Rod 2007, Part 6, November 26, 2006.

Session 5

The Importance Of Faith

This session covers:

- How Jesus and the New Testament Church healed in response to faith.
- A definition of faith and how it grows
- Keys to growing our faith for healing

I. Healing In Response to Faith

1. Throughout the Gospels, the one factor recorded more than any other that moved Jesus to heal was faith.

- The Gospels identify several keys for receiving divine healing, and we will observe many of these in the next session. However, by far the most frequently recorded heart attitude that moves God to heal is *faith*. Throughout the gospels, Jesus tells those who came to him for healing that "your faith has made you well". Let's look at a few scripture passages.
- "And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him, and saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented.' Jesus said to him, 'I will come and heal him.' But the centurion said, 'Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 'For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it.' Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, 'Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. 'I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 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. 8:5-13).

- "While He was saying these things to them, a synagogue official came and bowed down before Him, and said, 'My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live.' Jesus got up and began to follow him, and so did His disciples. And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; for she was saying to herself, 'If I only touch His garment, I will get well.' But Jesus turning and seeing her said, '*Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.*' At once the woman was made well" (Matt. 9:18-22).
- "As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!' When He entered the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, '*It shall be done to you according to your faith.*' And their eyes were opened" (Matt. 9:27-30).
- "Jesus went away from there, and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon. And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.' But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, 'Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us.' But He answered and said, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' But she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' And He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.' But she said, 'Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' 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" (Matt. 15:21-28).
- "While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; and they raised 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 were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine--where are they? 'Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?' And He said to him, '*Stand up and go; your faith has made you well*'" (Luke 17:11-19).
- In each of the above examples, it was the faith of the people that moved Jesus to heal. He healed in response to faith.

2. Jesus was limited in His healing power by a lack of faith.

- Not only did Jesus heal in response to faith, He was limited in His ability to heal when the people or the place where He was ministering was filled with unbelief. Notice the following two scriptures.
- "When Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there. He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? 'Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His

brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things? And they took offense at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own household.' *And He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief*" (Matt. 13:53-58).

- Even Jesus, the Son of God, could perform miracles only on a limited basis in His own hometown due to the unbelief of the people.
- And another example, "While He was saying these things to them, a synagogue official came and bowed down before Him, and said, 'My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live.' Jesus got up and began to follow him, and so did His disciples....When Jesus came into the official's house, and saw the flute-players and the crowd in noisy disorder, He said, 'Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep.' *And they began laughing at Him. But when the crowd had been sent out,* He entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up" (Matt. 9:18-25).
- In the preceding example, a synagogue official's daughter had died, and the official beseeched Jesus to raise her from the dead. When Jesus came, those who had gathered laughed at Jesus. So what did He do before He raised her from the dead? He cleared the house of those who did not believe!

3. To summarize, Jesus encouraged faith in at least three realms.

- First, Jesus encouraged faith in the person being prayed for. In a previous section, we listed six different Biblical references in which the faith of the person being prayed for was critical to their healing. Thus, we see the importance for the person being prayed for to believe that God *will* heal them when they are prayed for.
- Second, Jesus required faith in the place of prayer. Due to unbelief, He could do little in His hometown. And when raising someone from the dead, He required all who did not believe to leave the room. Creating an atmosphere of faith is very important for successful healing prayer.
- Third, Jesus emphasized the need for faith in the person praying. Probably, Jesus' most familiar passage concerning faith is recorded in Mark 11. It reads, "And Jesus answered saying to them, '*Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you*" (Mark 11:22-24). As we see in this passage, it is essential that the person praying believe that God is going to answer his or her prayers. And, in the context of healing, it is essential that the person praying for the sick have faith that God is going to heal the person in response to their prayer.
- So faith is an essential ingredient to our seeing God move in His healing power. Next, let's attempt to understand what faith is.

II. Faith Is

1. Faith is accepting what God says in His Word and acting on it.¹

- "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). As the author of Hebrews writes, faith is having a level of certainty ("assurance") that God will fulfill His promises ("things hoped for") even

when we do not see the evidence of that promise fulfilled (“conviction of things not seen”).

- The New Living Translation states it this way, “Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it give us assurance about things we cannot see” (Heb. 11:1, NLT)
- Observe the following quote from F.F. Bosworth,

Over and over again we are told that Abraham was counted righteous. The story as to how his righteousness was determined is very simple. *He believed God and acted accordingly.* He believed and acted as if he had received from God the fulfillment of His promise. To do this is the sum total of righteousness. Nothing can ever be so important and such a privilege as this. It is in this way alone that God’s glorious program for the individual and for the church can be carried out. In no other way can the will and work of God be done by anyone.²

2. Faith is the means by which God rewards man with fulfillment of His promises.

- “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).
- As the preceding verse tells us, the only way we can please God in our walk with Him is to live by faith in His Word. But this verse tells us even more. It states that God rewards those who seek Him in faith. Faith is the channel by which God rewards His followers with fulfillment of His promises—promises that include health and healing.
- Let’ read the preceding verse this way, “...for he who comes to God [in need of healing] must believe that He is [His name is Jehovah-rapha, the Lord our Healer] and that He is a rewarder of those who seek [diligently, fervently] Him [as their healer]”.
- After seeing Jesus feed the 5,000, some asked Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, *that you believe in Him* whom He has sent’ (John 6:28-29).
- So, how do we experience God’s healing power? We encounter God’s healing power when we take Him at His word and act on it—that is, when we respond to His healing promises in faith—because faith is the channel by which God rewards His children.

3. Faith is the means by which the impossible becomes possible.

- “Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not drive it out?’ And He said to them, ‘Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have *faith the size of a mustard seed*, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and *nothing will be impossible to you*’” (Matt 17:19-20).
- With man there are many things that are impossible. Even with the most skilled physician, there are diseases that are impossible to cure. With man, there are sicknesses that lead to death. With man’s best efforts, there are infirmities that torment and harass for life. With man, there are many illnesses that hinder the fullness of a life of purpose and destiny. *But with God nothing is impossible.* The most difficult disease can be healed. In the most hopeless situation, there is hope. Nothing is impossible to God.

- But notice what Jesus said to His disciples. He said “nothing will be impossible to you.” We would all agree that nothing is impossible to God. But Jesus went one step further. He told His followers that nothing would be impossible to them as they exercised their faith.
- If only we have the faith of a mustard seed, nothing will be impossible to us. Healing of the sick, raising of the dead, setting people free from strongholds, diseases, and areas of torment. All of these works of God are possible to His workers. How? Because of their faith.

So faith is. Faith is believing God. It is the means through which He works. It is the way He turns the impossible into the possible. Only when God finds the exercise of living faith for the fulfillment of His promises does He work. Only when God finds living faith for the fulfillment of His healing Word does He release His healing power.

III. Faith Grows

1. God has deposited a seed of faith within each of us.

- God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. In so doing, He has given us the potential to believe God in faith for His healing promises. There is a seed of faith for healing in us all. Our challenge is to allow this seed of faith, sometimes even smaller than a tiny mustard seed, to grow and flourish in our heart.
- Joseph Kansema speaks of the faith potential in each of us as he writes,

When those who are sick hear that they can be healed by faith from any kind of sickness, what comes into their minds is: “I wish I had faith or if I had faith, I could have been healed.” If you are a child of God, know that you have within you what it takes to have faith that is needed to bring healing from any kind of sickness or disease. If you did not have what it takes to have faith, God could not have expected you to have it. The fact that God expects you to be healed by faith shows that God knows that you can have faith for your healing. God cannot ask you to have what He knows you do not have the capacity to have. Statements like, “whosoever believes” show that believing is not for some people, but for every born again Christian. Every believer has a God kind of faith in him that was deposited in his heart on the day of salvation as a seed faith.³

2. Faith produces its intended result when we hold the truths of God deep within our heart, express them on our lips, and walk them out in our actions.

- Let’s examine these three dimensions of living in faith—holding on to the Word, speaking it, and acting on it.
- First, the Parable of the Sower speaks to us about holding the Word in our heart. Recorded in three of the four Gospels, this parable highlights several important

words that describe a heart of faith. These words include “hear the word in an honest and good heart”, “understand”, “accept”, “hold it fast”, and “perseverance”. (Matt. 13:23, Mark 4:20, Luke 8:15).

- This parable tells us that when we receive the Word in such a way, the Word produces a large harvest. The Word of faith begins to bear much fruit—either a thirty, sixty, or hundredfold return—when we first understand it, then accept it into an honest and good heart, and finally hold fast to with perseverance regardless of what circumstances may say to us. The Word begins to produce a harvest when we hold it in our heart.
- The second dimension of faith that produces a harvest is speaking the Word. Read the following, “But what does it say? ‘THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART’--that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation” (Rom 10:8-10).
- The Word of faith produces righteousness—that is, it produces the result that we desire--when it is believed in the heart and confessed with the mouth. In order for faith to work, it is very important that the confession our mouth line up and agree with the truths we hold in our heart.
- The third dimension of faith that works is walking out the truth of God’s Word in our actions.
- Over the last 50 years, there have been many abuses in attempting to act as though God’s healing Word is true. However, even so, it is important that we act as though we believe the healing Word. When someone is sick among us, we call on the Elders to pray. When we have a need, we confess our dependency upon Jesus as the Great Physician rather than running first and foremost to a doctor. Certainly, there is a balance to be worked out in living this out in real life. But we must act as though God is our healer.
- Our faith grows as we do the things that produce these three dimensions of living in faith. Our challenge is to build our faith, even if currently it is even smaller than a mustard seed, so that the Word begins to work for us. And, if we desire to be used in the healing ministry or to live in divine health, we must devote ourselves to the task of growing our faith for healing.
- There are several faith building activities that will grow our faith. The following lists six of those faith growing keys.

IV. Keys to Growing Faith

1. Understand that faith comes by hearing the Word.

- “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17).
- We build faith by hearing the Word of God—and by hearing it repeatedly and regularly. Going back to the Parable of the Sower, we realize that there are four different soils described in this story. The first is hard soil which describes a condition of the heart where the Word makes no inroad into our life. It describes a state of the heart in which the enemy steals the Word due to lack of understanding before it even affects our life in the least. There are two other soils that produce little fruit. In one case, the Word is initially received but affliction causes it

to be abandoned. In the other, the truth of the Word is lost due to the cares and worries of the world.

- But when we hear the Word regularly, repeatedly, in an accepting heart that does not forget it, our faith begins to grow.

2. Understand that it is easy to have strong faith in an area of truth when we have deep knowledge of that truth.

- In every area of Biblical truth, there is a direct connection between knowledge of that truth and faith. When we know something is true without any doubt, it is easy to believe the truth. We believe it because we *know* it to be true. Although this pertains to all areas of life, it certainly pertains to the truths of God's Word. When we know a particular truth is real—when we know it is real beyond any doubt—it is easy to believe it.
- So, deep knowledge of a subject produces solid faith. And deep knowledge of God's compassionate desire to heal and of His healing power to do so produces deep faith for healing.

3. Therefore, in order to develop deep knowledge, it is important to develop a lifestyle of regularly receiving the Word into our life.

- For the Word to impact us on any lasting basis, we must repeatedly hear it in a variety of forms. We must listen to it preached, read it, study it, meditate upon it, and speak it over ourselves and families. As we repeatedly hear the Word, we begin to understand it and hold fast to it.
- As we repeatedly hear the Word, it goes from our head to our heart—the place where it bears much fruit.

4. Develop a lifestyle of regularly receiving the healing Word into our life.

- The Word bears fruit *after its kind*. And the healing Word bears the fruit of health and healing. Faith for healing comes by hearing the Word of healing.
- It is amazing that we can barely even know a Biblical truth, but as we continually read, study, and meditate on the truths of the topic we are studying, it will not be long before the truth becomes very real to us. It is ours and it will produce much fruit.

5. Meditate on the fact that health and healing are covenant promises of God made available to the believer through the New Covenant.

- This is an important point to emphasize. Health and healing are more than just Biblical truths. They are promises made to the born again believer by covenant.
- Why is this distinction so important? Because God is faithful to His covenant, and He is faithful to His covenant promises. When God makes a promise by covenant, He secures it with His very being promising to be faithful to His Word.
- And healing and health are covenant promises made available to New Covenant believers as one of the blessings promised to Abraham. You can see our Lifeschool class, *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ*, for much more detail on God's blood covenants and the associated blessings that accompany them.
- But, very briefly know that God entered into covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). We are heirs to that covenant in Christ (Gal. 3:13-14), and a promise made to Abraham's descendents through covenant is health and healing (Deut. 7:9-15).

6. Whether you are sick or well, confess the healing Word over your life on a regular basis.

- The word is like medicine to our bodies. And confessing the Word is a good way to take the medicine. As we confess the healing Word over our life and family, several things take place.
- First, confessing the healing Word builds heart level faith. It is startling how well this works. Initially, when you begin to confess the Word, you may hardly believe the Word you are confessing. But as you continue to confess it day after day, it begins to take root in your heart. Before long, the truth that you originally doubted now becomes a truth to which you hold.
- Second, confessing the healing Word begins to release health over us. Remember our study of the creative power of the Word. The Word does not only tell us about life, it actually releases the life of God in us. The Word does act much like a medicine. It is a preventive vitamin when you are well and a medication when you are sick.

7. Ask God to increase your faith for healing.

- God is a God of great grace. His grace, which His divine power made available to help us in our weaknesses, will empower us to believe if only we will ask. So, ask Him for a work of His grace to increase your faith for healing.
- One of the gifts of the Spirit is the gift of faith (1 Cor. 12:9). Just as we would ask God for the gift of prophecy or for the word of knowledge, ask Him for the gift of faith. We receive not because we ask not. So, let's ask for the gift of faith—specifically for the gift of faith for healing.

8. Finally, begin to exercise your faith.

- Any discipline in our Christian walk grows as we exercise that discipline. For example, as we exercise our gift of teaching our ability to effectively teach grows. As we pray, our ability to pray effectively grows. Our gifts and disciplines grow by reason of use.
- This principle applies also to praying for the sick. As we exercise our faith by praying for the sick we encounter, our faith for praying for the sick grows. As we exercise our faith for living in health by speaking the truths of the Word over our life rather than the often negative words that doctors, friends or relatives would lead us to speak, our faith for living in divine health grows. As we pray for our children and friends when they have colds or minor infirmities, our faith grows.
- One very important principle that many seasoned teachers share is that we do not want to start our journey of growing our faith by taking on cancer. It is good to begin to exercise our faith by believing God for "little" things. As we do and see Him work in response to our exercising our faith, then we grow in faith and prepare ourselves to take on bigger challenges—both in our life and in the lives of others.
- So, faith grows as we put it into practice.

V. Releasing Faith through Prayer

1. Faith must not only grow, it must also be released.

- In the eleventh Chapter of Hebrews, that famous hall of faith chapter, it is easy to observe this essential truth: that is, to produce results, *faith must be released*.
- By faith, Abel *offered* a better sacrifice; by faith Enoch was taken up by God because he was *pleasing* [in his heart and actions] to God; by faith Noah *prepared* an ark; by faith Abraham, when he was called, *went out* to the place of his inheritance; by faith Abraham *offered up* Isaac; and by faith, Moses was *hidden* for three months (Heb. 11:4-23).
- In virtually every example of scripture, faith is demonstrated by those living by faith. In fact, James describes the importance of releasing faith through some type of faith action. He writes, "But someone may well say, 'You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.' You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 2:18-24).
- Faith without works is useless. Said another way, faith without some act that demonstrates our faith does not produce results. Faith must be released.

Three common ways our faith is released is through: 1) our confession, 2) our actions, and 3) our prayers. In this session we will look briefly at releasing our faith through prayer.

2. A predominant way faith is released is through prayer.

- Jesus' most profound statement about faith is recorded in Mark 11:22-24. In this passage, He tells His followers that "whoever says to the mountain, 'be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him" (Mark 11:23). Immediately following this statement concerning their faith, He states the following, "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you *pray and ask*, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you" (Mark 11:24).
- Do you see the distinction? It is not sufficient to just believe in our heart. We see results when we *pray and ask* from a heart that truly believes.
- Note the following quote from Joseph Kansema from his book, *You Can Be Healed Today*,

Although faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, faith is executed through prayer. It takes prayer to break demonic barriers that may try to hold back and hinder your healing. Apart from that, prayer makes our spirits sensitive and receptive to the work of the Holy Spirit in our spirits. The word of God and prayer are like food and water. Just as our bodies need food and water

for a normal healthy living, the spiritual man also needs both the word and prayer to function properly.....Faith cannot replace prayer. We need to give prayer its place if we are to experience the miracle working power of God. As a matter of fact, it is through prayer that we execute faith. Through prayer, we allow the Holy Spirit to give life to the word we have believed.⁴

3. We release faith when we pray fervently.

- In the context of praying for the sick and in the context of praying in faith, James writes the following. "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The *effective, fervent prayer* of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16, NKJV).
- Prayer that is offered out of a heart of faith will be fervent. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man or woman can accomplish much in regards to the prayer for healing.
- Passivity in prayer, meaningless repetition in prayer, and just going through the motions in prayer really do not accomplish much. But fervent, intense prayer from a heart that believes God has provided the way for health and healing accomplishes much.
- Many times when praying for the sick, we offer a very brief prayer. However, to break demonic strongholds of sickness often we must pray at length. We must pray with intensity, and we must pray this way repeatedly.

4. Effective prayer for healing is often directed from heaven to earth.

- Let me explain. Many people pray for the sick by asking God to heal the person for whom we are praying. Certainly, there are many times when this manner of prayer is an appropriate approach for prayer. Whereas this is often an acceptable way to pray, it is in a sense praying from earth toward heaven.
- Praying from heaven to earth takes another approach. It is a form of prayer in which a person prays from the foundation that God has already provided for the healing through Jesus' work on the cross before the prayer took place. It is offering a prayer based on the principles of Mark 11:24, that is, prayer that believes that you have already received the answer—believing that what you say and pray is going to happen.
- Note the way Jesus prayed. When He saw Peter's mother-in-law lying sick with a fever, He touched her hand, and the fever left (Matt. 8:14-15). In healing a leper, He stretched out His hand, touched the leper, and said, "I am willing; be cleansed" (Mark 14:1). With the woman with the issue of blood, Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction" (Mark 5:34).
- The New Testament Apostles prayed in a similar way. When Peter and John encountered the lame man at the temple, they said to him, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you; 'In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!'" (Acts 3:6).
- Do you notice the manner in which prayer for the sick is offered in the New Testament? Prayers are not spoken in an "if it be thy will" attitude. Rather in the New Testament, prayers are spoken in faith believing that God has already accomplished the healing before the prayer is spoken. Prayers are offered with the attitude that the person praying is a vessel through which the power of God will be released from heaven to earth.

1. Joseph Kansema, *You Can Be Healed Today*, PCN Printers, Mafikeng, South Africa, 2005, p. 8.
2. Bosworth, p. 126.
3. Kansema, p. 8-9.
4. Ibid, p.12.

Session 6

Keys to Healing and Health

This session covers:

- In the previous session, we examined the most frequently observed quality that produces healing and health—that being, faith.
- A look at several other keys that will help us pray effectively for the sick.
- In this final session we will observe eight additional keys that assist us in praying for the sick and living in divine health.

I. Be Grippled With Compassion

The dictionary defines compassion as sympathy for the suffering of others, which often results in a desire to help others in their need.¹ True Biblical compassion starts with an emotion filled heart toward the plight of another and ends with us being moved by our empathy to do something about their condition.

1. Compassion moved Jesus to heal the sick.

- Let's review several scriptures that we looked at in Session 2 about the compassion of Jesus. "Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt *compassion* for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:35-36).
- "When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt *compassion* for them and healed their sick" (Matt. 14:14).

- "As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, 'Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!' The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Lord, we want our eyes to be opened.' Moved with *compassion*, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him" (Matt. 20:29-34).
- "And a leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, 'If You are willing, You can make me clean.' Moved with *compassion*, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed" (Mark 1:40-42).
- "Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He felt *compassion* for her, and said to her, 'Do not weep.' And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise!' The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother" (Luke 7:11-15).
- As you can see from the numerous scriptural examples, the compassion of God led Jesus to heal the multitudes. God is love, and out of His love for His creation He desires for His people to live in health and to be set free from suffering, pain, heartache, illness, and disease.

2. God's compassion to heal has never ceased.

- The Lord is our Shepherd and as our shepherd, He promises us that "surely goodness and *mercy* shall follow me [us] all the days of my [our] life" (Ps. 23:6, NKJV). One of the definitions of mercy is a disposition to be *compassionate* or forgiving of others.²
- John Wimber writes of a vision he once had concerning God's mercy. He states,
Suddenly in my mind's eye there appeared to be a cloud bank superimposed across the sky. But I had never seen a cloud bank like this one, so I pulled my car over to the side of the road to take a closer look. Then I realized it was not a cloud bank. It was a honeycomb with honey dripping out on to people below. The people were in a variety of postures. Some were reverent; they were weeping and holding their hands out to catch the honey and taste it, even inviting others to take some of their honey. Others acted irritated, wiping the honey off themselves, complaining about the mess. I was awestruck. Not knowing what to think, I prayed, "Lord, what is it?" He said, "It's my mercy, John. For some people it's a blessing, but for others it's a hindrance. There's plenty for everyone. Don't ever beg me for healing again. The problem isn't on my end, John. It's down there." That was a moving and profound experience; certainly it revolutionized my life more than any other experience I had since becoming a Christian. I have never looked at healing the same way since that day.³
- God is still a God filled with mercy and compassion. And out of His compassion, He still desires for His children to be freed from suffering, pain, and sickness.

3. To effectively pray for the sick, compassion is essential.

- "But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).

- We saw in the last session how crucial faith is in healing. Without faith it is impossible to please God. However, here we see also that love, of which compassion is a significant part, is even greater than faith. As you reflect on this verse, remember that the context of this verse is not love directed toward God, but love directed toward our fellow man.
- Note again another quote by F.F. Bosworth,

Modern theology magnifies the power of God more than it magnifies His compassion; His power more than it does the great fact that "the exceeding greatness of His power is to usward." But the Bible reverses this and magnifies His willingness to use His power more than it does the power itself. In no place does the Bible say that "God is power," but it does say that "God is love." It is not faith in God's power that secures His blessings, but faith in His love and in His will.⁴
- Yes, faith is crucial in healing, but so is love. To see us used to release God's healing power, it is necessary that we connect our heart with God's compassion for mankind and thereby, be moved in compassion for the suffering of those in need.
- Out of compassion, we will see people healed.

4. It is not so much our acts of compassion but a heart of compassion that moves God.

- Note that Jesus *felt* compassion and healed. He was *moved* with compassion and healed. These phrases suggest that Jesus' compassion was much more than just actions. His heart was filled with compassion and out of a heart of compassion, He healed the sick. Jesus had a heart of compassion for the suffering of mankind.
- The story of the Good Samaritan clarifies the depth of compassion spoken of in the scriptures. In this story, we see three distinct levels of compassion.
- Let's read it. "Jesus replied and said, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands? And he said, 'The one who showed mercy toward him.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do the same'" (Luke 10:30-37).
- In this famous story, the priest and the Levite illustrate the first level of compassion, and that is a total lack of compassion. Both the priest and the Levite saw a person in great need but totally ignored the need. Surely they realized his need, but they did not respond. Maybe they were too busy on their way to an important appointment. Maybe the man was below their social status. Whatever the reason, they exhibited a lack of compassion. As a result, they left the man in his agony, untouched by these religious leaders of the day.
- However, the Samaritan was different. He stopped to help the man. He ministered to his wounds by pouring oil—a picture of the Holy Spirit—and wine—a picture of the blood of Jesus—on the wounds and then bandaging them. He also

took the man to an inn and took care of him. He helped this needy man with his time and his money.

- The Good Samaritan demonstrates the second level of compassion. He performed sacrificial acts of compassion. He allowed himself to be a vessel of the Holy Spirit to apply the healing ointment (the oil) of God's power over the ailing man, to apply the victory of the cross (the wine), and to show mercy by taking care of the man (the bandages). He performed acts of compassion.
- This level of compassion is fairly common in the Church today. Many churches have mercy ministries and do great works of helping the needy. However, though acts of compassion are great and provide much needed help in times of need, acts of compassion are empowered frequently by a love for God and a desire to serve Him more than by deep empathy for the needs of the people.
- When we minister only at this level of compassion, there is often a disconnect between the acts of compassion and a heart of compassion. We often do the works while our heart is far from the person to whom we are ministering.
- But there is a third level of compassion—again, demonstrated by the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan also *felt* compassion for the man. He not only performed acts of compassion, He was deeply moved by the condition of his man. He felt empathy for the person and the suffering He was enduring. His heart was touched, possibly even broken, over the plight of the poor man beaten by the robbers.
- It is when we connect on these last two levels of compassion that we see God move through us in power. When we *feel* compassion—that is, when our heart is moved with compassion for the person in need and out of a heart emotionally touched with compassion, we do acts of compassion, then we see the power of God made manifest.
- Ken Kessler, the founder of Lifeschool, shares this testimony of praying for someone a few years ago.

I remember in the early 90's being asked to go to the hospital to pray for an elderly aunt of a member of our Church. This woman had both congestive heart failure and kidney problems. The medicine for one was counteracting the medicine for the other. As my wife and I traveled the forty minute drive to the hospital in a heavy downpour, neither my wife nor I wanted to go. We had no faith for healing and certainly no compassion for this elderly lady that we had never met. But when we entered her hospital room, everything changed. The compassion of Jesus came upon my wife and I. We felt compassion for this dear lady and asked God to heal her. Although the prayer was a simple one, we sensed our faith level rising and knew something had happened. We left the room not knowing what had transpired but knew God had been there with us. Later the lady we prayed for told her family that after we prayed, a man clothed in white came to her room and touched her heart. She was immediately healed and went home from the hospital the next day. I share this story now because I believe it was the compassion of Jesus that came supernaturally upon my wife and I that moved God to heal in such a powerful way.

- Moving in the compassion of Jesus is a key to seeing people healed when we pray.

II. Listen for the Key

1. Jesus only did what He heard or saw the Father doing.

- "Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner" (John 5:19). See also John 5:30.
- Jesus only ministered as His heavenly Father desired. And He prayed for the sick when the heavenly Father wanted Him to. Our Lifeschool class, *Learning to Hear God's Voice*, deals extensively with the need to minister as Jesus did. It addresses in detail the concept that Jesus only did what He heard or saw His Father wanting Him to do. So we will not address it in detail here.
- But, briefly let us say this. Jesus ministered after hearing His Father's voice. As noted in Luke 5:17, He heard Him for whether or not He was to minister, "One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.
- He heard the Father's voice to know what key would unlock the power of the Holy Spirit for healing. Just as with the man at the Pool of Bethesda, He knew that desire was the key to unlock his healing. In other cases, He heard the Father to know that casting out a demon was the key, or in other cases, He knew that faith was present to allow healing and health.
- Finally, He heard the Father to know what prayer approach to use. He heard the Father to know that in one case He should spit on the ground, make clay, and put it on the man's eyes to heal him of blindness (John 9:6). In other cases, He heard that He was to raise the dead or to tell a man to arise and walk.

2. So, in a similar way, as we pray for healing, we must listen to the voice of God for the keys that will unlock God's power.

- Before we pray for someone, we should ask, "God, what are You doing in this person's life at this point in time?" We can pray this type of prayer silently and briefly and at the same time listen for God's direction on how to pray.
- We must listen for God's voice or even from information garnered from our discussions with the person for which we are praying as to what the source of the disease is. For example, it is very helpful to know if the root of the illness is bitterness, generational sin, demonic activity, complacency toward the disease, or any of the sources of sickness that we examined in Session 3. See Appendix 2 for a questionnaire that can be used to help in learning of possible roots of illness. This questionnaire will help the person to be prayed for to analyze the potential roots of their problem and help the person praying to help close the doors to the enemy.
- Finally, we should listen for God's direction on how to pray. Should we remind God of His covenant promises? Should we bind the work of the enemy and loose God's power? Should we ask God to release His healing anointing? Should we perform a prophetic act like Jesus' placing the clay on the eyes of the man born blind? Should we lay hands on the person according to James 5? We must sense God's direction as to how to pray.
- In summary, to be effective in praying for the sick, we must be as a branch connected to the vine (John 15) in such a way that we discern the desire of the Father in the particular situation, the spiritual root causes of the disease, and the approach to be taken to see God's healing power manifested.

III. Build Faith for Healing

1. The person praying, the person being prayed for, and the people in the place where the prayer is offered must have the correct mental attitude.

- Our natural minds for the most part are ruled by our senses. We make decisions based on what we see, feel, or hear. When we are ill, we often believe what the doctor says about our condition, and we receive his diagnosis as the final truth.
- Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that the natural man—and I might add, the natural mind—does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, which verse 12 has just told us includes the “things freely given to us by God”. To the natural man, these things given by God are foolishness.
- But, Paul also writes that we have been given the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). Drawing upon the mind of Christ within us, we can discern the things of the Spirit, that is, “things which eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9). These “things” include God’s promises of health and healing.
- Our challenge as those praying for the sick, those being prayed for, and those in the room where the prayer is being offered is to believe the Word of God about the condition rather than what our natural minds might tell us.

2. For those who would pray for the sick, it is beneficial to stir afresh our faith for healing.

- As people who regularly pray for the sick, we believe the healing promises of the Word. Even so, many times our faith needs refreshing. It doesn’t take long for our natural mind to take control of our thought processes and for our faith to evaporate. We need our faith stirred anew.
- As the Bible states, faith comes by hearing the Word. And faith for healing comes by hearing the Word concerning healing. So, before we pray for someone who has come to us for prayer, it is good to bring the healing Word to the forefront of our thoughts.
- We do this by reading, meditating upon, declaring, or listening to the healing promises of God. As we do this, even if only for a few moments, our spirit man who believes the healing promises of God arises above our natural man who believes the report of the doctor, and faith arises.
- We are now ready to pray for those mountains to move in Jesus’ name!

3. It is also very important for the person being prayed for to have their faith for healing strengthened before the prayer begins.

- Notice how Jesus asked two men if they believed He could heal them. “As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, ‘Have mercy on us, Son of David!’ When He entered the house, the blind men came up to Him, and Jesus said to them, ‘*Do you believe that I am able to do this?*’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘It shall be done to you according to your faith.’ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them: ‘See that no one knows about this!’ But they went out and spread the news about Him throughout all that land.” (Matt. 9:27-31)
- Ministers who regularly pray for the sick will often ask the person for whom they are to pray if they believe God will heal them. Many times, especially if the sick person expresses any doubt, they will then share a few of the scriptural promises for healing to build up the person’s faith.

- As the person to be prayed for hears the healing Word, usually their faith arises above any unbelief and prepares them to be prayed for.

4. In a similar fashion, it is important to build the faith of the people in the room.

- On at least one occasion, Jesus allowed unbelievers to leave the room before praying because it is so important that there be an atmosphere of faith in the place of prayer.
- Another way to handle any potential unbelief in the room is to build the faith of all the people in the room. In a worship service, many times the minister will preach a message on healing in order to raise the faith in the room before he prays for the sick. He could also quote some healing scriptures.
- If we are praying with a group of people for someone's healing, it is very helpful to speak the healing Word for a few minutes before praying to build faith in the room.
- Whatever approach is taken, it is very important to build the faith in the room.

IV. Accept Your Position of Authority

1. To be effective as God's healing ministers, we must understand our position of authority.

- As Paul writes, "which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." (Eph. 1:20-23)
- And the good news for us is that we are seated with Jesus I heavenly places above every rule, authority, power, dominion, and name (Eph. 2:6).
- God has granted us a measure of authority over every work of the enemy. In Christ, we have been given authority over demonic rulers, authorities and power and over every name that is named. In heavenly places, we have been granted authority over every name—including every named disease.
- As a general principle, the scriptures teach that our authority in the spirit realm starts out relatively small, but as we are faithful to use the authority and gifting God has granted us, it increases (Matt. 25:14-28, Luke 19:11-27).
- In a similar manner, our authority over disease may start out small but increases as we are faithful and exercise our faith to pray for those in need.

2. We must learn to pray from a position of authority over the enemy.

- When praying for the sick, we must know who we are in Christ and the position that we are entitled to because we are in Christ. And we must take our position of authority seriously so that we can pray with authority.
- Jesus told us to pray this way, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). In the Greek, the first word that appears in this verse is the word translated "come". This word is in the imperative mood, and, as such, could read, "Come, kingdom of God. The Greek word translated "done" is also in the imperative mood and could read, "Be done, will of God". The mood

of these words suggests that Jesus wants us to pray with authority. He desires us to pray with authority that His kingdom in heaven where there is no sickness or disease would come and His will which is for us to live in health and be healed when we are sick would be done.

- Those effective in praying for the sick know their authority and accept the responsibility to use it for God's glory.

V. Understand Healing as Instant or Progressive

1. In the scriptures, many times healing took place instantly; but, at other times, it happened progressively.

- "And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him. Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, 'Do you see anything?' And he looked up and said, 'I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around.' Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly" (Mark 8:22-25).
- In the above example, Jesus prayed for the blind man and he was partially healed. However, it took a second prayer for the man to be completely restored.
- This story illustrates a principle for praying for the sick. Healing does not always take place instantaneously. Sometimes multiple prayers and an extended length of time is required.

2. As we pray for people, we should look for one of at least three ways that God might heal.

- The first is instantaneous healing. This is the most exciting for all of us. We pray for someone and immediately they cry out that God has touched them and they have been healed. What excitement this brings to us all.
- However, there is another common way God heals and that is progressively. We pray for them and there may be no apparent breakthrough at all. In some cases, it appears that the person we have prayed for even got worse. In other cases, it takes several times of a person coming back for prayer for them to begin to experience healing.
- A third way that God commonly heals is sometimes called "obedience" healing. The person is prayed for, often with a powerful anointing upon the time of prayer. However, the means by which God has chosen to restore the person is through the individual's personal walk of faith. As the individual fights the fight of faith believing, confessing, and standing upon the covenant promises of God, he or she begins to experience the fulfillment of God's healing promises.
- As we pray for the sick, remember it is God's responsibility to heal. He may choose to heal instantly, progressively or even through the sick person's walk of faith. And in some cases He doesn't heal at all on this side of heaven. It's God's job to heal. Our responsibility is to pray.

VI. Use of Imperfect People

1. God's emissaries have always been weak and imperfect people.

- On the way to the temple for prayer, Peter and John healed a man lame from birth (Acts 3:1-10). What an exciting miracle. We would think that it would take a perfect man or woman to perform such a miracle—somebody just like Jesus.
- However, what we discover as we search the scriptures is that both Peter and John were weak and imperfect people. Not long before this exciting miracle at the Temple at Jesus' time of greatest need, Peter denied Jesus three times. He denied he had followed Jesus, he denied even knowing Him, and, moreover, when accused a third time of following Jesus, he cursed and swore at the people (Matt. 26:69-74).
- The scriptures do not record anything so dramatic in the life of John, but even though he had a deep relationship with Jesus, He also struggled with typical human weakness. Read the following about the Apostle John,

We note further that John was a young man of fiery zeal, and of a tendency toward intolerance and exclusiveness. The zeal and the intolerance are in evidence in the desire to call down fire upon the Samaritan village, and the tendency toward exclusiveness is manifested in the request of his mother as to the place her sons were to occupy in the kingdom. They desire to have the highest positions. These tendencies were not encouraged by Jesus.⁵

- Don't get me wrong. Both of these men were great men of God even as they walked with Christ before the cross. But they were human having the same flesh battles that we all have. They had weaknesses and imperfections just like you and I.

2. God still uses imperfect but willing people.

- God still uses people with imperfections. We do not have to be perfect to pray for the sick. We do not have to be the pastor or the prophet. We do not have to be the "Super Christian", or the seasoned intercessor. God desires all of us to pray for the sick. In fact, praying for the sick is a part of the Great Commission.
- God uses willing people more than perfect people. Even though there is ample scriptural evidence to show that an increase in intimacy and holiness increases our anointing in ministry, God desires to use us even in our early stages of walking with Him, in the weakness of our being burdened by sin and strongholds, and in the frailty of our humanity.
- He is looking for willing people. He uses people willing to take the time to pray for people. He uses people who will take the time to study the healing word so as to increase their faith. He uses people who eagerly desire to be used by God and, thus, make themselves available to Him.

VII. Draw Upon the Gifts of Healing

1. All believers can move in the gifts of healing.

- First Corinthians 12 tells us of the nine manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Again, we speak in length about these in our Lifeschool class, *Learning to Hear God's Voice*, so we will not speak much about them here other than to make one point. And that point is that all believers have access to all nine of the gifts.

- Every believer can receive a word of knowledge or a word of wisdom. All believers can operate in the gift of prophecy or discernment. And all believers can experience the gift of effecting of miracles and the gifts of healing.
- Therefore, everyone can pray for the sick and expect to see results. Everyone can do the works of God with power and anointing.

2. Yet, some believers move more powerfully in the gifts of healing than others.

- "And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? *All do not have gifts of healings, do they?* All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?" (1 Cor. 12:28-30)
- The scriptures support what we see occurring in the Church. Some are more gifted to minister in healing than others. This doesn't mean that only these special gifted ones can be effective in praying for the sick. We all can and should move in the gifts of healing. However, there are certain people who have been gifted more strongly with the gifts of healing than others.
- In fact, some have a gift to pray for cancer, others to pray for restoration of hearing and sight, others to pray for diabetes and others for other diseases.

3. As we pray for the sick, when possible draw upon those with the gifts of healing.

- When we gather a team to pray for the sick, draw upon those who have a proven track record of effectively praying for the sick. Put together a team comprised of some with strong gifts of healing and others who are beginning the journey of praying for the sick.
- As we do so, we will combine the power of someone God has specifically anointed to pray for the sick with others who are emerging in these giftings.

VIII. Walk in Health and Pray for the Sick

1. Those who desire to pray for the sick should live by the covenant promises of healing and health.

- It is important that those who desire to pray for the sick also pursue God's covenant promises of divine health and healing. In short, God has promised to us that He is a covenant making, covenant keeping God. Because of His covenant with us, He has bound Himself to be faithful to His covenant promises to us. And one of His covenant promises to us is healing and health. For more information on our covenant relationship with God, see our Lifeschool class, *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ*.
- Those who want to be effective in praying for the sick certainly do not have to be without any sickness or infirmity in their life. In fact, many people with a powerful healing ministry seem to battle infirmity. But it is important for those who desire to pray for the sick to strive to live in the covenant promise of divine health and healing. Each healing intercessor should believe the promises of healing and health, stand on the promises of healing, and fight the fight of faith for healing and health.

- We should attempt to walk in the divine health of God.

2. And then pray for the sick.

- Taking all that we have learned and the many good points of many who have written and spoken on healing, let us all go forth boldly and pray for the sick.

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1. Encarta Online Dictionary, "compassion".
 2. Ibid, "mercy".
 3. John Wimber, *Power Healing*, Harper Collins Publishing, New York, 1987, pp. 52-53.
 4. Bosworth, p. 71.
 5. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Biblesoft, Electronic Database Copyright, 1996.