

Outline: Healing, Part 2

Variety in the healing approaches of Jesus and the Early Church

As we look at the healing ministries of Jesus and the early church, we can see that there were no “formulas.” The miracles and healings in the Gospels and the Book of Acts are incredibly diverse. What is the lesson here? As we pray for people to be healed, we must seek the mind of the Spirit as to how to pray. We must deliberately avoid the use of formulas and instead, like Jesus, look to see “*what the Father is doing.*” (More on this a little later.)

How to approach praying for the sick and afflicted

A. Minister in the love of Jesus

This should go without saying, but as we minister to the sick, we are acting as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.

B. Team ministry is important!

The Lord seems to prefer team ministry to individual ministry in this area. There is safety in numbers! Working in a team provides encouragement, feedback, and prayer support. It allows for confirmation, checks and balances, training of newer workers, and lets complementary giftings to be utilized together.

C. General wisdom principles in prayer encounters

- Use godly wisdom in dealing with people.
- Put people at ease.
- Avoid swarming around people in large numbers to pray.
- Lay hands on people with their permission only.
- Do not lay hands on sensitive areas of a person's body. Avoid The Claw.
- Be careful how you speak and display emotional comfort to members of the opposite sex.

- Pray for and lay hands on children only with a parent's permission.
- Avoid debates over doctrine.

D. No two cases are alike, so avoid using "formulas"

People can be made ill in a variety of ways, so in healing ministry there can be no "methods" or formulas. Illness can arise from: physical causes; demonic assignment; emotional trauma; unforgiveness or other sin; and, the inevitability of death. Sensitivity to the Voice of the Lord is required if we are going to do more than just ask God to bless someone.

How do we pray? – Using the 5-step healing prayer model

Over the last 25 years, many Christians have learned to pray for others more successfully by using a model known as the "Five Step Prayer Model." It is simple enough to learn in a few minutes. Its strength lies not just in its simplicity, but in the fact that it will not allow you to develop a ritual or a cookie-cutter mentality when praying for the sick.

The five steps are: (1) the interview; (2) the diagnostic decision; (3) the prayer selection; (4) the prayer engagement; and (5) post-prayer directions. Let's discuss each one of these steps in turn.

Step 1: The Interview

After you introduce yourself, simply ask the person, “*What do you want me to pray for?*” This is not a medical interview, as most of us are not doctors, but a short discussion only. Remember that God does not need us to understand a person's condition scientifically before we can pray for it!

Step 2: The Diagnostic Decision

This step is designed to answer the question: *why is this person suffering from this condition?* Sometimes this is obvious. In other cases, the Holy Spirit will give you insight into the real cause of an illness or problem. He may give you a word of knowledge that the person is really suffering from arthritis because of bitterness in her life. He may give discerning of spirits to reveal a demonic problem that will need to be addressed in a session of deliverance ministry (*explain*). The key here is to “*dialogue*” with the Spirit

and ask Him to show you what the problem is. Believe that He will!

Step 3: The Prayer Selection

This step answers the question, *“What kind of prayer should I pray for this person?”* Continue to dialogue with God and ask Him, “Lord, what are you doing? Do you want to heal, do you want me to tell the person something that will help him receive healing, or what?” Remember that Jesus Himself said He could only do what He saw the Father doing. (John 5:19)

We do not strive to make things happen; we ask God what **He** would like to see happen and what He intends for this ministry time. In his excellent book *Power Healing* , John Wimber writes,

“If we believe that he hears us and cares about our needs, we may with confidence approach him and ask him how we should pray. Sometimes, even when I have a clear understanding of the cause of a condition, I am not sure about how to pray specifically. In these instances I pray in my mind, ‘Lord, I know you want to heal this person. Please show me how to pray for him.’ I then pray quietly in tongues, during which time frequently

(though not always) God indicates how he wants me to pray for the person.”

You may feel led to give a word of command, lay on hands, deliver a word from the Holy Spirit, ask the Spirit to come down on a person, or simply pray for the person’s healing. The Lord may give prophetic words for the person. Again, be led by of the Lord. You may also note that the person needs deliverance, in which case you can proceed accordingly. Trust God to show you what you are supposed to do, and don’t be overwhelmed or think that you will necessarily be able to "fix" the person in a single encounter.

Step 4: The Prayer Engagement

This step is meant to answer the question, *“How effective are our prayers?”* It’s at this time that you may need to be the most sensitive to what God is doing and to how the person is reacting to it. People react to God’s power in unpredictable ways: they may weep, shake, fall over, laugh, and do all sorts of things. Remember God is not necessarily making the person do these things, but the person is usually responding to His

Presence.

It may be good for you to **tell the person not to be afraid** of anything they are experiencing – indeed, some people encounter God’s Presence without expecting to, or expecting to react as they do. This can create embarrassment or confusion. When unbelievers experience these things, we can know more definitely that it is not manufactured. On the other hand, if someone is manufacturing a manifestation, you may gently suggest to him to relax or to stop if you sense that it is hindering the ministry.

More often than not, however, it is better to **let the Lord have His way** in them and do whatever he is doing – even when we can’t figure it out. Look at it this way: if an alcoholic twitches on the floor for an hour and gets up delivered, that is a good thing - it was not the twitching that did it, though! Such things are generally harmless unless they become a distraction to the ministry or the meeting that is taking place.

Pray with your eyes open so you can see if anything is happening or if

you are discerning anything. Also, how is the person reacting? You should also ask him if he is sensing or experiencing anything. Does he sense any relief or feel better? Is God showing him anything he may need to do?

Be aware of the **time constraints** of your environment, but give God adequate time to do His work. Many times a person experiences help simply by being in the atmosphere of God's Presence. This can take time and should not be rushed. Do not feel pressured by the presence of others waiting around you. Of course, if you are called upon to pray for a large body of people, you will have to believe God to work at a different pace!

Finally, learn to **recognize when you should stop praying**. Do you sense a release from the Spirit that you are "done" for the moment? If the person does not seem to have received anything you can encourage him to receive more prayer at a future session.

Step 5: The Post-Prayer Direction

Post-prayer directions are meant to help people *maintain whatever they have received during the ministry time*. When a person has been involved in a sin, you may need to give him the words of Jesus to “go and sin no more.” It may be enough to counsel him to maintain godly disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, and fellowship. Some people will need follow-up counsel with a pastor or Christian counselor; some will need deliverance.

Encourage the person to be committed to his local church and to be willing to be a disciple of Christ in all things. You may also need to speak comfort and encouragement to those who did not receive. Let them know that God loves them (and you do, too) and that you will continue to pray for them.

Summing it up

Really, the only way to learn how to pray for the sick is... to pray for the sick! You will make some mistakes and there will be a few funny moments. Remember that the Seventy and the Twelve were simple folk who were trained and sent out just like you. When we read the Book of Acts it's hard

to imagine there was a first time Peter prayed for the sick, but there was and we do not know whether he felt like a failure afterwards.

After Jesus had trained His followers, ultimately they came back to Him rejoicing that even the demons were subject to them in His Name. Your experience can be the same if you truly commit yourself to God's purposes and ask Him to use you to bless others. Remember how Jesus said,

“As the Father has sent Me, so I have sent you.” (John 20:21)

Pray then, to be His hand extended!