

Jesus' Method today

Does Jesus Heal Today?

Acts 3:1-12, 16
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This is the last message in the series *Does Jesus Heal Today?* The concepts I've shared and will share today were so foreign to me years ago that if I were sitting in the pew, I'd be struggling. I'd scrutinize the speaker closely and check every biblical reference. I'd be uncomfortable because this is such a different perspective than what I was taught and have practiced. If the speaker made one misstatement, I might stop listening or discount everything he said rather than just what was wrong. Knowing that about myself, I'm trying to be careful and measured in everything I say.

I'm convinced that we are unprepared to believe and embrace what Jesus taught about healing. Some of this is because of our lack of experience. Some of our struggle results from how we have been trained by our culture to see the world. On the screen I'm projecting an image of a lady. How many of you see an attractive young woman? How many of you see an old hag? How many of you see both? How many of you have seen this image before? When I first saw this picture I saw the hag, the bag lady. Only after others told me a young girl was pictured could I trace the lines in such a way as to see the image. I don't remember how much help I required, but I required some. We've been trained by our culture to de-emphasize certain lines in reality. Primarily, we omit the supernatural or see its contemporary forms as superstition. Thus, the picture we see in the Bible may be quite different than what the writers intended.

In this series on healing I have tried to help you trace the lines of the Bible so that you could see the image that is there. The image to which we've been oblivious has been obvious to others, especially to people who were not raised in the West. To prepare us to see, I've asked different people to share their healing experiences. I've shared some of my experience. I'm still on a journey and am learning. There is more in the Bible than I'm seeing, but I'm helping you explore what I've begun to see.

Let's open the Bible to Acts 3. Three times a day, devout Jewish people gathered in the temple courts for prayer. They came at nine in the morning for the morning sacrifice, at noon and then again at three o'clock for prayer and the evening sacrifice. Each time they gathered, beggars worked the crowds. A man crippled from birth routinely sat at one entry to the temple courts and begged. We don't know if Peter and John usually entered this gate and passed by the beggar each day, or if this particular day, they took a detour and ran into the beggar. Whatever the case, Peter and John both looked at the crippled man. They told him to look at them. Then Peter announced:

Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. (Acts 3:6)

Peter did not wait for the man to get up. He took the man's right hand, helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. Literally the man jumped up. He began to walk, leap and praise God.

Notice that Peter and John did not pray with the man. They said that they had a gift, and they commanded the beggar to walk in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Second, Peter went over to the man and helped him get up. These actions suggest that Peter and John knew that God wanted to heal the crippled man right then and there.

When Peter explained the healing, he said:

Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ...By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see. (Acts 3:12, 16)

Peter fingers two things as responsible for the healing: faith in the name of Jesus and faith that comes through Jesus. *First, Peter and John had faith in Jesus' name.* They believed in Jesus, in who he is as an authority, and in what he is doing on God's behalf. *Second, they developed faith through their relationship with Jesus.* They had seen Jesus heal people not by begging God for healing, but by exercising the authority of God. Moreover, Jesus had shared that authority with them so that they had healed people and liberated people from Satan's destructive grip.

In Matthew 10 (and Luke 9) Jesus calls his twelve disciples to himself and gives them "*authority to drive out unclean spirits and heal every disease and sickness.*" They are to minister to people out of this special authority. Jesus tells them:

As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matt 10:7-8)

They are called not to pray for the sick as much as to minister healing to the sick and oppressed out of what they have received, authority from Christ. This proclamation and healing comprise the basic mission of the disciples. It is not a side responsibility. It is the main thing; and it is passed on to others. In Luke 10 Jesus sends 72 other followers out to heal the sick and proclaim the kingdom of God. He commands them not so much to pray for the sick as to heal them. How can they do that if they have not received something that enables them to heal? The group was called to pray. Do you know what

for? Workers. They were to pray that the Lord of the harvest send out more workers in this great mission of healing and proclamation. Did you know that when Jesus left the earth, he did not plan for this mission to stop? He told his disciples that they would do even greater works than he did after he left (John 14:12). After his resurrection he told them that in the same way that God the Father had sent him, he was sending them. In the last words of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). What did Jesus command of them? To heal and proclaim. They were to develop people in the same ministry. In the last chapter of the Gospel of Mark (Mark 16), Jesus told his disciples to preach the gospel everywhere and that signs of his liberating power such as healing would accompany those who believed. (Biblical scholars note that most of chapter 16 is not included in the earliest manuscripts of Mark’s gospel. Chapter 16, however, reveals the mission and the promise of Jesus’ as the early church understood it.)

When we discuss divine healing, most of us think of a model of intercession. On the projector I have a diagram of that model. We as believers go to God through our special relationship with Jesus Christ and ask God to heal someone who is hurt, sick or oppressed. We pray, “Please heal.” There is nothing wrong with intercession. Often Jesus and the disciples prayed before they healed. There are also times that they prayed when they healed. But this is not the model revealed in Acts 3 or that we normally see as we read about the healing ministry of Jesus and his followers. In most cases, the diagram in this ministry model better describes their behavior. The believer acts with the authority of God and announces healing, commands healing, or engages in some action

like placing hands on the people, making mudpacks or giving some directive. What becomes obvious is that God has given these ministers some kind of power and direction. The Bible always attributes that to the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not engage in healing or proclamation until he was anointed with the Holy Spirit. He said that he could do nothing by himself. He could only do what he saw his father doing (John 5:19-20). His identity is the Christ, the anointed one, which means anointed with the Spirit for a mission. The term Christian means anointed one or anointed with the Spirit for a mission. To embrace the identity of Christian means to embrace both the anointing of God's Spirit and his mission. When Jesus commissioned his disciples in the Gospel of John, he blew air on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-22). In Luke and Acts he told them to wait for the special gift of the Spirit. Then they would receive power to minister (Acts 1:4-8).

In Acts 3 Peter and John, anointed with the Holy Spirit, embraced their mission of liberation. As they went to the temple, they received direction from the Spirit and ministered in the authority of God. They healed and proclaimed, which was their call.

What is obvious from the Scriptures is that you and I are to receive the same anointing and to serve in the same mission. We need to embrace both the intercession model of praying for people and the ministry model of serving people as we are directed and empowered by God's Spirit. I have encouraged you to receive ministry from others so that you might experience divine love and power in your struggles. Today I encourage you to begin praying with people. If you can, commit to a year of development and service in our healing ministry. This ministry helps you embrace the Holy Spirit, your mission of liberation and live out your identity as a Christian, an anointed one.