

How to heal like Jesus!

Living the New Life:

John 20:19-23

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Bethany Church

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The sermon title *How to heal like Jesus* may seem arrogant and irreverent. Have I lost my grip on reality in a bout of religious enthusiasm or egotism? How could anyone presume to heal like Jesus or teach anyone else to? I did not choose the title to be provocative. I believe the subject *How to heal like Jesus* is necessary if we take the life and teachings of Jesus seriously. (I do admit three things. One, Jesus is sinless, and I am not. My sins condemned him to death, and I continue to need God's forgiveness. Two, Jesus' devotional life and intimacy with the Father incomparably exceed mine. Three, although I've experienced divine healing, I've also been disappointed. Some of us have shared that disappointment together.) To suggest that we can learn to heal like Jesus, neither makes Jesus a sinner nor us a god. It does not deny our frailties or experience. Instead, it actually takes Jesus' words seriously, words we dismiss or fail to act on because we lack validating experiences. However, if we interpret Scripture only as it corresponds to our experience, we'll never taste the new life which we are promised and to which we are called. So then, what does Jesus expect of his followers. Why could he heal and how did he do it. How can that knowledge help us fulfill his expectations for us?

First, does Jesus expect us to heal like him? Would you agree that he expected that of the first disciples? The Bible reports exactly that. In Luke 9 we read:

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:1-2, NIV)

The Twelve were given *power* and *authority* (or the *ability* and *right*) to drive out all demons and to cure diseases. Later in Luke 9, verses 37 through 42, some of the Twelve tried to help a young boy who was tormented, and they could not help him. Jesus didn't say, "I guess that I'm the only one who can heal this boy because I'm the Son of God." No, he demonstrated anger with the Twelve and also with the crowd there, saying:

O unbelieving and perverse generation... how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? (Luke 9:41, NIV)

Jesus expected healing because of the power and authority (the ability and right) the Twelve possessed. They were expected to heal like Jesus. In Luke 10 he sends out another seventy-two followers to heal and proclaim the nearness of God's kingdom. When they return from their assignment, they are excited by the results. Jesus answers:

I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. (Luke 10:18-19, NIV)

Understand that healing is not cast as a purely physical battle. It is not seen from the view of a machinist who trims this, oils that and replaces whatever. Jesus sees it as a battle where rights are given to human beings to overcome the ability of the enemy to harm us. Satan falling from heaven appears to be a loss of his right. Also realize that everyone Jesus gave power and authority to heal eventually died. They all walked a path, similar to Jesus, that eventually led them to death and a promised resurrection. Jesus got his new body. His followers, who healed others, are waiting to get their new bodies along with us.

When Jesus gave his final commission to his disciples, he did not tell them to make believers. He told them to make disciples who obeyed everything he commanded of them. Their basic call was to heal and proclaim God's kingdom as apprentices of Jesus. Isn't that our call? In the gospel of John, Jesus, discussing his miracles and calling people to faith, declared:

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing.
(John 14:12, NIV)

Jesus expects his ministry to be accomplished by anyone, who believes, not just a few superstars. In John 20, Jesus tells his disciples that he is sending them just as the father sent him. He follows this statement with a prophetic act. He breathes on them and tells them to receive the Holy Spirit. He then gives them authority to forgive and withhold forgiveness. Wasn't that how Jesus was sent? What then does it mean for us to be Christ's body today? Doesn't it suggest that we are sent as Jesus was sent with the same call and the same Spirit? Isn't that what we see the church doing in the book of Acts? Jesus' words are to be trusted and acted upon.

Second, why could Jesus heal and how did he do it? Jesus could heal because we are a creation, not an accident; that wasn't made to fall apart! Our physical, biological defects are the corruption of creation, not its flaws. Jesus could heal because God planned to overcome the law of sin and death with the law of the Spirit of life; and this victory is initiated through forgiveness, pledged and then accomplished with Jesus' body. Jesus could heal because as a member of the human race that was given dominion in this world, his extraordinary birth and sinless life made him the perfect host for God's Spirit of life. Consequently, Jesus healed exclusively through the direction and power of the Holy Spirit. At times, he healed many. At times, he healed one. At times, he was surprised. At times, he was hindered. Jesus' record of healing shows dependence on God and no uniformity in his method or in people's experience. He doesn't snap his fingers or wiggle his nose. His apprentices experience both miraculous healing and terrible illness. St. Paul heals a dead youngster injured from a fall, but leaves a coworker seriously ill on an island.

Third, how then can this knowledge help us fulfill Jesus' expectations? One, understand that all illness and injury illustrate the law of sin and death. Nothing is a defect of design; all are works of corruption. However, it is not a sin to be sick. It is not a sin to be injured. It is a sin

for followers of Christ not to care for sick and injured people. How terrible it is for us to be sent by Jesus, just like Jesus was sent by the Father, with the Holy Spirit and authority to forgive, and not go! Two, realize that much of the Bible emphasizes the communal consequences of sins. Not just one person is hurt by a disease or accident. Not just one person is affected by the choice to drink and drive. Not just a ruler is affected by his decisions. We all rule in some way and are affected by the rule of others. Repentance, faith and forgiveness are individual *and* communal needs. Three, know that medicine can be a gift of God, or a substitute for God. In Old and New Testaments we observe medicine at work both beneficially and harmfully. One of the greatest rulers of God's people was King Asa, the great-grandson of King Solomon. People prospered because of his whole-hearted devotion to God. However, from the 16th chapter of 2 Chronicles, we learn that in later years his heart grew hard with pride. He then suffered a terrible disease.

The Bible says:

Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the LORD, but only from the physicians. (2 Chronicles 16:12-13, NIV)

Asa did not sin in seeking help from the physicians. He sinned in seeking help **only** from the physicians. Four, seek and expect the counsel of God's Spirit as you pray for and serve the sick and injured with genuine love. We are battling forces of corruption, not fixing God's design.

Now, I know that many of us not only encounter perplexing and debilitating diseases, but most of us adults suffer some kind of medical condition whatever its source. Jesus did not heal by magic. He did what his Father showed him. To heal like Jesus, we need to care for one another, pray for one another, seek God's counsel and continually act in faith. So welcome Christ into your life in his 21st Century body! That means welcome the ministry of believers. Receive it, and then offer whatever ministry you have faith to do. In that way, you become part of the 21st Century body in which Christ heals and proclaims God's kingdom.