Healing Prayer Is God’s Idea

Embracing God’s Invitation to Intercede

HEALING PRAYER

Prayer matters, and God invites us into his presence with kindness. Jesus is not asking us to waste our time or jump complicated, intricate hoops in a useless exercise that produces nothing. Rather, if we know how to give good gifts,

"***How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13b, NIV)*** p. 18

HEALING PRAYER

In Hebrews 11… God-followers turned to God in prayer, believing that the very fabric of time and space would be fundamentally altered in a magnificent “reality-shift” with God using the sacrifice of their intercessions.

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for anyone who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:6, NASB)

HEALING PRAYER

Do you believe that God invites humans to pray, shaping creation to respond to the prayers of people, to change and reshape the world? Here is an astonishing and sobering fact to consider:

Jesus of Nazareth did.

And so, in unity with the Father, Jesus prayed.

Jesus Christ entered into human experience; as the Second Adam, Christ [practiced…] communion with God through the practice of prayer ***as the principal occupation of his ministry***. p. 19

HEALING PRAYER

The continuing ministry of the Risen and Ascended Christ is a ministry of intercession, and… every follower of Jesus Christ is called to join him in that ministry. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is powerfully expressed:

"Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

(Heb. 7:24-25, NIV)

p. 20

HEALING PRAYER

Healing prayer happened all through church history:

- *In the ministry of John and Charles Wesley*
- *In African Methodist churches in the USA*
- *In C&MA branches across the earth*
- *In Pentecostalism*
- *In the ministry of St. Patrick to Ireland*
- *And in the ministry of the early church… among many thousands of other examples.*

HEALING PRAYER

In Luke 5 we have two “clues” about this:

1) Jesus had a deep and focused prayer life separate and distinct from his ministry of prayer for healing…

But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses… Luke 5:15 NASB

But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

Luke 5:16 NASB

HEALING PRAYER

Jesus, out of his prayer life, responded to the Manifest Presence when praying for healing.

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;

<u>And the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.</u>

Luke 5:17 NASB

HEALING PRAYER

Consider these examples from Scripture:

- *God will bless Elijah and send rain, but Elijah must pray.*
- *If God's chosen nation is to prosper, Samuel must plead.*
- *If the Jews are to be delivered, Esther must fast and advocate.*

Here is the BIG ONE:

God entered the human race in Jesus Christ to heal us,

yet Jesus <u>must</u> pray. ***p. 23***

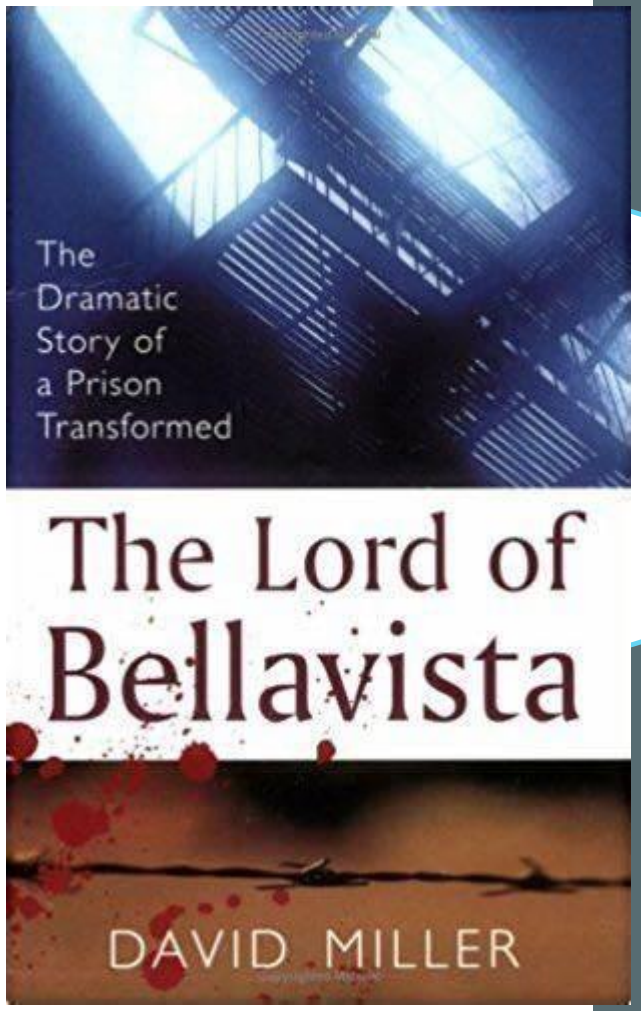
Healing Prayer…

Praying into the Presence:

A testimony from Susan and Gloria

Healing Prayer

The example of Oscar Osorio, the prison in Bellavista, and perseverance in prayer for six years…



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How We Pray for Healing:

We are joining our imperfect… prayers to his matchless ones. We do not pray to someone far removed from us, whom we have to labor to convince or to whom we must prove ourselves.

Rather, we join our minds, hearts, and wills with the One who is with the Father interceding, as we are through the Holy Spirit. P. 27

Healing Prayer is God's Idea

Among the disciples who continued to follow him, however imperfectly, was Simon Peter. Given Simon Peter's story, ***this should give great hope to the rest of us;***

He was warmly human, a fisherman who demonstrated a combination of blustery goodwill and headstrong impulsivity. Peter would step out and get it right, then almost immediately fall flat on his face again. Jesus' patient grace kept inviting Peter into deeper growth…

This should give the rest of us hope.

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HOW WE PRAY: TOGETHER

"And he summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. They went out and preached that people should repent. And they were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them." (Mark 6:7,13ac, NASB)

Jesus wasted no time in sending his disciples to pray for the afflicted and expected them to see results from their ministry of intercession. But he did not send them out alone. Jesus ensured they went out in teams – ordinary people, not even priests or religious scholars… He sent fishermen, and two kinds of people from the radical edges of his time: a tax-collector (a collaborator with the invading empire) and a rebel zealot—an extremely unlikely combination.

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“Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise them up and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and prayer for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.”

(James 5:13-16, NRSV)

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Healing prayer often takes place through a team or in gathered community. In the text from James, it is clear that those being asked to pray are not the 12 apostles, nor the leader of the church. Those called to gather in prayer for healing were believers whose walk with God had blossomed and grown in a local congregation (at that time, commonly house churches).

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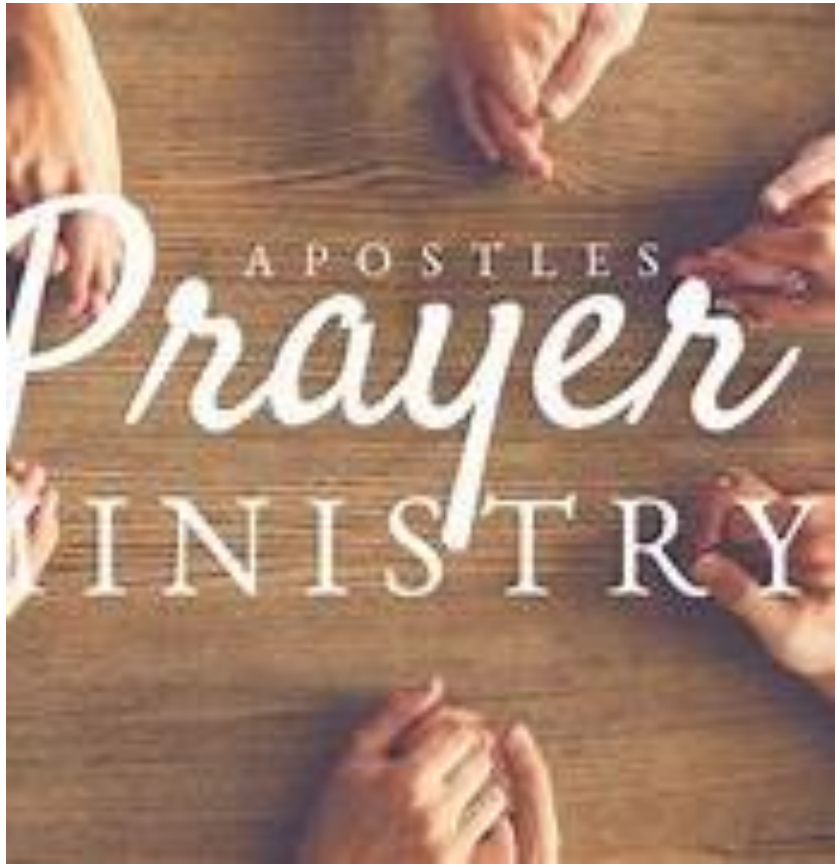
4 Healing Stories

The abuse victim who was healed by the care of an entire community…

The Spirit prevailed because the love of Jesus Christ had been expressed *through a whole community of faith*—a team consisting of some pastors, an able and understanding therapist, and a prayer group who faithfully cared for her. *It took all of us together*, utilizing the best tools of therapy, showing respect for her space and timing, and communicating with transparency with each other, to help support her to the place in which she could bring the wounds of the past into the gentle healing light of Christ. P. 33



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Through Jesus' presence or hearing, the flow of the Holy Spirit's power, mediated through contact of some kind or another, brought healing. In one account, Jesus returned to a spot where he had healed ill people once before.

"***When they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized him and ran about that whole country and began to carry on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard he was. Wherever he entered villages, or cities or countryside, they were laying the sick in the marketplaces and imploring him that they might just touch the fringes of his cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured***." (Mark 6:54-56, NASB) p. 34

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Susan’s Healing:

Her entire body filled with God’s Presence, what she described as a combination of gentle heat and “peace that passes understanding,” as people placed their hands on her and prayed. That Presence gradually encompassed her entire body as she sensed within that God was healing her. Suddenly, she simply knew that it was done.

They (intercessors) sensed “peace,” “fiery warmth,” “compassion,” and a “holy conviction,” a certain knowledge. They all suddenly knew that God was at work in her body, healing her of terminal cancer. Together, collectively, Susan and everyone else in the room received “a gift of faith,” the overwhelming sense that the matter was done. She was healed.

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Two moments in the Life of Jean Watson—A concert Violinist:

Healing by surprise. The 12 year old young girl losing her hearing:

He explained she was losing her hearing and the doctors were baffled. Speaking on her behalf, he emphatically stated, "she believes that Jesus will heal her if you pray." I remember thinking, well, that's probably not going to happen, but people are watching… So I placed my hands on the girl's ears and asked the Lord to touch her through me. As I prayed, it felt like a million volts of electricity passed through us, causing me to fall backward and land on the floor…

The girl was healed.

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Praying with a prostitute.

"I asked if I could pray with her, and she said "yes." Putting my arm around her shoulders, I prayed that the Lord would reveal his love to [her] in a way she could understand. After we prayed, she looked up with tears streaming down her face and said, "don't stop touching me. God is in your hands!"

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Healing Prayer

Healing Prayer Does not fit one approach… Every healing story in the gospels has Jesus praying differently. There is a consistency in His active desire to see people well—and a variety of approaches that occur throughout the gospels.

Maxie and I have discovered that there are eight unwise approaches we should avoid…

Healing Prayer

Problem #1: Demanding the person receiving prayer have more faith.

Jesus didn't regularly speak this way.

- *No faith* was exercised by the widow of Nain nor by her son (who was dead) when Jesus was moved to raise him. (Luke 7:11-17)
- In John 11:1-44, Mary and Martha specifically called Jesus to come and pray for Lazarus' healing, based on their faith, and yet Lazarus died. When their faith was wounded, it was Jesus who did the believing to raise their dead brother.

Healing Prayer

Problem #2: Refusing to accept the grace of medical science or mental health expertise alongside the grace of healing.

- This is a false dichotomy alien to the biblical authors and to our Lord. In Jesus' culture, *oil was medicine*. He anointed with oil and taught the apostles to do the same (see Mark 6:13; James 5:13-18). Accepting medicine while seeking God is something Jesus did.
- Prayer for healing with medicine is found in Isaiah 38 (2 Kings 20:1-11). Hezekiah received…

Prophecy, prayer, a second prophecy, a promise of future heath, and a medicine together in combination served as the agency of Hezekiah's healing.

Healing Prayer

Problem #3: Believing that healing prayer is only an instant mechanical or transactional process and never a long-haul, responsive relationship among God, the intercessors, and those being prayed for.

- James 5 uses Elijah praying for rain as the example when praying for healing… He prayed 7 times…
- Naaman the Syrian had to dip seven times in a shallow river to become well.
- Jesus prayed for one man twice, because the first prayer didn't finish the job.

Healing Prayer

Problem #4: Believing that sickness is always a consequence of someone's sin.

- *Sometimes* the link is possible… (John 5:14 "…You have become well; don't sin anymore so that nothing worse comes upon you…")
- Usually it is isn't so: In John 9:1-3 Jesus separates a man's blindness from his sin issues (or his parent's issues as well).

Healing Prayer

Problem #5: Attributing all disease to demonic activity.

- Jesus did not do this; nor do we find this approach in the early church or the epistles. Rather, Jesus discerned whether someone was merely physically sick or whether there was a demonic influence and acted accordingly (a single exception: in Luke 13:10- 17, the text demonstrates that this sickness had a demonic root).

Healing Prayer

Problem #6: Attributing illness to God.

There is ***no*** New Testament indication that an illness or a disability is “a cross God has designed for us to bear.”

Jesus always healed disease; he never told people to accept that “nothing was going to change” or that “this disease is from God.” Disease is described as an enemy—and “the last enemy to be destroyed will be death itself.” (1 Corinthians 15:20)

Healing Prayer

Problem #7: Giving up early and deciding circumstances must just be destiny.

The attitude of the believer must always be to believe that God wants us well (if we think otherwise we violate the will of God to seek medical treatment!)

Healing Prayer

Problem #8: Insisting that the afflicted one never verbalize the reality of illness or a lack of experience of healing.

Much damage is done when we tell others that they are not allowed to say that they are quite ill or struggling emotionally, mentally or spiritually. Frequently in Scripture, the afflicted one named their affliction to the intercessor.