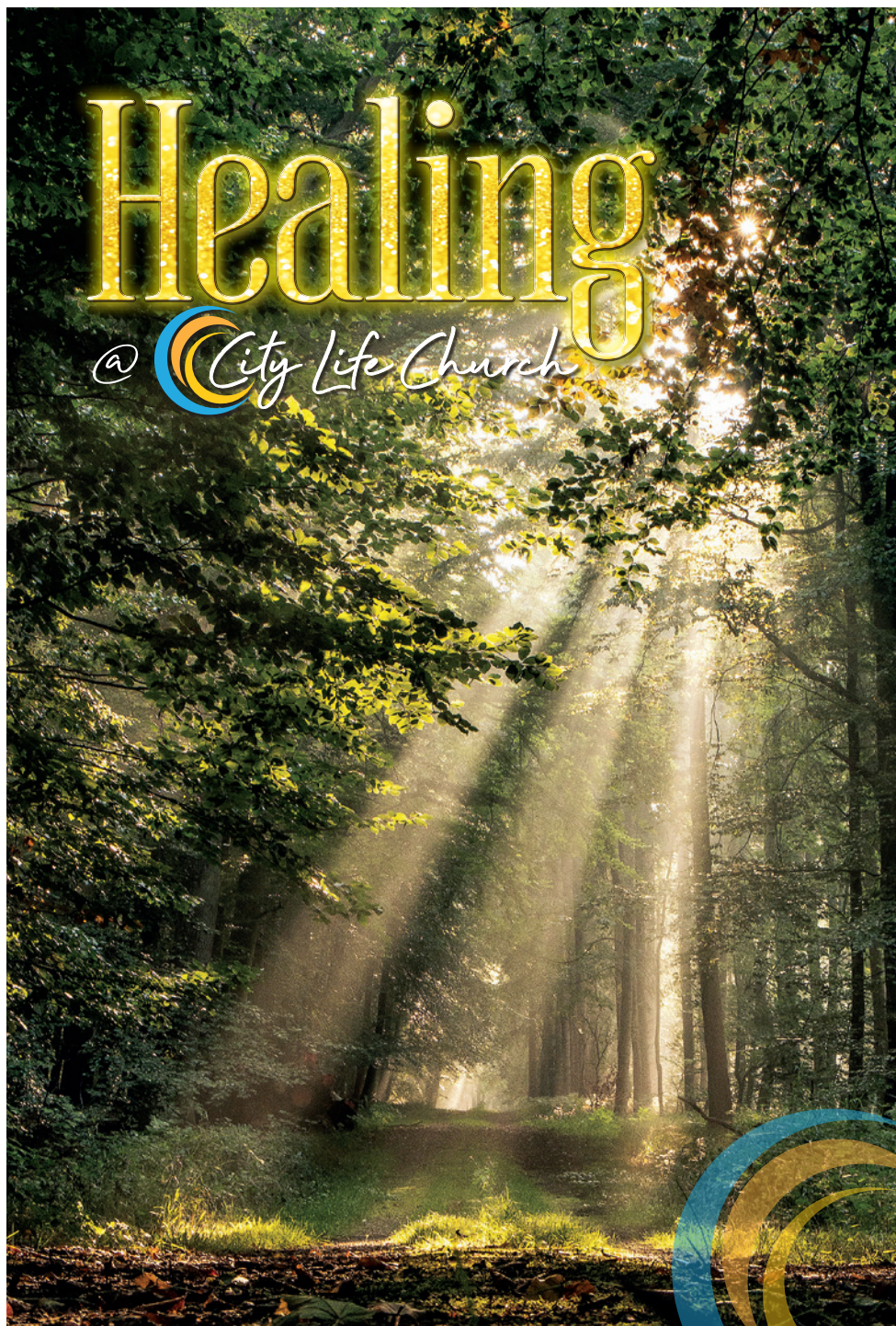


Healing

@ City Life Church



At City Life we celebrate all healing, as we believe all healing is from God

So, while we thank God for the provision of health care here in the UK, and gladly experience the benefits of it, we also believe that God supernaturally heals today, and it has been our joy to see this on occasions at City Life Church. Supernatural healing is part of the Kingdom of God impacting, or breaking in, to the natural realm in which we live, and we believe that we should seek and see this as a normal and natural part of our everyday walk with Jesus. Although we don't see people healed every time that we pray, it is our firm belief, which we reflect in our practice, that it is Jesus' desire to heal (He expresses this repeatedly in the Gospels, and particularly in Luke 5:12-13). We also believe that He often uses us, His followers, in this process, as part of our 'co-labouring' or 'partnering' with Him, to see His power and healing purposes revealed, and His Kingdom come.

So how do we pray for healing? Is there a method or formula which we should use? The answer is both 'no', and 'yes'! 'No' in that there is no one way to pray for healing modelled in the life of Jesus or the early church that we should use every time in the hope of achieving the best results. Luke's Gospel describes in detail a number of healing events in the life of Jesus, and we are going to reflect on several of them as we consider how we pray for healing. The answer to the question is also 'Yes', in that there are certain things that are really good to keep in mind every time we pray for healing, we will also look at these below.

Before we do, let's think about where sickness comes from?

It is important to acknowledge that the causes of sickness are varied and complex, and are often rooted in the physical, psychological, spiritual, relational and social, or a combination of these. The resulting sickness can also manifest in a host of different ways. An example of this is unforgiveness – it starts relationally, but then, if not dealt with, can impact in each of these areas. It is good to keep all this mind as you prepare to pray; as you approach a situation give careful thought to the words you use, recognising that the words we use can release healing, but can also lead to someone feeling judged or even condemned, which could in turn distract or derail what God wants to do in that moment.



Healing in Luke's Gospel

■ God uses words – 'Rebuking'

In **Luke 4:38-39** Jesus prays for Simon's mother-in-law. Luke describes how Jesus 'rebukes' the fever that was making the woman so ill. Rebuke (Epitimao in the Greek), in addition to some of the more standard definitions of the word, to chide, reprove or censure severely, also means 'to assign or acknowledge the worth of something' or 'award, in the sense of merited penalty'. It's like Jesus was telling the sickness, and the spirit that had caused it, that they were not wanted or welcome, and their influence was over, and because of who he was and what he came to do, they now had no value and their impact would be limited.

■ God uses actions – 'Laying Hands'

In **Luke 4:40-44** people with all sorts of illnesses were brought to Jesus for him to heal. Luke describes how Jesus 'laid his hands upon them' and they were healed. Hands in the Bible are symbolic of power, honour, healing, trust and creativity. Throughout the Gospels, and the book of Acts, we read how, when people had hands laid on them, God would touch them in a host of different ways; they receive the Holy Spirit and the Spiritual Gifts (including speaking in tongues & prophecy), they were commissioned and sent out on a particular mission, and they would be healed. So, there is something significant in this simple act! God can use our laying hands on another person as a means through which He can impart his grace and release the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit.

■ God uses authority? – 'Authority'

In **Luke 7:1-10** a Roman centurion, having heard about Jesus asks him to come and heal his gravely ill servant, whom he loved greatly. In the exchange that took place between them (through third parties) Jesus recognises the man's authority in the natural realm, and in doing so highlights how the centurion had grasped the authority that Jesus had in the spiritual realm (even over the forces of sickness) ... Jesus was astonished by his recognition of this. As co-labourers with Christ, and

as part of His 'being glorified' bride, the church, we can function and pray (ask or declare) according to a delegated authority that He bestows upon us, by the Spirit and because of Jesus's crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

■ **God uses hearts – 'Compassion'**

In **Luke 7:11-17** we read how Jesus came across a crowd carrying a recently deceased young man. Jesus first response to the situation was compassion - the word used here in the original language is 'spagchnizomai'. This depth of this word has been lost in translation as it means 'to be moved as to one bowels', in other words to be moved to the very core of our being, the very seat of our emotions. It was this that motivated Jesus to act. When praying for healing the starting point is love (deep compassion) for the person before us, God loves them and so do you.

■ **God uses belief – 'Faith'**

In **Luke 8:40-56** we read of two people whose belief / faith brought them to Jesus seeking healing and help; Jairus, who did so in an up-front public way; and the sick woman who did so covertly, under the radar. Both, because of what they knew and believed about Jesus, reached out to him. In the original language 'faith' and 'belief' are the same word - Pistis (Pisteuo is the verb / action). It is often translated 'to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in'. In the early church their understanding and engaging with this word was more dynamic than this. Pistis / Pisteuo involved entering into, and living in the reality of, a dynamic personal relationship, to the point of confidence and action based on that relationship. So when praying for healing, regardless of the level of faith we might have in that moment, we need to embrace the fact that we are entering into a glorious divine interaction with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, born out of a covenant connection and rooted in the promises of God so that the power of God is not constrained. (Luke 4:22 & Mark 6:5)

■ **God uses prayer – 'Prayer and Fasting'**

In **Luke 9:37-43** we read how Jesus, as he was coming off the mountain where he had been transfigured, comes across a crazy

situation where his disciples could not heal a demonized boy. The boy's father was desperate and reached out to Jesus for help. Jesus 'calls out' the presence of unbelief and then rebukes the spirit, and boy is set free. In Mark's account of what happened, it says Jesus 'commanded the spirit to come out of him and never return'. He also gives a bit more detail of the debrief with the disciples afterwards. Jesus explains to his disciples that 'This kind can only come out by prayer (and fasting)'. It is through prayer and fasting that we become more aware of **whose we are** (our identity as trusted children of God and co-labourers with Christ), **where we are seated** (in heavenly places with the risen victorious Christ, far above all rulers and authority – this is where we can look from as we pray for healing) and **what is available to us** (as heirs, and co-heirs with Christ ... the power that was available to him is available to us!)

It is good to keep in mind that although in many of the healing accounts in the New Testament the healing that took place seems to be instant, there are also numerous occasions when the need for persistence in prayer is emphasised, and the need for prayer to be a key element of our personal discipleship highlighted.

God responds to their response – 'Presenting & Praising'

In **Luke 17:11-19** a group of men with skin conditions meet Jesus and shouted out to him to have pity on them. Jesus simply says, 'go and show yourselves to the priest', and it was as they went that they were healed. It was as if they needed to step into their healing (you see this again in Acts 3 when Peter and John pray for the guy at the Temple gate). They were then able to present themselves to the priests who would have been able to confirm the miracle, no doubt adding to the weight of their testimony. It appears, though, that the main focus of this healing miracle is the importance of praise and thanksgiving. Jesus honours the one man who was healed and then returns to give thanks to him and praise to God. When we praise God for the healing, we recognise whose power was at work (humbly acknowledging that it was nothing we can do ourselves). In our praise and thanksgiving for the miracle (however small it may seem), we are seeking to steward the moment well and position ourselves for more (Zechariah 4:10).

Things to be aware of when you pray for healing . . .

- A sense of God's grace for healing in the room or over the situation (Luke 5:17).
- A word of knowledge i.e. a word, impression, condition which comes to mind . . . (1 Corinthians 12:8).
- An impression or feeling in your own body guiding you in what you should pray for / or 'call out' in the room.
- A testimony which shifts the atmosphere and causes an unction to rise up upon the person or you to pray for healing.
- An awareness of the Spirit moving over a person or a particular area in the room.
- Be prepared to pray for healing when you become aware of need and pray for them (but be sensitive to the person who may not want to be prayed for.)

When you pray ...

- May sure you approach with humility, you are there as a servant of the Lord to really love the person before you It's not about you!
- Spend a couple of moments talking to the person about what they want prayer for.
- Before you pray for them quietly ask for the Holy Spirit to help you ... how should you pray?
- Ask if it's OK to lay hands on a person, if they agree then place your hands on them (being sensitive about where), but as you do believe that this is a sacramental act – a means through which God impart His grace. When you pray keep your eyes open, watch what is happening and keep talking inwardly to the Holy Spirit.
- After you have prayed you may wish to ask if the person felt anything. Can they test out if there has been healing?
- Be prepared to pray again (Mark 8:23). You may want to ask the person if there is any way they can 'check out' if they have been healed (this may require a medical appointment as a person 'presents themselves' as a confirmation of their healing)

One day Christ will return and what was intended for creation in the beginning, lost in the fall, and then redeemed at the cross, will be gloriously and perfectly known (Revelation 21). In the meantime, through the power of the cross and resurrection, Jesus is putting the world right through His church, by the power of Holy Spirit. Jesus instructs us to pray 'your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is heaven'. As we pray this we are praying for something of that future reality to break into the present one (this is called a realised eschatology) . . . in Matthew 18, Jesus explains how in prayer we can do this – releasing (or loosing) heaven's reality here on earth, and binding (restricting) those things that are not of that kingdom.


The reality is that, at this time, we know only 'in part' what we will one day know in its fullness (1 Corinthians 13:12), and until that time we will have to contend with the presence and impact of brokenness, darkness, evil and sin in our world. So, sometimes people don't get healed, or they die, and we have to carry the potential grief, sadness and disappointment of that, alongside our deep inner longing for things to be restored and made right that don't go away (in Romans 8 Paul likens this to inner groaning).

But we do not allow this to be a reason to stop praying for healing . . . we simply, in faith, have to embrace the 'mystery' of this time that we are in, holding on to the promise that the Kingdom of God is advancing and our purpose and calling is to keep abiding, seeking, praying and being ambitious for the Kingdom, until Jesus returns!



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