

## Chapter 15

### MINISTERING PHYSICAL HEALING

*Some years ago I was on a treadmill at a health club in Grand Junction, Colorado, and had planned to walk on it for an hour. After 50 minutes, without any apparent reason, the treadmill stopped. I tried to get it started, but the thought came that maybe I was supposed to stop at that point. I went downstairs, took a shower, put on my swimming suit, and got into the hot tub. A 40 year old lady was in the hot tub. I noticed she acted as though she was in pain. I asked her about it, and she said she had terrible back pain. I asked, "When did this pain start?" She replied, "Six years ago." When I asked her what had happened at that time she told me that one day while living in another community she had been jogging about sun down, and a car driven by a student hit her. I said, "I'll bet you have some resentment toward that student, don't you?" She said, "No, I don't, but I have resentment against my doctor. He took X-rays and couldn't find anything wrong, and he said I was exaggerating the pain. He ridiculed me." She went on, "I have had a lot of resentment in my heart toward that man."*

*I then told her I was a minister and had prayed for many people and would like to pray for her. She was very agreeable. I asked a few more questions. She said her father had rejected her when she was born because he wanted a boy. She had always tried to be a tomboy but could never please her father. She also told me she had married a wonderful man and thought her life was complete, but after several years he had abandoned her for another woman.*

*In ministering to her, I started at the beginning and had her forgive her father and repent of any judgments against him, forgive her husband for rejecting her, and forgive the other woman I had her forgive the student that ran into her and the doctor that made fun of her. She had a difficult time doing that, but finally she forgave him and repented for her hatred of him. Then I prayed for the trauma she had experienced. I prayed that the Holy Spirit would come heal the brokenness inside, and for the pain in her back. She was healed right there in the hot tub! All the pain left! She was full of joy and said, "My brother is a pastor in Alaska. He wrote that he and many people in his church had been fasting and praying for me for healing, that he had been praying specifically that God would bring someone to me that knew how to pray for me." They did all the hard work of fasting and praying, and I "happened" along, walked her through a brief ministry, and had the thrill of seeing her healed and set free.*

Jesus said, *"I came to do to do the will of Him who sent Me,"* and he went about healing the sick.<sup>1</sup> Matthew reports, *"And (Jesus) was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. And the news about Him went out into all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them."*<sup>2</sup> Mark says, *"And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, and to have authority to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons."*<sup>3</sup>

Jesus sent out His disciples to do His works. He sent out the twelve to preach the Good News, to heal the sick and to cast out demons.<sup>4</sup> Later, He sent out the seventy to preach the Good News, to heal the sick and to cast out demons.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Jesus commissioned the whole church to do His works. While on the earth, He said of those who would believe in Him, *"The works that I do he will do and greater works he will do"*.<sup>6</sup> The resurrected Christ commissioned the church, and this is a part of what He said: *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. These signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons, they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover."*<sup>7</sup> Please notice He does not restrict his commission to pastors or specially gifted people but says, *"those who believe will lay hands on the sick and they will recover."* Finally, the ascended Christ gave gifts to His church through the Holy Spirit, and among those gifts were the gifts of healings and the gift of miracles

.<sup>8</sup> In the Book of Acts a significant part of the work of the early church was healing the sick.

God receives glory when people are healed by faith. When Jesus healed a paralytic, the multitude *"marveled and glorified God"*<sup>9</sup> When He healed the *"lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others,"* the multitude *"glorified the God of Israel."*<sup>10</sup> When He healed blind Bartimeus, *"And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God."*<sup>11</sup>

And in John 14:12-14 is Jesus' amazing declaration that, *"He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do."* Then Jesus adds, *"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."* So Jesus clearly states that the Father is glorified when we obey Him and do the works that He did.

One of the names of God is Jehovah-Rapha, *"the God who heals."*<sup>12</sup> This name demonstrates the eternal character of God. In the brief time when God walked on the earth, He spent much of His time healing the sick, including casting out demons, and teaching on this subject, so it must be important! He trained His intimate disciples to do this work, and He gave this ministry to the church (His body on earth), and yet today many Christians have been in church for 20, 30, 40 years and have never heard one sermon on the subject of healing. Members of the church are not encouraged and trained how to pray for the sick. In my experience, at least 10% of any congregation are sick and in pain. If there are 200 people in the congregation, at least 20 of them are sitting there sick and in pain. Some of them are

in a desperate condition. In many churches there is never an invitation to come forward for prayer for healing, nor is there any teaching that God is interested in your health and desires to heal you. I wonder if we are fulfilling Paul's prophecy that *"they will have a form of Godliness but deny its power."*<sup>13</sup> Some churches even preach against healing, implying that if any healing happens as a result of prayer it is demonic. That is very interesting. When Christ walked the earth He healed the sick regularly, now some say only the devil can do it. Other churches don't preach against it, they ignore it, and the result is the same. If you ignore something, essentially you are saying it is not important, and yet to Christ, to the disciples, and to the early church it was important.

#### **Four tips or suggestions about praying for the sick**

**The first suggestion is to lay hands on the sick appropriately when you pray for them.**<sup>14</sup> In Hebrews 6:1-2 "laying on of hands" was one of the doctrinal foundations of the early church.<sup>15</sup> When Jesus prayed for the sick, frequently He laid hands on them. When He prayed for Peter's mother-in-law who was sick with the fever, He touched her.<sup>16</sup> He touched a leper and healed him.<sup>17</sup> He touched and healed a deaf man.<sup>18</sup> A woman with an issue of blood touched Him.<sup>19</sup> Peter and Paul frequently touched people when they prayed for them for healing. Remember that Jesus said, *"Those who believe will lay their hands on the sick and they will be healed."*<sup>20</sup>

What happens when one touches another person? Warmth, love, and the very life of God are transmitted, because the same Holy Spirit, the same love and power that was in Jesus, is in us. I suggest you lay your hand where there is pain, if that is appropriate and modest, that men never pray for women privately and vice versa, and that you use Godly wisdom in touching another person.

**The second suggestion about praying has to do with "soaking prayer."** Francis MacNutt has two classic books on praying for the sick: Healing and The Power to Heal, and I encourage you to read those books if you have not read them. Francis has a special anointing for praying for the sick. Although everyone is authorized and encouraged to pray for the sick, some individuals definitely have a special anointing for the healing ministry, just as everyone is to share and teach God's truth in an appropriate setting but there are people who are especially gifted as teachers. Years ago, Francis discovered a pattern when he prayed for a group of people. Let's say he prayed for 100 people and all of them had sickness or pain. He stood up in front of them, prayed for about 30 minutes, and then would ask them, "How many of you were completely healed as I prayed? All the pain has left?" Usually 5 or so of the people would raise their hands. Then he would ask, "How many of you were not completely healed but you know that you are improved? You do not have as much pain, the symptoms are not as bad and so forth?," and about half of the people would raise their hands. The other 45 showed no evidence of improvement as he prayed. So he started wondering, "If I pray for 20 to 30 minutes for a group of people and 5 are completely healed and 50 of them are improved, what would happen if I prayed for another 20 to 30 minutes?" He started testing this out and found that if he prayed longer, more of the people experienced healing. There were teams of five or six people that went with him and would get together and pray for someone for a period of time. There was one lady, a secretary, whose fingers were swollen and painful with arthritis, and this caused problems when she tried to do her

secretarial work. They prayed for her every afternoon for 30 minutes for a full week and saw improvement every day. The swelling went down day by day, and the pain was much less. After many experiences of this kind, they concluded that prayer is sort of like X-ray therapy without the bad side effects. The more you pray, the more you bring Holy Spirit power to bear on the sickness.

When ladies wash clothes, they don't just hold the clothes up next to the wash-water and sprinkle the water on the clothes. They put them down in the water and soak them for a period of time until the dirt comes out. The way we usually pray for the sick is to sort of sprinkle them with a little prayer, 5 or 10 minutes at the most, and if they are not immediately healed, we may think, "Well, God's not listening to my prayers today," or whatever. What would happen if we soaked the person in prayer for a period of hours instead of just sprinkling a little prayer on them? Does this imply that our human effort manages or manipulates God, or that healing is earned by or dependent upon human works? This same question is implicit in our ministry of healing no matter whether short or long in duration. Is God dependent on our prayers, on our ministry? Apparently He has made Himself dependent on our ministry to the sick – and likewise on our witnessing and preaching the Gospel, for it is God's idea that we do these things. He could certainly do them without our participation. Since we know we cannot heal anyone or save anyone, our humble obedience in these and other areas does not diminish the sovereignty of God, rather, as previously stated, it glorifies Him. When Jesus, our model, healed the sick, the people gave glory to God. <sup>21</sup>

Some people teaching on the subject of healing say, "Just pray once and then claim the healing. To pray more than once is a lack of faith." But where does it say that in Scripture? Jesus taught much about perseverance. He talked about the man who came to his friend at midnight asking for bread, and he knocked on the door again and again until he finally got what he was asking for.<sup>22</sup> Following that parable, He said to ask and seek and knock, and the implication is that we are to continue to ask, and seek, and knock until we get what we are asking for. Implicit in this parable is the qualification that we are praying according to the will of God. James points out that if we pray amiss, with wrong motives, we will not receive an answer from God.<sup>23</sup> Jesus also tells a parable about the woman who went to the unjust judge, and the point of the story is that we are to pray continually and not to lose heart.<sup>24</sup> There are several examples reported in Scripture where Jesus' healing ministry was a process rather than being instantaneous:

- Jesus prayed for a blind man twice. Remember after the first time the man said he saw men as trees walking and Jesus prayed for him again.<sup>25</sup>
- The healing of the Gadarene, the man who ran around naked among the tombs, seems to have been a process.<sup>26</sup>
- The 10 lepers were healed "as they went".<sup>27</sup>
- After the healing of the "epileptic" boy,<sup>28</sup> Jesus said, "This kind can come out only by prayer" (or by prayer and fasting) – a process.

Several years ago in Loveland, Colorado, there was a lady in her 60's who attended the church I was

pastoring. She had osteoporosis with much pain in her back and at times was bedridden. I prayed for her on several occasions and she felt better each time, so it occurred to me that we should soak her in prayer. I asked her if she would be willing to do that and she was agreeable. So on Tuesday night, when we had our regular prayer time, my wife and I and four or five others, went to her house, gathered around her bed, and prayed for her. We prayed for 1-1/2 to 2 hours. That is a long time to pray for someone. How do you do that? I prayed for her in every way that I knew how. Usually after about 5 minutes you run out of something to say. I prayed in English and also in my prayer language. We took turns. I had one of the ladies lay her hand on her back where it was painful. We read appropriate Scriptures about healing, we listened to the Holy Spirit, we took coffee breaks and then resumed. At the end of the evening, she said she felt better, and we asked if we might come back the following week. When we returned, I tried to find out about any bad roots that might be behind the sickness. We learned that the pain and osteoporosis had worsened several years before when her husband abandoned her for a younger woman. We had her forgive her husband, the other woman, and repent of all judgments. We prayed for her heart to be healed and continued to pray for her back. On that second night she felt much better at the end of the prayer time and was able to get out of bed and sit up. We said we would come back again. The next Tuesday she was able to sit in a chair in a circle with us. As we prayed that night, after about 20 minutes, suddenly all of us could hear the bones in her back start cracking and snapping, and her back straightened up. She was completely healed; all the pain left. It was a glorious experience. We knew her for many years after that and she remained healed. What would have happened if we had only prayed for 5 minutes, sprinkled her with a little prayer and said, "Well, I guess God is not in this," and given up? I assume that nothing would have happened. But because we persisted and got to the roots, and we soaked her in prayer for many hours, God was gracious to come and heal her.

I encourage people who have chronic disease, who have children or family members with chronic disease, who have children who were born with some mental problem, to practice soaking prayer. I have heard many wonderful stories of people who persisted in praying over months and years and gradually saw healing take place that the doctors said could not take place. I believe we are to persist, to soak people in prayer and trust the Lord.

Am I saying that if we pray right, and if we pray long enough that everyone will be healed? No. *"There is a time to be born and a time to die,"* and all physical healing is temporary, and we can see examples in Scripture of people who were not healed. The apostle Paul reports on one occasion, *"Trophimus I have left at Miletus sick".*<sup>29</sup> Paul states this matter-of-factly, although Paul had been greatly used in miraculous healings and had undoubtedly prayed for Trophimus. We don't understand why everyone is not healed but do know that if we pray in faith many are healed, for which we give glory to God.

When someone is not healed, we should leave them better off, not worse off. For instance, I have

heard of situations where those who prayed for a sick person blamed him for his lack of faith if he was not healed. So they left him still sick but also feeling guilty about it! The only time Jesus seemingly blamed someone when healing did not take place was the time He expressed disappointment with His disciples (not the sick boy or his father) when the disciples were not able to heal the “epileptic” boy. Jesus said, *“How long am I going to put up with you?”*<sup>30</sup> When we pray for someone, and they are not healed, we should leave them knowing we care about them and God loves them.

**The third suggestion is regarding an “action of faith.”** In Matthew 12, Jesus went into a synagogue on the Sabbath and ministered healing to a man with a withered hand. In Verse 13, He said to the man, *“Stretch out your hand,” and it was restored as whole as the other.* As the man took an action of faith, stretching out his hand, he demonstrated his faith and was healed. The same principle was demonstrated in John 5:8 when Jesus told a paralyzed man to, *“Rise, take up your bed and walk.”* And in Acts 3:6-8 when Peter said to a lame man, *“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength,* and he began walking and leaping and praising God!

When the circumstances fit I ask the person to whom I have ministered to move the part of his body that was previously immobilized or painful. If it was a back problem, “Now bend over or squat in a way you could not do before.” Their response to my direction is faith, and God responds to faith. Without exaggeration, I can say that over the years I have seen God heal hundreds of people in this manner. As an example, four of us were conducting a prison seminar in Canyon City, Colorado. On Friday night after the first session we went to a restaurant for dinner. The waitress, Sharon – according to her name tag – was wincing with pain when she moved her right arm. I asked her about it. She said that on the previous weekend they had served a large convention and she had carried many big platters at shoulder height and apparently strained her shoulder. Also she said that at a family gathering a day after the convention she played softball with her family and when she threw a ball she heard her elbow pop and now she was really in pain. I said, “Do you mind if we pray for you?” She hesitated and said “Okay.” We in the booth joined hands and I lightly touched her arm and prayed, “Lord Jesus, we pray for Sharon, and in your name I command this pain and soreness to leave.” Then I asked Sharon to stretch out her arm. She looked at me as if I were strange, but she gingerly moved her arm, then stretched it out, then raised it over her head, then started moving her arm and shoulder in broader movements. Then she raised her head and stared at the wall and said, “That’s weird! How did you do that?” I said we didn’t do it, Jesus did it, and she should thank Him. That little experience honored our Lord and planted a seed of evangelism. Sharon will think about that and maybe realize that Jesus is not a myth but is a living, powerful reality. Glory to God! I have similarly ministered healing in checkout lines at the grocery store, on the golf course, in taxis, in buses, etc.

**The fourth suggestion has to do with using a “word of command” in ministering healing.** You will notice in each of the healings reported in the New Testament, where authority was exercised either

by Jesus or in His name, that there was no prayer, per se. Jesus spoke authoritatively to the condition, to the demonic spirits causing the condition, he touched the person, the person touched him, or he instructed the person to perform some action of faith: "Stretch out your hand," etc. This is the normal course in the four Gospels and in the book of Acts. As an example, see the account in Luke 13:10-16 of the woman who had a "spirit of infirmity" for 18 years and whom Jesus loosed. Following the New Testament pattern, when ministering to the sick I normally do not pray but simply command the sickness or pain to leave in the name and authority of Jesus, and usually I command any demonic spirits behind or connected to the pain or sickness to leave. I am not saying it is a rule that we should not pray for the sick. God is not legalistic, and there are of course times when we do offer prayers. I believe God is very pleased when we have enough faith and compassion to follow His example and His clear commandment to minister to the sick. He is not monitoring our formula. Also, I never say, "Lord, if it be thy will, please heal this man." That is a faith-killer. God has made His will clear to us. Jesus was the will of God in action, and He healed all who came to Him (see Mark 1:32 and Luke 4:40, among others). There is only one reported instance when Jesus refused, at first, to heal someone: the Syro-Phoenician woman who asked him to heal her child, but even then He healed her child.<sup>31</sup>

What of those who are not healed when we minister to them or pray for them? Isn't it obvious that it is not God's will to heal them? No, it is not. Perhaps God's will to heal them was blocked by factors we were not wise enough to ascertain (wounds, rebellion, lies, curses, etc.). Perhaps they will be healed as a process, or by another who ministers to them, or by a physician and medicine, or perhaps they will not be healed in this life. That is within the sovereignty of God. We cannot heal anyone of anything at any time. If anyone is healed, God is the One who heals him. But He has demonstrated His will in this matter in the New Testament by sending Jesus to heal all who came to him, and Jesus said, "*As the father has sent me, I also send you*" (John 20:21). And Jesus has given to us, to the church, His authority to do just what He did (Mark 16:18, John 14:12). And He has given to the church gifts of healings and miracles (1 Corinthians 12:9-10). Only our lack of faith and fear of man will prevent us from being obedient.

One other point: Faith is an action of obedience, it is not a feeling! Many people say, "I just don't have enough faith to pray for the sick." That is a sorry excuse. Paul said that God has allotted to each a measure of faith.<sup>32</sup> Faith is not a feeling! What people are apparently waiting for is Holy Ghost goosebumps, or ethereal music from the sky, or an absolute assurance that if they stick out their necks by praying for someone that he or she will be healed at that moment so they won't look foolish. Forget it! John Wimber said that faith is spelled R-I-S-K. Aren't you willing to risk looking foolish for the Lord? "But what if they aren't healed?" What if they are? And many will not be healed unless we obey God and minister in obedience to the one we call Lord. We call Him "Lord," but some of us are as scared as little mice to obey Him.

## THINGS THAT MAKE PEOPLE SICK OR BLOCK HEALING

The first Thing that makes people sick or blocks their healing is sin. There is no sickness in heaven, and there was no sickness on earth until man rebelled against God, the experience we call, "The fall." From that perspective, all sickness is the result of sin. But all sickness is not the result of sin by the person who is sick; for instance, the man born blind in John 9:1. "*The disciples asked, 'Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?'*" You will notice they assumed that sin had something to do with his affliction. Jesus said that neither this man nor his parents sinned.

However, there are a number of instances in Scripture that connect sin and sickness. David says, "*There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger; nor any health in my bones because of my sin.*"<sup>33</sup> In Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth, he referred to their taking communion in an unworthy manner. He told them that because they did not judge themselves many members of their church were weak and sick and many sleep (that is, have died).<sup>34</sup> Remember the paralyzed man that was let down through the roof by four of his friends and Jesus said to him, "*Friend, your sins are forgiven.*"<sup>35</sup> And then He said to him, "Take up your mat and walk." Again, remember that after Jesus healed a man who was paralyzed by the pool of Bethesda, Jesus said to him, "*Don't sin anymore or something worse will happen to you.*"<sup>36</sup> An important verse to the whole church is in James 5:16 where we are told, "*Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.*" Notice also the apparent connection between sin and sickness in Psalm 103:3. In reminding us of the benefits that the Lord gives us, we are told, "*He forgives all your iniquities, He heals all your diseases.*" Thus, the Psalm implies a connection between forgiveness and healing.

Is there a connection between sin and sickness? Common sense tells us there is. Does smoking and alcohol and drugs have anything to do with sickness? Is there a connection between anger and sickness? Scientists say that there is a connection between anger and high blood pressure and heart problems and strokes. There seems to be a connection between bitterness and arthritis. I have read that resentment causes excess hormones from the pituitary, adrenalin, and thyroid glands that can result in ulcers, colitis, arthritis, and migraine headaches. I have read that grief, and also cynicism, have been shown to be closely connected with cancer, that stress and fear can be connected to ulcers and back problems and colon problems. Guilt causes many sicknesses, etc. I also have some newspaper articles that talk about the sexually transmitted diseases of syphilis, hepatitis, gonorrhea, and AIDS. A study from the New York Times says stress can double the risk of a cold. Another article says that extramarital sex and cancer are linked; that men who visit prostitutes may spread cervical cancer virus.

The American College of Cardiology recently identified emotional turmoil (anxiety, depression, and hostility) as risk factors almost as potent as smoking and a lack of exercise in contributing to heart disease.<sup>37</sup> And Dr. Donald Colbert recently reported<sup>36</sup> that: "Dr. John E. Sarno, professor of clinical



rehabilitation medicine at New York University School of Medicine, has treated thousands of patients with chronic back pain. He has found that injuries of the back are rarely responsible for the chronic back pain. He discovered that tension actually leads to muscle spasm and back pain (a condition he named Tension Myositis Syndrome). Muscle spasms in the back create constriction of the blood vessels that supply the muscles with blood and oxygen, a process that leads to decreased oxygen for muscles and nerves. The result is a cycle: more spasms and more pain create more anxiety and more tension, which create more spasms and more pain. Sarno found that many of his patients had anger, repressed or internalized, and that it was the root cause of their muscle spasms. He now counsels them not to focus on their pain but on healing their anger." As Christians, we have the advantage of being filled with God's Holy Spirit, who can bring all things to our remembrance, even the repressed anger we may carry from our childhood or adolescent years. Forgiveness and repentance can reprogram the body for health instead of pain.

Is there a connection between sin and sickness? Obviously. So in praying for the sick we need to discover if there is sin that needs to be repented of. I would summarize this point as follows: All sickness is caused by sin. (1) the sin abounding in a fallen, cursed world, (2) the sin of others, such as generational curses, witchcraft curses, and word curses; as well as traumas inflicted by others, or (3) the personal sin of the person who is sick. An example of Nos. 2 and 3 is in the following point.

**The next point is that when you pray for someone who is sick, it is important to get to the root.** I ask the questions, "When did this sickness or this pain begin?", "What happened about that time?", in order to get to the root. Some years ago I ministered to Alex, a man of about 40 who played in his church band. Alex had a terrible condition in his back which hurt so badly he couldn't get through the day without lying down on a cot from time to time and stretching out. It was so bad that when he drove home from work he would cry out to God to help him get home because of the terrible pain I asked Alex, "When did this pain in your back begin, and what happened at that time?" He said, "Twenty years ago. Before I was a Christian, I was playing for a band in a night club. One night a man ran inside to tell me that a guy was beating up my friend out in front of the club. I went out and saw this big guy had my friend down on the sidewalk and was kicking him. I tried to push the man away, but he picked me up and slammed me down on my back over the curb. It almost broke my back. I had surgeries and many treatments by doctors. They finally said they couldn't do anything else to help me and told me to take pain medication and learn to live with it." I asked Alex if he had ever forgiven the man who had hurt him. He said, "No, it never occurred to me. I have always hated and resented that man."

I told him about the importance of forgiveness as a prelude to ministering God's healing and asked him if he would be willing to forgive the man who hurt him. He quickly said he would. I led him to forgive the man and to repent of judging and hating him. The setting of this ministry was in a small church group, so I had everyone join in prayer for him and had several of them lay hands on Alex. I prayed that God would heal the trauma, which is both physical and emotional.. We prayed for

his wounded heart to be healed. Then I said, “In the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command this back to be healed, and I command pain and any spirit behind the pain to leave.” Then I asked Alex to stand and move his back in some way that had been painful before. (An action or physical expression of faith.)

In an instant God healed his back and there was much rejoicing. That event occurred more than 8 years ago, and he has remained healed. Alex was a Christian and had been prayed for many times for the pain in his back without results. Why? I believe they never got to the root: the trauma, unforgiveness, bitterness, and hatred in his heart.

#### *WHEN SICKNESS AND PAIN RETURN*

This is a very important matter, and I would like you to consider it for a moment. I have reflected a great deal on the reality that sometimes pain and sickness return to people after they have been prayed for and seem to be healed. I suppose all of us who pray for the sick have had experiences like this. When this happens, it raises questions in people’s minds about the validity of the healing ministry. Why does it happen? While I cannot support this belief scripturally, per se, it has been my observation that there are times when this phenomenon seems to occur because those who prayed and ministered to the sick person did not get to the root. It simply follows that if sickness is a bad fruit, as I am convinced it is in every situation, then it is important to discover and cut the bad root. In the case of Alex, the clenched fist of bitterness and unforgiveness inside his heart apparently created a barrier that God’s grace and healing could not or would not penetrate.

I am not suggesting that this model or perspective on praying for the sick is the only or the best model. But over the years we have seen many hundreds of people healed as we ministered to them – and not only healed physically but also healed emotionally and spiritually. I am convinced that the “bad fruit/bad root” principle is a universal spiritual principle, and I am sure that God honors this way of ministering because it simply follows along with core truths He teaches in His word.

Categories of things that make people sick or prevent them from being healed were covered in previous chapters:

- curses that parents or others have spoken against the person
- curses that people speak against others or against God or against themselves
- involvement in occultism
- involvement in alcohol or drugs

- generational curses\*
  - witchcraft curses against the person
  - trauma
  - demonization
  - ungodly soul-ties\* \*”What is of
- great significance when praying for physical healing is that sickness and infirmities that have been passed down the generational line are often transferred through a dominating parental relationship. When that ungodly soul-tie is cut, illness which has resisted every other form of prayer previously is suddenly free to be healed through deliverance.”<sup>39</sup>

**Som**

### **e concluding points about praying for the sick:**

1. What about doctors and medicine? They are a blessing and that is sometimes the way God chooses to heal. I have had several major surgeries and also had radiation therapy for cancer. It wasn't for lack of prayer, but God chose to heal me through doctors and surgery and I thank God for them.
2. The need for common sense, such as good food, rest, and exercise. A final nugget from Dr. Don Colbert: He says his exposure to sick people at crusades convinced him that fewer Christians would need God's supernatural healing touch if they would learn to live according to principles of divine health. “We'd see people leaving the crusades smoking cigarettes, eating hot dogs, eating cookies and drinking Cokes” and overweight from lack of exercise, “going back to the same lifestyle that got them sick in the first place.”<sup>40</sup>
3. The difference between faith and presumption. When you pray for someone you should never tell them that just because you prayed for them they are healed. You never tell a diabetic to stop taking his insulin. You may be charged with murder. Let the doctor tell them they are healed. You simply minister to them and pray. Then you have done your part.
4. Are all healed when you pray for them? No, they are not. Some are healed instantly; some are healed as part of a process. Some are not healed on the physical level, for many reasons, some which we might understand, some that we don't understand. But when someone is sick and in pain I always assume it is God's will to heal them because Christ gave us the mandate and authority to pray for the sick. (I

recommend the book, When God doesn't Heal Now, by Larry Keefauver.)

5. When you pray for someone, touch them, appropriately and modestly, a touch of love and faith.
6. How many times should we pray? Many times, if we can, if that is appropriate. We should soak them in prayer, especially if you see some improvement after you have prayed for them once.
7. Look for the root. In this way you may be used by God to heal not only the person's physical problem, but his emotional and spiritual problems as well.

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### **Time of Reflection**

In the list of the gifts of the Spirit in I Corinthians 12, one of the gifts is the gifts (plural) of healings (plural). God heals through faith and through prayer in many different ways. There are many people who approach the whole matter differently from the way I do and God honors their prayers and their faith. God is much bigger than our understanding of Him, and His ways are far beyond our ways. I thank God that there are many gifts of healings. I want to encourage those who read this little message to step out in obedience and in faith and pray for the sick. If you are sick and in pain, ask others to pray for you and to continue to pray for you. Don't give up, don't be discouraged. God has revealed Himself as Jehovah Rapha, God our Healer. Our Saviour is the divine physician. There is much encouragement in Scripture to persevere in praying for the sick. God is glorified when we pray for the sick, and we give Him the glory when anyone is healed.

### **Endnotes**

- (1) John 6:38
- (2) Matthew 4:23-24
- (3) Mark 3:14-15
- (4) Matthew 10
- (5) Luke 10
- (6) John 14:12
- (7) Mark 16
- (8) 1 Corinthians 12:8-10
- (9) Matthew 9:8
- (10) Matthew 15:30-31

- (11) Luke 18:43
- (12) Exodus 15:26
- (13) 1 Timothy 15:26
- (14) Mark 16:18, James 5:13
- (15) See Derek Prince's "Foundation Series", specifically Laying on of Hands.
- (16) Matthew 8:15
- (17) Mark 1:40
- (18) Mark 7:33
- (19) Mark 5:27
- (20) Mark 16:18
- (21) Luke 5:26
- (22) Luke 11:5-10
- (23) James 4:3
- (24)
- (25) Luke 18:1-8
- (26) Mark 8:25
- (27) Mark 5:1-20
- (28) Luke 17:14
- (29) Mark 9:29
- (30) 2 Timothy 4:20
- (31) Matthew 17:17
- (32) Mark 7:25-30
- (33) Romans 12:3
- (34) Psalm 38:3
- (35)
- (36) 1 Corinthians 11:28-31
- (37) Luke 5:17
- (38) John 5:1
- (39) U.S. News & World Report, P. 68, December 1, 2003
- (40) Charisma, P. 90, August 2002
- (41)
- (42)
- (43) P. 133, Peter Horrobin, Healing Through Deliverance, Volume 2, The Practical Ministry
- (44) Charisma, P. 45, November, 2003