

Guidelines – Prayer for Healing

Psalm 103:3 *“Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases”*

Theological base

We believe that the church has a mandate and a responsibility to pray to God for healing - for one another, and for others in our community (James 5:14, 2Cor 12:8).

The Gospels show that Jesus Christ had a ministry of healing no less than His teaching (compare Mk 1:14 f with 1:32-34). *“Jesus travelled all through Galilee teaching in the Jewish synagogues, everywhere preaching the Good News about the Kingdom of Heaven. And he healed every kind of sickness and disease”* (Matthew 4:23). *“While the Sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on everyone of them, He was healing them”* (Luke 4:40).

When He sent the Twelve Apostles out (Mk 6:7, 13) and later the Seventy (Lk 10:1, 9), it was to heal the sick as well as to preach. The Book of Acts shows the apostles and others involved in the ministry of healing (Acts 3:7 f; 5:12-16; 8:7; 19:12; 28:8), and Paul speaks of “gifts of healings” distributed among believers along with other spiritual gifts. James refers to a ministry of healing carried on by the elders of a local church (James 5:14).

In the early centuries of the Church following the Apostles, the gifts of healing were still claimed and practiced within the church (Justin, *Apol.* ii.6; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* ii. 32, 4; Tertullian, *Apol.* xxiii; Origen, *Contra Celsum*, vii.4). Down through the history of the church there have been individuals and societies (e.g. Francis of Assisi, Luther, Wesley, the Waldenses, the early Moravians and the Quakers) who have claimed the gift of healing as one of the gifts of the Spirit.

New Testament Healing had various characteristics:

1. Jesus healed with a word or a touch
2. Jesus healed instantaneously
3. Jesus healed totally
4. Jesus healed anybody
5. Jesus healed organic disease
6. Jesus raised the dead

We find that the apostles and others who worked with them like Barnabas, Philip and Stephen, all showed the same characteristics of healing as Jesus.

In 2 Timothy 4:20, Paul mentioned that he left Trophimus sick at Miletus

This leads us to the conclusion that miraculous Divine healing today should also have the same characteristics, and that any other healing (EG partial or progressive healing, or healing from conventional medicine) is still Divine healing but not in the same category as the signs and wonders of the NT. God is the only One with the prerogative to heal. His Divine love is a motive to heal (*and His Divine love is also the motive when He does not heal*), His Divine power is His ability to heal, and His Divine wisdom is a major factor in the ‘if’ and ‘how’ and ‘when’ that He heals. Healing is not dependent on how much faith we have, but whether our faith is reliant on God – His power, love and wisdom.

We must keep God's plan and purpose in focus when we are involved in prayer for healing. The people came to Jesus for physical healing, but did they come for spiritual healing. They came to prolong their lives on earth, but did they come to secure eternal life.

As believers, God's purpose in allowing a physical ailment may be far more important than giving us relief from the pain, inconvenience or brevity of life it brings (2 Cor 12:8).

Guidelines for pastoral prayer for healing

The pastoral (or healing) team needs to consider:

- What is the most appropriate setting and style of ministry. We at ABC prefer not to have healing ministry as a public occurrence (an 'exhibition') unless the elders/pastors deem it important to have the whole church pray together in any specific cases. We would incorporate prayer for healing into a regular prayer meeting, Life Group meeting, in a person's home or in a church room.
- When in a hospital or hospice, the need to introduce team members to a member of staff.
- The benefit of inviting friends and family of the person receiving ministry to be present. Healing (rather than cure) is about a person's whole life and this includes their network of relationships.

Confidentiality

In order to build a relationship of trust with the person being visited it is important to be clear that you will treat the things they share with you in confidence.

There are two exceptions to this; the first is if they specifically give you permission to share something they have said with another person (e.g. they give permission for a situation they are facing to be put down the church prayer chain, or passed on to the pastor, or the pastoral care and eldership teams).

Secondly, if the person says something that leads you to think they or another person are at risk you have a duty of care to pass this on to the appropriate person or agency.

Approach to healing

- **Prepare yourself** by personal prayer, meditation in the Word, and listening to God. Empathise – seeking to feel with them and think about how you would pray were you in their place.
- **Arrange** to meet the sick person with at least one other prayer partner.
- **Ask yourself** "Do I have the faith to believe that God may choose to heal this person?" We can never be certain of what God intends, so we must couch our prayer in an attitude of submission to God's gracious will and wise purpose in what He does, but we are nevertheless to pray in faith with a real expectation that God will intervene.
- **Communicate** with the sick person the uncertainty of the outcome, but assure them of what you will be asking God for on their behalf.
- **Ask** them if there is anything specific they would like you to pray (EG. They may ask for relief from pain, or for a desire to eat). If their request is radically different to your intended prayer (they want to go to be with the Lord – you are praying

for their healing), then you must talk with them gently and allow God to change you or them.

- **Praise and thanks** is an appropriate way to end your prayer ministry.

Authorisation and accountability

Those involved in prayer for healing ministry should be authorised by the elders and acknowledged publicly in the church. Those involved should have a working accountability to the Senior Pastor.

Touch and the laying on of hands

Touch should always be used with care and forethought and permission sought. Jesus used touch at times in his ministry and its wise use can give a message of acceptance and value – a warm handshake can help to establish a relationship; holding a person's hand can be very comforting. It is important to remember that some people cannot bear to be touched, sensitivity is very important. Between the elbow and the shoulder is an acceptable area to give a reassuring touch.

Laying on of hands is an ancient Christian tradition. The person offering prayer for healing ministry represents the whole congregation on behalf of God, from whom all healing comes. The most common practice is to lay hands on the head or shoulders of the recipient. The recipient might be invited to take the hand of the person offering prayer and place it on the troubled area. This requires great sensitivity but has the potential to promote a feeling of participating in the prayer for healing. It is important that such physical acts take place with other people present or close to hand.

Anointing

Anointing with oil is usually reserved for more acute or serious conditions, and is usually done by church elders in response to a request by the recipient.