

*A man runs into his doctor at the grocery shop, and he says
“Six weeks ago, when I was in your surgery, you told me to go
straight home to bed, and to stay there until you called. But
you never called.”*

*“I didn’t???” said the doctor, “Then what are you doing out
of bed?”ⁱ*

I thought we’d start out today with a bit of light-hearted
humour, because today’s topic is,,, well it’s pretty serious
business.

We’re talking about “healing” and in particular, we’re talking
about “miraculous, physical healing”. We’re not going to be
talking about the normal bodily process of healing (which **is** a
miracle in itself – the way that God has designed our bodies to
do that – but that’s not what we’re talking about). Nor are we
going to be confusing the **gift** of healing with the physical
skill of medicine or nursing. We’re talking about miraculous,
physical healing”.

It was miraculous, physical healing, that Jesus did, as He
made the blind to see and the lame to walk. And as we read
through the book of Acts, we cannot help but notice, that the
same sorts of miracles that Jesus did, continued to happen
through not only the apostles, but also through ordinary
disciples of Jesus, in the early church. And perhaps that
shouldn’t come as a great surprise to us – after all, Jesus did
say that those who believe in Him, **will** be able to do what **He**
does – in fact He said that they would do even **greater** works
than what He was doingⁱⁱ.

So, there’s no doubt about it – Jesus healed the sick and raised
the dead. The apostles healed the sick and raised the dead.

Ordinary disciples of Jesus in the early church, healed the sick and performed miracles in His name...

But what about today? Are disciples of Jesus Christ still given the gift of healing today???

Some bible teachers will say “Absolutely, definitely yes.”

Some bible teachers will say “Absolutely, definitely no.”...

So, which is it? And why the difference of opinion? And if the answer is “Yes.”, well in what form does that healing take?

Well, I’m going to lay my cards down on the table right now – And I suspect most of you know very well what I’m going to say:

- Yes, People **are** still healed in the Name of Jesus today.
- Yes, disciples of Jesus **are** still given the Holy Spirit gift of healing.
- Yes, I believe that occasionally, people are even raised from the dead (in the name of Jesus) today.”

I say this, because the primary source of my theology – the primary source of what I believe about God, comes from the Bible. And I can say this in faith, because I can find absolutely **zero** evidence in the Bible, that the spiritual gifts of healing and miracles would only be around for a little while and then disappear.” And the second reason I believe what I believe, is because of the evidence of the miracles themselves.

Miraculous healings may **not** be near as common or as often, or as available on demand as some would have us believe, but I have seen enough miraculous healings, to know that God is still active in the world in this way today.

Alright, so that's where I'm at, and I'll share on that a bit more shortly. But also at the outset, I'm also going to say that not all people are healed today (just as not all people were healed in the early church). And we'll talk about that some more later too.

OK. Where does one begin? People's opinions are so varied, not only across the different denominations, but even within the one church (or the one local congregation), there can be an **enormous** difference of opinion over healing in the Name of Jesus....

So, what I'm going to do today, is to share with you a bit of the cross-section, representing some of the major views on healing today (and where those views come from), and then I'm going to tell you what I believe the Bible says... Is that OK???

1. The first view that one may come up against, is what some call, "the cessationist view".

Cessationists believe that out of all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, 4 of them (which they call the sign gifts) were temporary, and so they have now ceased. So, they say the gifts of miracles, healings, tongues and interpretation of tongues (and some would also throw into that list, the gift of prophecy), – they say these gifts **were** given, for the specific purpose of giving credence to the apostles' teaching – to give them an authority so they would be listened to. Alright, so they preached the gospel of Christ and the forgiveness of sins in His name, and they backed it up with these signs and wonders.

And the cessationists would say that these gifts have now ceased. They were only around until the New Testament had been written by the apostles, and after that, they disappeared.

The cessationist view, is a view which is held by Brethrens, some Presbyterians, some Baptists, and some other evangelical churches (especially those who may tend towards what's known as "a dispensational theology" which I'm not going to explain now, but you can look it up if you want [you won't find it in the Bible, but you will find it on the internet] [and I'm not a believer])...

While the cessationist view says "there is no gift of healing any more", most of them would agree that God is still sovereign, and that if God chooses to, He can heal anybody He likes, but they also believe that we should have no expectation that He will, or that He is even likely to.

And so the cessasationists would point people more towards a spiritual healing. They would point to the return of Christ and the resurrection body we will receive when He comes – and there's the healing. Now, that's absolutely true. Every sickness – every disease, is going to be dealt with, and our resurrection body will be free of that...

One of the key bible passages that they claim as evidence for this, is 1 Corinthians 13:⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part,¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.

And they claim that this is referring to the writing of the New Testament. They claim that when the New Testament was written down, the perfect had finally arrived, and so these temporary gifts that were filling in until that time, have now passed away.

The problem is, that passage of Scripture, is very clearly, not talking about the writing of the New Testament – It's talking about the return of Jesus. Because it goes on to say ^{1 Corinthians} 13:12 **For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.** It's very clearly talking about when Jesus returns – when we actually get to see Him face to face.

Now, Paul who wrote this was actually an Apostle. And so an Apostle is saying **“Now I know in part; then I shall know fully** , now I see dimly, but then I'm going to see Him face to face... Now, if an apostle is looking forward to this future time, to know God better, and to understand fully, how can he possibly be talking about what He's in the process of writing???

To say that the Spiritual gifts have passed away, because they were deficient, but now the Bible is perfect, and in it we can see God face-to-face – well, that's a bit of a problem. It's almost as if they treat the Holy Trinity as Father, Son and Holy Scripture...

So, I feel the cessationist view, is a way of explaining (or even justifying) a powerless spirituality. And some will take it so far as to say that any miracles done today, are the deception of

the devil, and people who have a gift of healing are acting as agents of the Devil. And I find that pretty sad, that they would give Satan glory for the wonderful things that God is doing.

So, that's the cessationists.

2. The second view on healing, is what I'm going to call the "religious or sacramental view".

This view, is where healing is made available through the rites and liturgies of the church – it becomes a very formal and religious act. So, for instance, the Roman Catholic church have a sacrament that they call "The anointing of the sick", where the priest, will come to the sick person and anoint them with oil, and presumably say the correct liturgical words.

But also in the Roman Catholic church, some have an openness to religious icons; religious artefacts; canonised saints... and through contact and veneration of these objects, some people seek healing.... Most evangelicals would look upon these actions as idolatry, so we don't have anything to do with it...

Although, we do anoint the sick with oil. Because James 5 says: ¹⁴ **Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.** ¹⁵ **And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.**

And we do that out of obedience, but it does not become a religious sacrament, or a liturgical function of a minister – it's done out of obedience, and in faith.

3. A third view on healing is a very **strong** view, held by the “word of faith” movement.

And I suspect the cessationist view is very much a reaction against the “word of faith” movement, and visa versa... (they're opposites)

The “word of faith” belief, is that Jesus dealt with all sickness and disease on the cross. And therefore the healing in Jesus' name, is available for everyone who has faith. They teach that, provided you don't have undealt-with sin in your life, if you ask God for healing, and claim that healing, and speak out that you **are** healed, and believe that you are healed,, then you **are** healed.

OK, so they believe **all** Christians can be healed **right** now, of every sickness, every disease – we don't need to wait for our resurrection bodies – we can be healed right now (guaranteed) provided we have enough faith...

And so, if somebody asks for healing, and they're not healed, well the logical response is “Well, you didn't have enough faith” or some of them will say “It'll come in time – you just have to keep believing”. And many many people keep believing they are healed, all the way to the grave... And they're not healed, so what are they believing? They're believing a lie.

Dangerously, some people will tell you, to stop taking your medication, or to give up on the doctors, and stop treatment, because while you keep on with treatment, that's a lack of faith in the healing... Let me just say, "Don't do that." Paul told Timothy to keep taking his medicine for his gut problem... And you should too.

The "word of faith" movement is **very** big in the Pentecostal churches. And **very** popular in the United States, and we Australians seem to have become followers of the United States, and so it's become very popular in Australia too... And I'd be surprised if it hasn't influenced what a lot of us believe. Well-known preachers, such as Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Jerry Savelle, Creflo Dollar, Joyce Meyerⁱⁱⁱ, Joel Osteen^{iv} - some of these profess to being "word-of-faith", and the rest have a theology that is very much **aligned** with "word of faith".

And sadly, when someone is suffering, and they claim healing and they believe for a healing, but healing doesn't come, they're left feeling "I didn't have enough faith". "It's my fault"... And many people have become very disillusioned in God, because what was promised never arrived...

This teaching is very much bound up in a power of words theology (you may have heard this): speak positive things – good things will happen. Speak negative things, bad things will happen. One of the key Bible verses they point to, is **Mark 11:²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.**

And when we pray, God does want us to have that sort of faith. But what I see as the greatest problem with the “word of faith” view, is that it does not leave room for the sovereignty of God. You see, God is God. We don’t always know what God’s will is. We don’t always know what God’s plan is. And sometimes (we don’t want to hear it) but sometimes it **is** God’s will for us to suffer, and in our suffering, we draw closer to Him. In our suffering, we bring Him glory (1 Peter 4).

We should always seek to pray in accordance with God’s will, but we don’t always know what God’s will is. Even Jesus Christ when He prayed, He pleaded to be spared from the cross, and yet He also prayed “Yet not my will, but Your will be done”^v. And something that’s very important for us to understand, is the Lordship of Christ, and therefore His right to act, without me questioning Him, and without me requiring an explanation...

You know, the way that we live our lives, whether it be in the good times, or the bad, we can bring Glory to God. Are you enjoying good times? – give glory to God. Are you suffering? – well in your suffering, continue to glorify God, and **WOW!!!**, what a witness you become to the world, when you give God glory, even when you’re suffering.

A second problem with the “word of faith” view, is the physical evidence. Many people **are** healed in the Name of Jesus today, and I praise God. But if healing is a result of words and faith, and guaranteed if I have enough faith, then why do I not see any 1000 year old men and women of faith around today? If those who had the faith to be healed once,

are sick and dying again, why aren't they healed again and again and again??? - the evidence doesn't stack up.

And the third problem with the “word of faith” view, is what it promotes in the life of the believer:

- It very often promotes what I call a Christian hedonism – it's a self-centeredness, with a fixation on financial prosperity, physical health and good times in our earthly existence. And all of this is exactly the opposite of what Jesus taught us is important.
- Secondly, it can be quite **false** in its claims – it does not focus on the truth. To try and give credence to its claims, any little glimpse of a healing is claimed as a miracle of God *e.g.: One evening, I was with a bunch of men, and one of them shared that somebody who was absent had the flu. So we prayed that God would bring Him healing. Well, the next morning I received a text, sent to all the men who had been at the group the night before, “So and so is healed. The Flu's gone. Praise Jesus.” The next day I actually rang this recently healed person, and he sounded as crook as a dog. And I said “I heard you were better”... and he said “Hmmm... so-and-so rang me that morning to ask me how I was, and I said “I felt a little bit better than last night”, and then he sent out the text telling everybody I'd been healed...”*

It's just false. And we should never be false in our claims about God. God wants you to be real. God wants you to be a real witness – not a false witness. God doesn't need you to be his PR man and spin-doctor. Yes, it is absolutely critical, to give God glory when He does the miraculous, but it actually does terrible damage,

to the church, and to God's reputation, when false claims of miracles are made.

The devil must just love it when falseness is found out, and people lose all faith in God because of it.

4. A fourth view of healing, is sometimes very closely aligned with "word-of-faith", and that is a ministry of miracle crusades.

And the likes of Benny Hinn travel the world in their private jets, doing these miracle crusades, and raking in millions of dollars from the desperate, as they do it.

I'd love to stand up here and say that they're all sharlotans. Because I think there's enough evidence around, that a lot of what these fellows do, is false... But at the same time, through these crusades, some have turned to Christ, and some have received healing... And I praise God. I cringe at their methods. I cringe at their motivations. I cringe at the thought of what's in their heart. I cringe at the damage I suspect it has done to God's Kingdom.... But I also praise God, that when despite the falseness, some individuals **do** turn to Christ, and **do** receive healing in His name, and do have faith in Christ – not in the crusader – well there's a reason to praise God...

5. A fifth view – I was actually unsure whether to include it in our list or not, because it's not really a Christian view of healing, some folk do tend to mix it in with their

understanding of healing, and it's a New age or spiritualist understanding.

And so drawing on mostly eastern religions, New Age practices such as Yoga, Tai Chi, Raki, Kinesthesiology, crystals, etc etc. – these New Age practices get all mixed up with the Christian practice of prayer for healing, and really it's not Christian at all.

And the best advice I can give you, is to stay away from New Age stuff – it's not of Christ – it's of other religions and other gods.

6. So, a sixth view of healing, is praying in Faith, and seeking God's will. We ask for healing, and in God's sovereignty, God can choose to answer our prayer (as with any other prayer) by saying:

- Yes, you are healed;
- No, I have other purposes for you;
- Not yet – wait for my timing; or
- I'll do it in a different way – which may be a Spiritual Healing

7. So, what do I believe? I believe No.6. I believe we should pray for healing. I believe if we don't ask for healing, a) that's showing a lack of faith, and b) it could be denying the healing that God is wanting to give, and so therefore it could be denying God the glory He's intending to display.

And if our pride, or our theology against healing, is preventing us from asking God **for** healing, well we need to deal with that, and place ourselves firmly in God's hands "Lord, I desire healing, and I'm asking you for health... But Lord, regardless of whether you do heal me, there's something else I ask for – the strength and faith to glorify you, whether I be sick or whether I be well."

So, I believe we should, in faith and in expectancy, be praying for healing, and God willing, the healing will come. But we should give God glory, for His greater and unknown purpose.

But it's not **only** prayer. There is **also** the spiritual gift of healing. And as with all Spiritual gifts, we don't all have that gift, but some disciples of Jesus **do**... And the body of Christ is not functioning properly, if the spiritual gift of healing is not being used.

So, what is the spiritual gift of healing?

A minister who we used to have in our church in Dalby told me that one day (in one of his previous congregations) he felt God was telling him that a certain person in his congregation had a gift of healing. So he went to visit this person, and he asked them "Do you have the gift of healing?" "Oh, I don't know", they said. "Well, what happens when you pray for someone who's sick?" "Oh, usually they get better"

Someone with the gift of healing, is someone who, not all the time, but more often than most, when they pray for the sick, they are healed.

The bible actually refers to it as "the gifts of healings" – in the plural. Now that should be a bit of a hint for us. It doesn't

mean that the gift of healing is one gift, that's given to a person, so they can conjure it up on demand, and heal whoever they want, whenever they want. The gifts of healings are not like that. Every single gift of healing is a gift from God. And God gives healings, as God wills.

You know, the Apostle Paul had gifts of healings, and yet he couldn't heal the stomach ailment of his good friend, Timothy^{vi}. He had to leave one of his fellow missionaries (Trophimus) at Miletus because he was too sick to travel^{vii}. Paul himself had some ailment that he referred to as "a thorn in the flesh"^{viii} that he was never able to shake.... The Holy Spirit gives gifts of healings, as the Holy Spirit pleases. They can't just be dispensed on demand.... Because God is sovereign...

So, what do we learn from all this? We've covered a lot of ground.

Well firstly, it should be clear that there is no 'set-in-stone' formula for healing:

- We cannot say, "No one is miraculously healed", because that's just not true.
- We cannot say, "If you do this particular ritual, you will be healed"
- We cannot say, "If you have enough faith and claim healing in Jesus' name, you **will** be healed"
- We cannot say, "If you call upon this particular miracle worker, you will be healed."

There is no 'set-in-stone' formula for healing. But that doesn't mean we don't pray for it.

Secondly, God is sovereign. He is Lord. And our right attitude, is to know that our Heavenly Father knows what's best, and so we can trust in Him and have faith in Him, and expect that God will answer our prayers (especially if we're praying in accordance with His will), because God is a good God, and His will shall be done.

Thirdly, the **world** seeks health, wealth, and a long life, and I know we're naturally wired to want those things... *I have a great fear for our country, because as our population ages, we are spending more and more and more money, trying to squeeze out an extra month, an extra week, an extra day of life... And as a country, we are accumulating a debt our children will never be able to pay. And as individuals, we are spending our children's inheritance, to see that we can have the longest possible life, with the most enjoyment we can squeeze in...*

As Christians, these things should not be so important to us, because life's short anyway, and we're fixed on eternity. Paul said in Philippians ^{1:21} **For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.** And he struggles. "I think I'm about to be executed, and I've got mixed emotions about it. If I die, I'm with Christ – I gain everything... But if I live, I can keep being an encouragement and a help to you. I can keep preaching Christ. I can continue labouring for the Lord..." He had real mixed emotions. And so should we. For Christians, death is the beginning of something wonderful, but we want to stay a bit longer, for our loved ones, and for sharing the gospel.

And so we pray for healing. Yet not our will, but God's will be done. And when it's time to go, let go, and fall into the arms of Jesus, knowing it's better still...

Fourthly, I hope you've kept hearing today, "Give God glory". Give Him glory in health. Give Him glory in sickness. Give Him glory in life. Give Him glory in death.

Because one thing's for sure – the Lord is with us, in sickness and in health. And He can be our strength.

Questions.

ⁱ Readers Digest – Laughter, the best medicine . Readers Digest, Canada 1998. (p.42)

ⁱⁱ John 14:¹² "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://geekychristian.com/is-joyce-meyer-word-of-faith/>

^{iv} You have to begin speaking words of faith over your life. Your words have enormous creative power. The moment you speak something out, you give birth to it. This is a spiritual principle, and it works whether what you are saying is good or bad, positive or negative"

^v Matthew 26:42

^{vi} 1 Timothy 5:23

^{vii} 2 Timothy 4:20

^{viii} 2 Corinthians 12:8-9