



MentorNet #71

Integrate Healing with Evangelism and Church Planting

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Introduction. MentorNet readers are familiar with reports of how God is moving through ‘signs and wonders’ in many regions of the world where Christian workers watch healing and deliverance open some hearts to the Gospel and shut others. Even experienced practitioners in such ministries admit that there is much they do not understand about divine healing. MentorNet hopes that the following guidelines will help you incorporate healing and deliverance more effectively into your existing ministry.

1. Practice all of Jesus’ words. One of the most important things we Christian workers can do in this regard is to apply to ourselves the words Jesus spoke to his original workers. Christ gave his workers authority over sickness, disease, and evil spirits (Matt. 10:1 and Luke. 9:1). He then sent them out to proclaim the Good News, healing the sick and casting out demons (Matt. 10:8 and Luke. 9:2). According to the book of Acts, after Christ returned to the Father, his followers continued to use this authority, leading many to faith. Since the New Testament gives no indication that Jesus later withdrew this authority from his followers, we, too, may exercise this authority given by Jesus, just as his original apostles did (Matt. 18:18-20; John 14:10-13; 15:7-10; Eph. 1:15-23; 2:20-21; 3:14-21; 1 Cor. 12:7-10; Jam. 5:13-20).

Non-Western Christian workers easily embrace this approach. I asked a group of church planters in South Asia how they trained new workers. They said that they trained younger workers in healing and deliverance as a normal practice, and that over two-thirds of the house churches in their network were started following a demonstration of Christ’s power over sickness and unclean spirits. They do not regard this as in any way unusual, nor do the people to whom they minister.

2. Apply Christ’s authority boldly. Whilst God graciously answers many petitions for healing and deliverance, there is another aspect of healing ministry that deserves attention. According to the healing and deliverance episodes recorded in the Gospels and Acts, rather than petitioning the Father to make the sick whole, Christ and his followers spoke directly and authoritatively to the sick, to their condition, or to whatever spirits may have been involved. Christ did not say this was the only approach to take, but it is the one recorded throughout the Gospels and the Acts. This is also the common approach of those I have worked with in South Asia and East Africa. In those regions, one sees little in the way of petitionary prayer. Christian workers’ usual approach is to exercise the delegated authority of Christ, as his early followers did, and they regularly see the sick healed and the oppressed delivered. When I myself started dealing with sickness and the demonic in this way, I, too, began to see more people healed.

Ministry with authority may require one to pray at length or speak repeatedly a word of command, as necessary. In South Asia, a woman was brought to me for prayer who could only see light and dark shadows. I spent a minute commanding the cause of the blindness to leave, in Jesus’ name, and for her sight to become sharp and clear. I then asked what she could see, and she said there was some improvement. I repeated this twice more, until she reported that she could read the lettering on a poster 50 feet away. This reminded me of Christ laying his hands twice on a blind man (Mk. 8:23-25). Again, although there is no direct NT command to take either approach; I suggest studying all of the pertinent NT passages, asking the Holy Spirit which approach to take.

3. Persevere and work in a team. The early disciples were trainees who did not always get the desired results, as recorded in Luke 9:37-43. Many today see little or no results when they start ministering to the sick and oppressed. These have to keep on trying, without growing discouraged, believing

that they will see results if they persevere. It can be very helpful to talk with those who get good results dealing with disease or the demonic. Prayer in a group for the sick can prove highly effective, if time and circumstances allow. Also, keep an eye open for opportunities to work alongside someone who has an authentic healing ministry, or to include such folk in your ministry team. Combining healing with ministries of the Word can be unusually powerful.

4. Look for those whom you can serve. You will see more folk set free, if you look for more opportunities to minister to them. When others know that your team practices healing ministry, you will get opportunities for Christ to show that his healing power is the same yesterday, today and forever. Many workers I have talked to in South Asia go through neighbourhoods and villages looking for a 'house of peace', by telling folk that they pray to God to bless folk, which includes prayer for the sick or demonized in the name of Jesus. Quite often they are welcomed into homes and discover a house of peace in which they are able to start a church. For more on houses of peace, see MentorNet #32 at <www.mentornet.ws/pdf/mentornet32.pdf>.

5. Deal with the whole person. While God heals whom and when He wills, certain factors are often seen in the lives of those who suffer from disease and the demonic. When these factors are dealt with, relief can come quickly. If time and circumstances allow, deal with the possible presence these issues. Such factors include unforgiveness and bitterness, anger and resentment, known sin or disobedience, past involvement in the occult, false religions, and other unhealthy spiritual practices. Help the sick or oppressed to repent of their sins, to forgive and release others, or to put away evil practices. Doing so can lead to healing right on the spot.

6. Live with the unknown. No one will deny that much mystery surrounds healing. Some afflictions may be caused by spiritual warfare or other unknown factors, such as a person's lifestyle choices. Disregard for fellow believers in the early Christian community once resulted in a good deal of sickness, even death (1 Cor. 11:30). When you minister to the sick, you will sometimes deal with folk who have a sincere faith yet are not healed. Even Paul, miracle worker that he was, once had to leave his sick co-worker Trophimus in Miletum, while he went on elsewhere.

It is often unclear why some believers have great success in administering healing, while other equally-committed folk have only modest results. It is easy to feel embarrassed (for oneself or for God) when a sick person is not healed. In those cases, it is good to remember that the love and care you show the sick can itself have a big impact on those present. Nevertheless, we believers trust that 'it is to the glory of God to conceal a matter' (Proverbs 25.2), so we keep the faith, trusting in the goodness and grace of God, even in the face of on-going physical suffering.

7. Honour Christ and bless households. Some folk, after being healed, may fail to follow through with faith and obedience to Christ. Whether healing happens or not, your objective should always be to lead households to become lovingly-obedient disciples of Jesus. Healing, signs and wonders should only point to the Healer and Saviour, the Risen and Ascended Lord of Heaven and Earth.

Conclusion. Healing is one of many ministries that can open hearts and lives to the gospel. 'Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil' (Acts 10.38). Even though you will not duplicate Jesus' results, usually for unknown reasons, you can broaden the scope of your ministry and see much blessing as you put his words into practice, following his example.

For consultation at no cost, contact Bruce G. through <<http://mentorandmultiply.com/bruce.html>>.

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