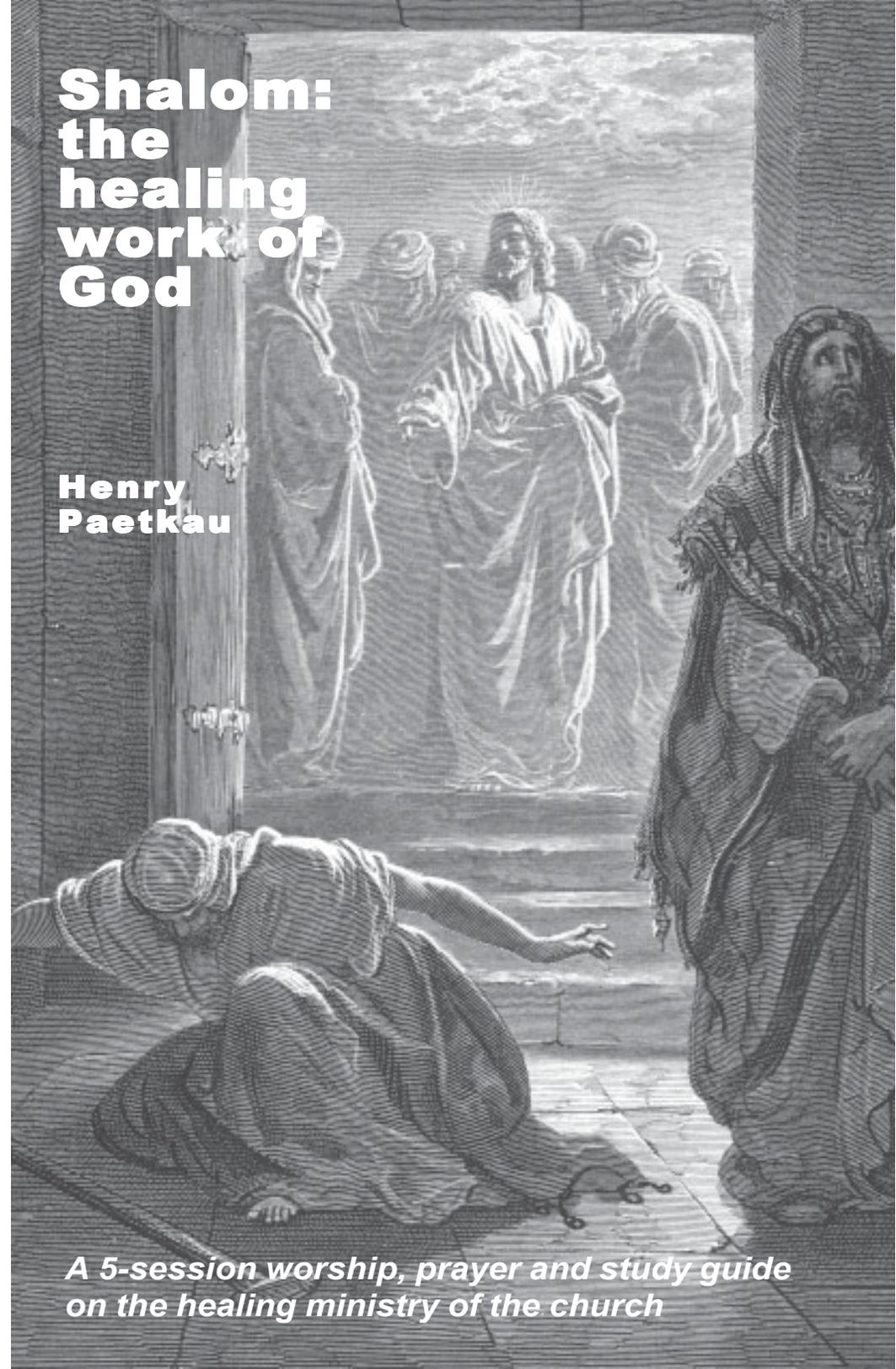


Shalom: the healing work of God

Henry
Paetkau



*A 5-session worship, prayer and study guide
on the healing ministry of the church*

Shalom: the healing work of God

Our vision:

God calls us to
be followers of
Jesus Christ
and by the
power of the
Holy Spirit,
to grow as
communities
of grace, joy
and peace
so that God's
healing and
hope flow
through us
to the world.

*A five-session worship,
prayer and study guide on
the healing ministry of the
church*

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Paetkau**



Contents

Foreword _____ **6**

Introduction _____ **7**



Session 1

The God of Shalom _____ **8**



Session 2

Jesus the Healer _____ **14**



Session 3

The “Gifts of Healings” _____ **20**



Session 4

Healing Rituals in the Church **26**



Session 5

**Healing and Hope
for this world and the next** _____ **32**

Shalom: the healing work of God - *A five-session worship, prayer and study guide on the healing ministry of the church*; is published by the Christian Formation Council, and is designed to serve as a resource for the congregations of Mennonite Church Canada.

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Cover image: The woodcut cover image is taken from *The Doré Bible Illustrations*, depicting Jesus healing the sick. Inscribed beneath the plate is the passage from Matthew 15:30, “*And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them...*”

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Foreword

“God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world.” We are familiar with these concluding words of the Vision Statement of Mennonite Church Canada. How do we experience God’s healing and hope in the varied circumstances of our lives? Henry Paetkau, writer of *Shalom: the healing work of God*, helps us take a closer look at healing. He probes both Old and New Testament texts for relevant meaning, and shares personal experiences of healing within the context of a community of faith. He gently guides us through rituals that encourage us to expand our understanding and nurture our faith.

I’m honoured to recommend *Shalom: the healing work of God* for study, discussion, group sharing and prayer. The selection of rituals, songs, texts and prayers offers flexibility for different congregational styles and contexts. May this resource encourage a fuller experience of God’s healing work in our lives, so that “God’s healing and hope can flow through us to the world.”

Justina M. Heese
Executive Secretary, Christian Formation
Mennonite Church Canada
October 2001

Introduction

Who of us hasn’t prayed for healing, for ourselves or for people whom we love? Often our prayers become quite desperate as we, or the people we love, face pain, disability or death. Some years ago while I was attending a Christian school, a fellow student was diagnosed with a very serious illness. I remember a very devout Christian professor beginning our class with a prayer for the student and all who knew him; the professor prayed that we would have the grace to accept God’s decision in this matter, but he never prayed for the student to regain his physical health. I was left feeling that only half a prayer had been prayed. Is it legitimate to pray for a restoration of physical health? What other things should we include in our prayers for healing?

In this prayer week booklet, Henry Paetkau gives us a firm biblical foundation for thinking about these issues as he examines the themes of shalom, Jesus the healer, the gifts of healings, healing rituals in the church and healing in this world and the next. Any reader who works through the material in this booklet will gain a fuller understanding of what God’s ultimate intention for his people is and how God would like us to respond to illness in its many forms. This material, however, is not primarily intended to be an essay on healing but was written to be an aid to corporate prayer in a local congregation. The numerous suggestions for prayer, worship and discussion will guide both the individual and the community toward an enriched prayer life as together you seek the healing work of God.

Don Rempel Boschman,
Christian Formation Council
Mennonite Church Canada

Session 1



The God of Shalom

Scripture References:

Exodus 15:26
 Psalm 103
 Psalm 107:17-22
 Isaiah 53:4-6
 Jeremiah 33:6-8

Introduction

When the third of our four daughters was born, many people added a comment to their words of congratulation that went something like this: “Another girl! Oh well, as long as she’s healthy it doesn’t matter whether it’s a boy or a girl.”

I often wondered, “What if she hadn’t been born healthy? Then would it matter whether it was a boy or a girl? Would I not be capable of loving a so-called ‘unhealthy’ child? Is health, usually meaning physical or mental wellness, the most important factor in celebrating the birth of a child, or affirming any human life? And what does ‘healthy’ mean, anyway?”

Eleven months later our second child, then barely three years old, was diagnosed with leukemia. Quite suddenly we had a very

unhealthy daughter on our hands. And it certainly didn’t matter to anyone any longer whether it was a boy or a girl! Everyone prayed for her survival and healing. Throughout the three years of chemotherapy treatment, doctors spoke of “survival rate” and “cure.” Five years after her treatments were complete, with no recurrence of cancer, they pronounced her “cured.” She looked healthy enough. But we knew, and many of them recognized, that her fragile body, her fractured spirit, and her damaged emotions needed more than that cure. They needed healing, which required a different treatment protocol and would take much longer. Thankfully, she is now a very healthy and vibrant young woman. But she, and we as a family, are still being “healed” of that shattering experience with illness.

Healing in the Old Testament

The Old Testament never defines “health.” It describes it. And it is most often described as what we might call “well being.” Spiritually, it means being rightly related to God and God’s good creation, living obediently and righteously. Physically, it means freedom from sickness and disease; it means fertility and longevity. The word “shalom” comes closest to expressing its meaning. It occurs over 250 times in the Old Testament. Shalom includes the concepts of wholeness, completeness and well being in all of life, whether physical, mental or spiritual, individual or social. In fact, shalom/health could be described best as “right relationships” in every aspect of life. Being rightly related in and to all of life.

Shalom...being rightly related in and to all of life!

Healing in the Old Testament was understood to come from and by God’s power alone, regardless of the manner in which it came. Exodus 15:26 puts it this way:

If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases I brought upon the Egyptians. I am the LORD who heals you.

Psalm 103:2-5 describes God’s saving/healing work in all its dimensions:

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live...

Ps. 107:17,20 illustrates a similar connection between body, soul and spirit: *“Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction...[God] sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction.”* Listen to the words of Jeremiah 33:6-8:

I am going to bring [Jerusalem] recovery and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. I will restore the fortunes of Judah...I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin...

In Ps. 38 David writes, *“there is no health [shalom] in my bones because of my sin...make haste to help me, O LORD, my salva-*

tion.” Spiritual and physical health are not differentiated. Disobedience, illness and sin are all “diseases.” *“There is no peace [shalom]...for the wicked,”* God says through Isaiah (57:21). But

...all healing comes from God

God desires healing and wholeness, shalom, for all people. Shalom is God’s healing work.

God’s plan for shalom is described in Isaiah 53. The “Suffering Servant,” later understood to be Jesus, takes upon himself the sin and brokenness and disease of the people in order that they might be healed.

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole [shalom], and by his bruises we are healed.

While the Old Testament leaves no doubt that all healing comes from God, there are very few instances in which God is shown to heal directly. Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel are healed of their barrenness. By and large, however, healing in the Old Testament

is provided by human agents. It is not the priests who are the agents of healing, however, as was the case in some cultures surrounding Israel. In Israel the priests were, instead, charged with the responsibility of guarding the public health by upholding the law and the many regulations. Much of the healing which occurred in Israel came through the natural healing processes of the body and mind and the practice of what we might call “folk medicine.” Physicians are rarely mentioned. The use of oil and bandaging is noted, as is the healing power of a special balm prepared in Gilead from an aromatic resin (Jer. 8:22; 46:11). God’s healing power was miraculous, but most often it was mediated through natural means.

There are a number of references to the involvement of prophets in the healing process. Recall Elisha’s advice to Naaman, the leper (2 Kings 5:1-14), for example, and Elijah’s resuscitation of the widow’s son (1 Kings

17:21). In all their healing activity, however, the prophets insist that the power and life come from God alone and that they are merely the instruments. They, too, look forward to a time when, in the words of Isaiah 33:24, *“no inhabitant will say, ‘I am sick’; and the people...will be forgiven their iniquity.”* Again, physical and spiritual health is not strictly differentiated. God, the great Physician/Healer/ Saviour, desires and promises both for his people. God desires shalom, health and wholeness, in all dimensions of life.

God’s healing power was miraculous, but most often it was mediated through natural means.

Questions for reflection

1. Discuss this definition of health: “Health is a dynamic state of wellbeing of the individual and society, of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social wellbeing; of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with God.” (*Christian Medical Commission of World Council of Churches, cited in Harold Taylor, Sent to Heal: A Handbook on Christian Healing, 4*)

2. What is the difference between healing and cure? Between an understanding of God as Healer/Physician and as Saviour? Between God's healing power being manifest directly or by means of human intervention?
3. How does God, in Jesus, make us "whole" (Isa. 53)?
4. How have you experienced God's gift of shalom?

Praying Together

Prepare a prayer table to serve as a visual focus throughout this series. A different item will be added for each session. Begin today with an open Bible.

Reflect quietly as someone reads Scripture (e.g. Psalm 103, Isaiah 53, Psalm 23).

Share a personal experience of brokenness/illness/sin and how God has brought shalom/health/wholeness into your life.

Pray for one another, in paired and/or group prayer. Invite sentence prayers of praise, confession and intercession.

Sing, or read together, from the hymns following.

Send one another on the healing way of shalom with the litany that follows. (You may want to use it at various other times throughout this study.)

Hymns

O healing river #372

Healer of our every ill #377

Litany

- L: O God, who desires our health, our wholeness of body, mind, emotion, and spirit,
 P: **May your healing love come to us.**

L: O God, who yearned for and brooded over Israel, making a covenant and sending prophets to bring the people to justice and wholeness,

P: **May your healing grace come to us.**

L: Jesus, you went through the countryside restoring people to health;

P: **May your healing presence come to us.**

L: Holy Spirit, you are continually at work in each of us, inviting us into wholeness;

P: **May your healing wisdom reveal what needs to be removed from our stream of life so the water can run clear.**

L: Jesus, you met the leper, the afflicted woman, the dying child and healed them;

P: **Meet us in our brokenness and pain. May your love transform, forgive, redeem, resurrect, and heal us.**

L: Jesus, you touched the blind man, and he saw;

P: **May your assuring love open our eyes to see our brokenness being transformed into a unique gift.**

ALL: **Grant to all who seek your healing love and presence, O God, an increased faith in you and a new empowerment to love and serve others. May our spiritual eyes be open to see what you are bringing to birth in us. May we receive the healing you offer us according to your loving purpose.**
AMEN

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Session 2



Jesus the healer

Scripture References:

Matthew 11:2-6
 Mark 2:1-12
 Luke 7:1-9:11
 John 5:2-18

Introduction

Many call her a “miracle child.” Thirteen month-old Erika wandered outside into the -17°C night one February wearing only a diaper. When her mother found her several hours later, her body was lifeless and frozen. Although clinically dead, little Erika was slowly resuscitated by medical staff. As if that wasn’t amazing enough, a completely healthy Erika left the hospital several weeks later!

Was it a miracle? An act of God?

An editorial in a national newspaper called the events “close to miraculous. . .Not miraculous, not awesome, not breathtaking, but humbling. Sometimes,” the paper concluded, “the body has ways of overcoming adversity that its caretakers can only gasp at.”¹ There is no place for the divine or the supernatural in this worldview.

¹ “Little girl thawed,” The Globe and Mail, Wed., Feb. 28, 2001, A12.

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago saw life, death and the world differently. After being told that his cancer was incurable, he responded, “While I know that humanly speaking, I will have to deal with difficult moments. . .I can say in all sincerity that I am at peace. I consider this as God’s special gift to me at this particular moment in my life.” In a Christmas card sent shortly before his death, what he called the “final journey home,” he acknowledged a feeling of sadness. But, he added, “There is also joy and anticipation at the prospect of being more intimately united with the LORD in the world to come.” Bernardin believed in, looked for, and experienced the power and presence of the divine in this world, in the midst of his illness, pain and dying.

Bad things happen to God’s people, too. Sickness comes. So does death. How do we respond? How did Jesus respond?

Jesus, the Healer

The New Testament never identifies Jesus as a physician. However, the Greek word from which that title comes (iaomai) is sometimes used to describe his healing activity. Jesus himself alludes to the title in Luke 5:31 (cf. Mark 2:17) when he says, “*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.*” Jesus identifies himself here as a spiritual physician, just as God, his heavenly Father, did in the Old Testament.

The gospel accounts offer plenty of evidence for the importance of healing in Jesus’ ministry. Of all the narrative content in the four gospels (that is, those sections that describe events rather than recounting teaching), between 30% (in John’s gospel) and 40% (in Matthew and Mark) of the total consists of healing stories. Approximately 38 different acts of healing are recorded, 26 describing the healing of individuals and 12 the healing of people in groups. Half of those 26 individual healings are recorded in one gospel only while most of the others are mentioned in all three synoptics [gospels].² There are three

² John Wilkinson, The Bible and Healing. A Medical and Theological Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 66-69.

instances of the raising of a dead person (the widow's son at Nain [Lk. 7:11-18], Lazarus [Jn. 11:1-46], and Jairus's daughter [Mt. 9:18-26; Mk. 5:22-43; Lk. 8:41-56]). The illnesses and infirmities which Jesus is recorded as healing include blindness, deafness, paralysis, infectious skin diseases, fever, and gynecological disease.

The gospels demonstrate that Jesus exercised his divine power over both body and spirit, over life and death, as well as over sin. Jesus came to bring God's shalom. He says to the paralytic lowered through the roof by his friends in order to be healed, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mk. 2:3-12). In response to the objections of the scribes, Jesus asks,

"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk?' But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Here was a clear demonstration of the power and presence of God! Divine intervention. Jesus' miracles, whether of physical healing or some other divine intervention (e.g., stilling the storm [Mk 4:35-41; Mt. 8:23-27; Lk. 8:22-25], feeding thousands [Mk. 6:30-44 and 8:1-10; Mt. 15:32-39], and walking on water [Mk. 6:45-52; Mt. 14:22-33]) are tangible examples of the Kingdom of God breaking through.

walking on water [Mk. 6:45-52; Mt. 14:22-33]) are tangible examples of the Kingdom of God breaking through. John's gospel presents Jesus' miracles, whatever they are, as "signs" given "so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name" (Jn. 20:31). In response to John the Baptist's courageous question, "Are you the one who is to come [that is, the Messiah], or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answers the disciples,

"Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me." (Mt. 11:2-6; cf. Lk. 7:18-23)

This description of Jesus' healing activities is a combination of Old Testament passages from Isaiah (29:18-19; 35:5-10; 61:1) describing the work of the promised Messiah. Jesus quotes from these texts to demonstrate that he is indeed the Messiah, sent to bring God's gift of shalom. The healing work of Jesus, then, is not merely an occasional or random act of compassion, or an end in itself. It is also confirmation that Scripture is being fulfilled in his ministry. There is something greater going on here because there is *Someone* greater at work here! All of these signs point beyond themselves to God, the source of all healing. That sounds a lot like the Old Testament!

The healing work of Jesus... is also confirmation that Scripture is being fulfilled in his ministry.

One of the Greek words used most often to describe Jesus' healing is *sozo*. It means "to make safe" as well as "to heal, make well, make whole." The noun, *soteria*, means "salvation, wholeness, health." It comes closest to the meaning of "shalom." Luke, the physician, uses a form of that word numerous times in chapters 7-9 (as well as two other favourites, *therapeuo* and *iaomai*). It may refer to spiritual salvation (7:50, 8:12) or to deliverance from demons (8:36); to cure from disease (7:3, 8:48) or to the raising of the dead (8:50). In Lk. 19:9,10 it occurs twice to describe the salvation of Zacchaeus. In each instance there is deliverance from an undesirable state, whether of body, mind, spirit or life, to a state of wholeness, health and well being. In other words, there is salvation! Shalom. And in each case it is the power of God revealed through Jesus that accomplishes it. According to one commentator, this word, *sozo*, as clearly as anything else, demonstrates that

healing of the body is never purely physical, and the salvation of the soul is never purely spiritual for both are combined in the total deliverance of the whole human being, a deliverance which is foreshadowed and illustrated in the healing miracles of Jesus in the gospels.³

³ Ibid., p. 82.

Jesus exercised his healing power in a variety of ways. These include a spoken word of command (9 times), touching the sick person (7), both word and touch (6), and occasionally the use of saliva (3). There is no indication, of course, of any magical power in the saliva itself, or that any formulas or incantations accompanied the healings which might provide a ritual of healing for us to use in the church today. Nevertheless, it is clear that both word and touch conveyed healing power.

...both word and touch

conveyed healing power.

There is a variety of motives ascribed to Jesus' healing activity, although not nearly every incident is described in that way. Those which are identified include: a response to the faith of the sick person or those asking on behalf of someone who was ill (8 times), in response to a cry for mercy (5), as an expression of compassion (4), as an occasion for the glory of God to be manifest (3), and as fulfillment of Scripture (3).

Finally, the initiative for healing comes from a variety of sources. Sometimes Jesus takes the initiative (the paralytic by the pool of Bethesda [Jn. 5:6]). Several times it's the disciples. Most often the sick themselves, or their relatives, approach Jesus. Friends or the master are also identified. In other words, there is no pattern or preference in Scripture regarding who takes the initiative to request healing from Jesus. But a common response in the gospels is the one described by Mark (2:12), "...they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'"

Questions for reflection:

1. Discuss this definition of salvation and healing: "Healing in the fullest sense, spiritually and bodily, is what it means to be saved...It has been a tragedy that the Christian Church...has so often missed this truth and has interpreted being 'saved' or 'born again' in a narrow way that deals [only] with the soul or spirit of the individual..." (Tom Harpur, *The Uncommon Touch*, p. 62)

2. What is the relationship between sin and illness, between forgiveness and health? (See *John 9:1-3*.)
3. Read a section of the gospels, like Luke 7:1-9:11, and list the varieties of "illness" or "unhealth" and the varieties of healing/salvation available in and through Jesus. What do these accounts teach us about salvation and health?
4. What are some of the ways in which you have been healed/saved? How did they happen?

Praying Together

Prepare the prayer table with an open Bible and a white candle (the Christ candle).

Reflect quietly as someone reads Scripture (e.g. John 9; Mark 4:35-41, 5:21-43; Matt. 9:1-13).

Share how and where you have experienced or seen God's healing power at work. Identify circumstances, persons or places for which to pray for God's shalom/healing.

Pray for one another and for the witness of your congregation in a broken world.

Sing or read together, from the hymns following.

Send each other into the world God loves, and came in Jesus to save, with Hymnal reading #722.

Hymns

Heal us, Immanuel, here we are #375

By Peter's house #378

Jesus, lover of my soul #618

Session 3



The “Gifts of Healings”

Scripture References:

Luke 13:1-17

Acts 3:1-16

1 Corinthians 12

Introduction

Evangelist Oral Roberts believes he is called by God to be a healer. He has built his entire life and ministry around that calling. Roberts established a university with one of the largest medical facilities in the world. He claims to have prayed personally with 1.5 million sick people. Roberts also believes that, by faith and prayer, he himself was twice pulled from the brink of death. But his faith was severely shaken by several personal experiences. Drugs killed one son. Then a daughter and her husband, a devout Christian couple with three children, died in an airplane crash. On his TV program the Sunday following, Roberts acknowledged that “bad things happen to good people, they happen to everyone, and we don’t always know the reason why.” But Roberts’ grief and loss only strengthened his resolve to proclaim and share God’s healing power. These experiences did not rob him of his faith, but served rather to strengthen his reliance on God and his commitment to sharing the healing power of God.

The Acts of the Apostles

Healing was not a primary means of spreading the gospel in the early church. The book of Acts devotes considerably less space to healing stories than any of the gospels. However, it contains a number of significant accounts that reflect the earlier tradition and practice. The healing of the blind man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple in Jerusalem (Acts 3 & 4) is one example. This is the account of a man lame from birth who is begging for alms, but who receives physical healing through Peter instead.

...Luke uses a form of every word for health and healing in his gospel...strong, healthy, healed and saved.

In his telling of the story, Luke uses a form of every word for health and healing used in his gospel or elsewhere in Acts! The lame man becomes strong, healthy, healed and saved. It appears that since all of these words are used to describe the same event, they overlap in meaning. They describe an act of healing done by followers of Jesus in his name, demonstrating that the salvation Jesus came to bring encompasses all the dimensions of God’s shalom revealed earlier in Scripture.

This connection is underscored by Peter’s comment, “*There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). The words “salvation” and “saved” here come from the same Greek root word (sozo) used earlier (in v. 9) to say that the man was healed. The early Christian church, in the tradition of the Old Testament and Jesus, did not distinguish sharply between those aspects of salvation, health and wholeness.

Also noteworthy are Peter’s words, “*in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk*” (Acts 3:6). Paul similarly invokes the name of Jesus when he commands an evil spirit to come out of the slave girl in Philippi (Acts 16:18). Both are mindful of whose power is at work here, and who the healer is. With these words they call upon the power and authority of the LORD, who promised to hear the prayers of those who pray in his name (John 14:13,14).

The “Gifts of Healings”

The most frequently quoted reference to healing is found in 1 Corinthians 12. This passage contains one of Paul’s lists of spiritual gifts given by God to the church. (The others are in Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11.) These gifts are available to every believer from the Holy Spirit for the common good (1 Cor. 12:3,7). They are neither purely supernatural and miraculous and therefore beyond the scope of the normal Christian life, nor are they purely natural and human, a part of everyone’s everyday life.

Spiritual gifts, like spiritual healing, combine both the natural and the supernatural. They are the “grace gifts” of the Holy Spirit. Charisma, the Greek root, means “grace, a gift freely given.” John Stott defines charisma as

Neither a capacity by itself, nor a ministry or office by itself, but rather a capacity which qualifies a person for ministry. More simply it may be regarded either as a gift and the job in which to exercise it, or a job and the gift with which to do it.¹

Perhaps most surprisingly, this gift of healing is mentioned only in 1 Cor. 12, where the term appears three times (vv. 9,28,30) and always in the plural, that is, as “gifts of healings.” What, then, can we say about these “gifts of healings”?

According to 1 Cor. 12, they are given only to some persons, not to everyone. Furthermore, they are described as an activity, as a

Spiritual gifts, like spiritual healing, combine both the natural and the supernatural.

function, and not as belonging to an office or a position. There is no indication that there was any prescribed formula for this healing activity. Nor is there reference to specialization, that is to say, whereby one person heals one kind of illness and someone else another

kind with some special ritual. These gifts may, in fact, have been given only in certain instances for a specific occasion. That was the case when Ananias healed Saul of his blindness, for example

¹ John R. W. Stott, *Baptism and Fullness*, cited in Wilkinson, *ibid.*, p. 187.

(Acts 9:17). James 5 speaks of healing but not of the gift of healing. And the gift is not mentioned in the lists in Romans or Ephesians (the two places, interestingly enough, in which Paul had colleagues who were sick and not healed [Epaphroditus in Phil. 2:27; Timothy in 1 Tim. 5:23]).

...an understanding of the nature of the gift of healing is not necessary for the practice of healing.

What, then, is the nature of this gift? Paul gives no further details about it in 1 Cor. 12. We might conclude, therefore, that the church in Corinth knew all it needed to know about the “gifts of healings” and Paul had nothing further to add. We do know that this group experienced some conflict over the relative merit of some of the gifts of the Spirit. We might also note that this particular gift is distinct from the gift of working miracles (v. 10). Does that mean that these healings were non-miraculous? What made them different or noteworthy? Why are the persons who healed the sick in Acts not reported as having special gifts? Why were some who were sick not healed?

John Wilkinson concludes,

The existence of so many unanswered questions suggests that an understanding of the nature of the gift of healing is not necessary for the practice of healing. When we add to this the obscurity with which the gift is described, and the fact that it is never specifically associated with any account of healing in the New Testament record, and is not mentioned in the explicit description of the church’s practice given by James, it suggests that the gift of healing consists essentially of the application of earnest prayer together with the natural endowments of the members of the Christian community which have been enhanced by the Holy Spirit.²

Paul himself prayed earnestly for healing of an unknown illness, which he describes as “a thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7), of which he was not healed. He understood this infirmity as a sign from the LORD, through which God’s power might be manifest as much as in the gift of healing. “[The LORD] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in

² *Ibid.*, p. 191.

weakness.’ *Therefore, I am content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong*” (2 Cor. 12:9,10). Paul understood God’s shalom not necessarily as the absence of suffering, but as a gift of wholeness in the midst of brokenness and suffering. He could “*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*” (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Questions for reflection:

1. Discuss the understanding of “spiritual healing” as “healing achieved not by physical intervention, as in the prescribing of medications, lab tests, surgery, or elaborate hi-tech treatments of various kinds, but by the laying-on of hands or other religious rites, by prayer, visualization, meditation, and the cultivation of the inner, spiritual qualities of hope, faith, love, forgiveness, courage, purpose and meaning.” (*Tom Harpur, The Uncommon Touch, p. 11*)
2. Talk about how other conditions or experiences of life, such as grief, fear, abuse, addictions, painful memories, etc., are evidence of brokenness, “unhealth,” or sin in need of God’s gift of shalom.
3. Identify ways in which spiritual healing might be brought to these circumstances, and the spiritual gifts and abilities of the persons through whom God is at work to bring healing.
4. How do forgiveness and reconciliation help to bring healing and restore shalom?

Praying Together

Prepare the prayer table with an open Bible, a white candle, and a picture, print or sculpture of the “Praying Hands.”

Reflect quietly as someone reads Scripture (e.g. 1 Cor. 13; 2 Cor. 4:7-5:5, 12:5-10).

Share about a time when you received the gift of healing through someone else. Identify ways in which you, your group, and/or your congregation are channels of spiritual healing.

Pray for one another in groups of 4-6. Gather in a circle, with an open chair in the centre, taking turns sitting at the centre of this healing circle. Invite the person seated to share requests for healing prayer, then, laying hands on their shoulders, take turns offering prayers for them.

Alternatively, pray for those living with the kinds of brokenness identified above, and for those who are sharing their “gifts of healings.”

Sing or read together, from the hymns following.

Send each other out as healing agents with Hymnal reading #720.

Hymns

In your sickness, your suff’rings #585

O Christ, the healer #379

Kyrie eleison #144

Session 4



Healing Rituals in the Church

Scripture References:

Mark 10:46-52
 Luke 10:29-37
 James 5:13-18

Introduction

When Fran Heppner was diagnosed with cancer, doctors told her that there was no hope for a cure. They suggested palliative treatments of chemotherapy and radiation along with alternative holistic therapy. Fran, a homemaker and student with two young children, followed their protocol, but also turned to her faith community and to God. Three years later, longer than she was expected to live, she reflected on her continuing journey with illness.

I am so thankful to the many people in various settings who have prayed for me in healing circles. As they have touched me and expressed their love through prayer and requests for my healing, I have gradually come to feel loved. This has evoked love in me and appreciation for the unique quality and gifts of each person. These prayer sessions have at times appeared to improve my physical condition, for pain has gone away. The process I am describing is a healing of life.¹

¹ Fran Heppner, "I, too, had to leave 'Ur'", *The Mennonite*, Feb. 13, 1990, p. 71.

Article 10 of our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, entitled "The Church in Mission," states that "The church is called to be a channel of God's healing, which may include anointing with oil." The Mennonite Church Vision: Healing and Hope Statement invites us to become "communities of grace, joy and peace" through which "God's healing and hope flow...to the world." How did the early church demonstrate and share God's gift of shalom in circumstances of illness?

Healing in the Epistle of James (5:13-18)

This brief passage provides one of the very few glimpses into the healing ministry of the early church. It addresses three groups of people: those who are suffering, those who are cheerful, and those who are sick. Each is encouraged to do something about their circumstances.

The church is called to be a channel of God's healing.

Those who are suffering (the word used here means "to be in trouble, to suffer misfortune") are encouraged to pray. Those who are cheerful are encouraged to sing songs of praise. In both instances the Greek verb is an imperative and refers to ongoing action. Unhappiness ought always to move believers to prayer even as happiness moves them to praise. Those in the third group, who are sick, are advised to call in the elders of the church. Here the verb form suggests an action done immediately and only once.

What are the elders to do? They are encouraged to pray over the sick person and to anoint him or her with oil in the name of the LORD. What is the anticipated outcome of these actions? "*The prayer of faith will save [sozo] the sick, and the LORD will raise them up [presumably from their sick bed]; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven*" (v. 15). Notice again the connection of physical and spiritual health, salvation that brings shalom. These instructions assume that the hearers already know who alone can forgive sins, and who alone can heal.

Verse 16 encourages the community of believers to "*confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.*" James instructs the community to pray, and to address

both physical and spiritual illness in their midst. He illustrates the power of prayer with the example of the prophet Elijah.

The emphasis in James's response to illness is, first and foremost, on prayer: the prayers of the elders and of the larger community of faith. The elders come as representatives of that community. There is no indication that healing belonged to the office of eldership. But it does appear to belong to the community of believers. The church clearly has a concern for the sick within its fellowship. Healing is part of the normal activity and ministry of the church. There is, however, no mention of the gift or gifts of healings in this passage.

Second, James indicates that the elders should minister to the sick by "*anointing them with oil in the name of the LORD*" (James 5:14). Oil was often used for medicinal purposes (Lk. 10:34). The disciples used it in their healing ministry (Mk. 6:13). It was also used as a symbol of consecration or commissioning (1 Sam. 15:1; Lk. 4:18). The Greek word for anointing is also the root for Jesus' title, the Christ (the anointed). "When oil is used in

...a ministry of healing is part of the ongoing work of the church.

healing," suggests one writer, "it should include the idea of consecration to God's service. It is an action which symbolizes an inner anointing by the Holy Spirit and a renewal of the person's life affecting body, mind and spirit. It therefore relates both to sickness and to the total healing of the person as the person seeks to be completely consecrated to God's purpose."² That is salvation, shalom.

Finally, James instructs the elders to invoke the name of the LORD (as Peter and Paul did in Acts 3:6 & 16:18). Praying "in the name of Jesus" is not only a way to draw upon God's power, but also a way of saying, "Your will, not mine, be done." That was how Jesus had prayed in the Garden before his betrayal and death (Lk. 22:42).

James reminds us that illness and healing always have more than a physical dimension, and that a ministry of healing is part of the

2 Harold Taylor, *Sent to Heal: A Handbook on Christian Healing*. (Victoria, Australia: The Order of St. Luke the Physician, 1993), p. 115.

ongoing work of the church. In the minds of many people in western society, however, the task of healing belongs to medical practitioners. As a result, the healing task has been assigned to a variety of persons and professions, who may not be in conversation with one another. In this environment, the church's ministry is often confined to "spiritual care." "The Church," John Wilkinson argues, "has a healing function to perform in all cases of sickness. This function includes the use of all forms of healing through those who are professionally qualified and those who are not. All methods are to be applied in the name of Jesus Christ and supported by prayer."³ Some congregations and parishes are developing a more integrated response through the model of "parish nursing." This approach seeks to bring together the various persons and activities that are part of a comprehensive response to illness. It recognizes that shalom encompasses all of life, that God's saving work is done in many ways, and that God intends healing and hope to come among and through people of faith.

shalom encompasses all of life...

Questions for reflection:

1. Discuss this understanding of Christian healing: "Through prayer and the laying on of hands, through confession, anointing...and other means of grace, Jesus meets us in our brokenness and pain and there loves, transforms, forgives, redeems, resurrects, and heals. Jesus does this in God's way, in God's time, and according to God's loving purpose for each person...Very often the results of our healing are increased faith in God and a new empowerment to love and serve others. Frequently we find that the very thing that caused our greatest brokenness becomes transformed into our own unique giftedness." (*Tilda Norbreg and Robert D. Webber, Stretch Out Your Hand, 26f.*)
2. Reflect on an experience of illness or brokenness in which you experienced the healing power and presence of the community of faith. What were the ways in which you received the grace of God through other people?

3 Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing*, p. 260.

3. Who represents and shares in the healing ministry of your group or congregation: pastor(s), deacons, elders or other lay leaders, care groups, other persons? How might it be strengthened?

Praying Together

Prepare the prayer table with an open Bible, a white candle, the praying hands, and a small flask or jar of oil.

Reflect quietly as someone reads Scripture (e.g. Lk. 10:29-37; Rom. 8:31-39; 2 Cor. 12:5-10).

Share about an experience of laying on of hands or anointing, if you've had one. Identify something in your life for which you might request God's shalom and healing.

Pray for one another in groups of 4-6, or as an entire group. Invite the group to gather for the laying on of hands and/or anointing with oil. Invite persons to come forward one by one, as others quietly pray or sing or hear soft music. Invite each one to share a request for healing prayer. For the **laying on of hands**, place hands gently on the person's head or shoulders and offer a brief prayer. Close with the words,

"I lay my hands on you in the name of Jesus Christ. May you receive his healing love and grace. May God's healing presence touch your whole body, mind, and spirit. Amen"

To **anoint with oil** following the prayer, dip a thumb or forefinger in the oil and make a sign of the cross on the forehead, saying:

"[Name], I anoint you for healing in the name of Jesus. Let this oil soaking into your skin remind you of God's love soaking into your whole being – body, emotions, and spirit." Or say, "[Name], I anoint you with oil in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. May your weakness be turned to strength, your sorrow to joy, your illness to wholeness, harmony and peace, as you commit your body, mind and spirit into the care of our LORD."

(Sources: Norberg and Webber, *Stretch Out Your Hand*, 87; Minister's Manual, ed. John Rempel, p. 215)

Sing or read together, from the hymns following.

Send each other on the healing way by saying together the Vision Statement of the Mennonite Church:

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

Hymns

Come, ye disconsolate #497

Holy Spirit, come with power #26

Session 5



Healing and hope for this world and the next

Scripture References:

Psalm 30
 Luke 18:35-19:10
 John 11:1-44
 Romans 8:31-39
 Revelation 21:1-4

Introduction

“*Expect 72 years of good health,*” announced the headline of a newspaper article.¹ I pondered those words for some time. Who was making this promise? What did they mean by “good health”? And why is it something one should or could expect? What about those whose health is less than “good,” or who experience good health only for a short time?

The article was reporting the results of a World Health Organization study of life expectancy in 191 countries. Canadian women, it concluded, live an average of 80.9 years, men about 76 years.

That’s a substantial increase in recent years, due largely to changes in lifestyle and improvements in medical treatment. As I breathed a sigh of relief at the prospect of a long, healthy life, I read on. People in the African nation of Sierra Leone, which was at the bottom of the list, experience an average of only about 26 years of good health. That put the meaning of my good health, and life, into a different perspective! How should I then live? How and when should I prepare to die?

A quick survey of the shelves in any bookstore will confirm our society’s preoccupation, even obsession, with health, fitness, and long life. At the same time, ironically, there is considerable debate about physician-assisted suicide for those suffering with a painful terminal illness. Rob Wedel, a Mennonite physician, reflected recently on “our own deep-seated attitudes—how we equate disease and disability with suffering and a life not worth living, how we are unable to see hope and fulfillment, only indignity and dependence.” The challenge, and opportunity, he observes, is “finding meaning in the midst of anguish.”²

Walter and his son, Tim (not their real names), whose relationship had been tattered and torn because of very different values and lifestyles, became estranged after the death of Tim’s mother and Walter’s subsequent remarriage. Tim lived far across the country, in a common-law relationship, adding insult to the injury already felt by his father, who held strictly to traditional values. Walter became ill with cancer, and Tim finally came to visit. They slowly built some bridges of communication and understanding. Some months later, when his father’s condition became terminal, Tim returned, this time with his partner. A week later, they were married in the hospital room where Walter lay dying. Father and son embraced and cried together. Walter died of his illness shortly thereafter, but he died with a sense of peace and restored wholeness. While his body was not healed, his spirit, mind and heart were renewed through this reconciliation with his son. He had received God’s gift of shalom.

1 St. Catharines Standard, Monday, June 5, 2000, pp. A1-2.

2 Canadian Mennonite, vol. 4, no. 18, Sept. 18, 2000, pp. 6-7.

Life and Death

“Teach us to count our days,” the psalmist prays, “that we may gain a wise heart” (Ps. 90:12). That means considering the quality, not simply calculating the quantity, of days lived. Jesus calls this “abundant life.” “Whoever enters by me will be saved (*sozo*),” he told the disciples. “I came that [you] may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn. 10:9,10). That’s the meaning, hope and promise of God’s shalom, God’s gift of salvation in Jesus—for this world and the next.

One of the ways in which Jesus transforms both our living and our dying is by erasing the sharp line we often draw between those two dimensions of life. For the Christian, this life and this

For the Christian, this life and this body are not all there is.

body are not all there is (cf. 1 Cor. 15:19). “Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life,” Jesus told those who demanded earthly evidence of a divine reality (Jn. 6:47). Eternity is here, Jesus is saying, among you and within! Don’t you recognize the divine meaning and value of the life you’re

living? “I am the resurrection and the life,” Jesus told a grieving Martha, distraught at her brother, Lazarus’s death. “Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (Jn. 11:25,26).

Paul picks up the theme in writing to the believers in Thessalonica. “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died,” he writes, “so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). That hope, however real it is for this time and life, is nonetheless a hope that can only be fully realized on the other side of the grave. The vision of John is of “a new heaven and a new earth” in which “Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away” (Rev. 21:1,4). Christians trust the God of shalom to deliver them through, but not always from, the sickness, suffering and death that are a part of life on this side of Eden.

Faith and Healing

It is faith in and acceptance of God’s gift of salvation that saves us and makes us whole/well. Jesus points to the connection between faith and healing/salvation/shalom. To the leper who was healed, and returned to say “Thank you,” Jesus said, “Your faith has made you well (*sozo*)” (Lk.

17:19). To the blind man, Jesus said,

“Receive your sight; your faith has saved you (*sozo*)” (Lk. 18:42). And he assured the woman cured of hemorrhages, “Daughter, your faith has made you well (*sozo*); go in peace” (Lk. 8:48; cf. 7:50; 19:9,10).

But not all instances of healing are accompanied by evidence of faith (what about the other nine lepers?!). There is no simple, or magic formula for receiving God’s healing power through Jesus. Shalom is first of all a relationship with God, out of which wholeness in all other areas of life can flow.

What, then, is Christian healing? Christian healing is not magic or manipulation; it is surrender to God’s healing work in us. Nor is it a prediction of what God will do; it is trusting that God loves us and is already at work in us. It is not something to be sought out for a spiritual thrill; it is a way to grow as a Christian. It is not proof that we are faithful or holy; it is a sign of God’s love.³ Salvation/shalom is the gift of God received by faith from the One who is Creator, Redeemer and LORD of all of life.

Conclusion

We have a peculiar family ritual. Each year, on the anniversary of our daughter’s cancer diagnosis, we remember her illness and celebrate her life and health with a cake. We tell stories about that difficult time, we laugh together, and sometimes we cry, because she who was sick unto death is alive and well – and being healed. And we, who journeyed with her, and suffered too, are likewise being healed. We hug each other and reaffirm our love, the gift of life, and the relationships we share.

Shalom is first of all a relationship with God...

3 Tilda Norberg and Robert D. Webber, *Stretch Out Your Hand*, p. 26.

While we would never have chosen to walk through that valley of the shadow of death, and would never wish it on anyone else, there are by now times when we can thank God for pieces of that

Suffering can be a path to growth.

experience. None of us is the same because of it. There is a whole world of experience, of relationships, of involvements and activities and ministry, even of career and life choices, that has grown out of our family's journey with illness. We wouldn't choose to go through it

again – but our life is deeper and fuller and richer as a result of it. There is healing in that realization, too. Suffering can be a path to growth. What the gospel and the Christian faith have to say about suffering is profoundly relevant and necessary in a society which employs so many of its limited resources to avoid it rather than to find meaning in and through it.

Healing has come to us in many ways. I still remember vividly the people who came to the house the day after the diagnosis just to sit and listen. Many people brought food. We found those love offerings in the freezer for months afterwards! And each one reminded us that someone cared. The significance of the personal presence offered by the caring community of faith cannot be overemphasized. That is being true to the biblical tradition which recognizes that illness, like sin, cuts people off from community, and that healing/salvation means restoring that fellowship. That is God's gift of shalom. That is how Jesus ministered and healed. That is central to the mission of the church.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Discuss this understanding of healing and hope: "...our hope is not based on something that will happen after our sufferings are over, but on the real presence of God's healing Spirit in the midst of these sufferings." (*H. Nouwen, Making All Things New, 75*)
2. What are the elements of a Christian understanding of suffering and death? How does it differ from other faiths, or from a secular understanding?
3. Henri Nouwen states that "Many words, such as care and compassion, understanding and forgiveness, fellowship and

community, have been used for the healing task...I like to use the word hospitality..."⁴ How does healing take place? List the varieties of healing evident in the ministry of your congregation. What are the areas in which it might be strengthened or expanded?

4. Scientific evidence confirms the connection between religious faith, prayer and healing. More than 130 controlled laboratory studies have shown that "prayer or a prayer-like state of compassion, empathy, and love can bring about healthful changes..."⁵ How can you strengthen the prayer ministry of your congregation, your personal life?
5. Talk about the ways in which the gathered community of faith can express, experience and share the gift of healing, of God's shalom. These might include Sunday morning or other worship experiences, communion services, prayer meetings, small group gatherings, etc. What would be meaningful in your congregation and context? How might you incorporate this ministry into your congregation's mission?

Praying Together

Prepare the prayer table with an open Bible, a white candle, the praying hands, and a small flask or jar of oil. Bring enough candles for everyone in your group.

Reflect quietly as someone reads Scripture (e.g. Psalm 32; John 21:15-17; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 4:16-5:10).

Share a hope or dream or vision for a more extensive healing ministry in your congregation. If appropriate, share the LORD's Supper as an expression and experience of God's gift of shalom. Or share a potluck meal or snack. Then find a way to share something of your healing journey, and of yourself, within your family, your congregation, your place of work or leisure, your community.

4 Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, p. 88.

5 Larry Dossey, *Prayer is Good Medicine: How to Reap the Healing Benefits of Prayer*. (San Francisco: Harper, 1996), p. 49. Cf. Harold G. Koenig, *The Healing Power of Faith: Science Explores Medicine's Last Great Frontier*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), pp. 23-28; "Healing," *Time*. (June 24, 1996), pp. 35-40.

Pray for one another, and your commitments, in paired or small groups. Or pray as a group in the pattern of witness outlined by Jesus in Acts 1:8. Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead and empower you.

Sing, or read together, from the hymns following, including during the lighting of candles.

Send each other on the healing way by repeating the Vision Statement of the Mennonite Church:

God calls us to be followers of Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.

Distribute the candles and invite each person to take light from the Christ candle as they return to the rest of their lives.

Hymns

Will you let me be your servant #307

Thou true vine #373

Move in our midst #418

They that wait upon the LORD #584

Suggested Resources:

(relating directly to themes addressed in this study)

Books

Allen, E. Anthony. *Caring for the Whole Person*. MARC, 1995.

• Droege, Thomas A. *The Healing Presence: Spiritual exercises for Healing, Wellness and Recovery*. Augsburg Youth and Family Institute, 1996.

Harpur, Tom. *The Uncommon Touch: An Investigation of Spiritual Healing*. McClelland and Stewart, 1994.

Graham, Rochelle, et. al. *Healing from the Heart: A Guide to Christian Healing for Individuals and Groups*. Wood Lake Books, 1998.

Linn, Dennis & Matthew Linn. *Healing Life's Hurts: Healing Memories Through the Five Stages of Forgiveness*. Paulist Press, 1978.

MacNutt, Francis. *Healing*. Ave Maria Press, 1974.

Maddocks, Morris. *The Christian Healing Ministry*. 2nd ed. SPCK, 1990.

• Miller, J. Keith. *A Hunger for Healing: The Twelve Steps as a Classic model for Christian Spiritual Growth*. Harper, 1991.

Minister's Manual, ed. John Rempel. Herald Press, 1998.

Norberg, Tilda and Robert D. Webber. *Stretch Out Your Hand: Exploring Healing Prayer*. Upper Room Books, 1998.

Nouwen, Henri J. *The Wounded Healer*. Image Books, 1979.

Rogers, John, ed. *Medical Ethics, Human Choices: A Christian Perspective*. Herald Press, 1988.

• Rupp, Joyce. *Praying Our Goodbyes*. Ave Maria Press, 1988.

Taylor, Harold. *Sent to Heal: A Handbook on Christian Healing*. The Order of St. Luke the Physician, 1993.

• Thomas, Leo. *Healing Ministry: A Practical Guide*. Shedd and Ward, 1994.

Wilkinson, John. *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*. Eerdmans, 1998.

Yancey, Philip. *Disappointment With God*. Zondervan, 1988.

Yancey, Philip. *Where is God When It Hurts?* Zondervan, 1990.

Audio Tapes

• "Befriend the Darkness, Welcome the Light" 2-cassettes, Joyce Rupp.

• "Prayer and Healing," AMBS Pastors' Week: Walter Wink, January 2001 (6 tapes) Themes: Prayer and Healing, The Healing of the Paralytic, The Wounded Healer.

• *Tom Brown Lecture Series: CMBC*, January 1997 (6 tape series) Topics: Practising the Presence of God, Helps for Healing, Hope in Healing, Wholeness Through Healing Prayer, Healing of Creation, Requiem Healing.

• "Who will mourn? Who will dance?" Lecture by Henri Nouwen, 1994.

Videos

• "Is Any Among You Suffering?" The Church of the Brethren practises private and public anointing. Recipients speak of their experiences of anointing: before surgery, for healing of memories of loss, transition and change. (17 minutes)

• "The Journey Toward Wholeness: Reclaiming the Healing Ministry of Jesus" Dr. Ken Bakken, physician/pastor, hosts this 6-part series on "Healing and Transformation: Into the Image and Likeness of God". It includes a leader's guide, conversations with health care experts and theologians, contemporary and Biblical stories, music and poetry.

• These resources are available through the Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre: 1-800-665-1954 (or check local libraries/ bookstores).

From the introduction:

“God’s healing and hope flow through us to the world.”

How do we experience God’s healing and hope in our lives?

In this study, Henry Paetkau helps us take a closer look at healing. He probes both Old and New Testament texts, and shares personal experiences of healing within the context of a community of faith. He gently guides us through rituals that encourage us to expand our understanding and nurture our faith.

About the author:

Born in Paraguay, Henry came to Vineland, Ontario as a seven-year old. Academic interests led him to Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Conrad Grebel College, the University of Waterloo, and finally the University of Western Ontario for doctoral studies in Canadian Mennonite history. But God’s call to ministry persisted, leading to pastorates in Harrow, Windsor and St. Catharines, Ontario. Along the way, Henry married his college sweetheart, Leonora Retzlaff, with whom he shares four daughters. In August 2000 he assumed the office of Denominational Minister for Mennonite Church Canada.



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