

How Biblical Is Your Ministry Of Healing?

By Pastor Don Bartow

I firmly believe healing is God's will. However, what does the Bible really say as to how we receive and achieve His healing? What should we be teaching others concerning healing and wholeness as taught in His Word? My pilgrimage the last decade has taught me a biblically sound healing ministry is far more than one that has some Prayer or Bible Study groups and weekly or occasional healing service.

Since 1959 I have felt a special calling to the healing ministry. In the last decade the Lord has shown me a much broader approach to healing. I confess there were times when some of the ministries in which I became involved I felt were drawing me away from my calling. I want to do my best to convey the fact that in reality they have not been moving me from God's will. I have discovered I have moved closer to the center of His will for healing in all areas of life than I ever dreamed? What I once thought to be involvement that was biblically questionable, are really very much a part of the Word of God? Permit me to be very personal as I share what the Lord has revealed to me in recent years. But first, I must go back nearly 50 years, and then I will reveal the "*rest of the story.*"

PROMOTE HEALING

It was April 15, 1959 the Lord called me to start holding healing services. This I did and my first service was May 6, 1959. I have continued to hold such services. After retiring in 1991 as a parish pastor I was led to purchase a facility in which to conduct healing services and to hold conferences and Seminars concerning healing in the Name of Jesus. We held our first service at the Total Living Center facility May 8, 1991. Although, we continue to hold weekly healing services other things have also moved to the forefront. They have helped me to see I was presenting a somewhat narrow concept of spiritual healing. I have come to realize the Bible teaches concerning other important things to do for ones healing. Also, it presents a lifestyle of healing in the Name of Jesus that involves far more than attending and/or participating in healing services. What are some of these things and how do they fit into the message of healing today in the Name of Jesus? Here is my pilgrimage.

SOUP KITCHEN

A little over a year after we secured the facility I was led to start a Soup Kitchen Ministry for the poor. Our first meal was served June 16, 1992. It wasn't long until hundreds were coming to eat and the Soup Kitchen consumed much of our time and energy. We now have a Soup Kitchen at three locations and weekly serve hundreds of meals.

FREE GROCERIES

We soon found ourselves providing groceries for needy families. By the end of 1993 we were distributing groceries once a month. This became a huge project. I recall one night we gave away over 5,000 loaves of bread, plus other produce. Within a year it was twice a month. Five years ago we started to distribute groceries once per week. It has grown to the point where we now distribute over 50,000 pounds of groceries per month. This is a huge amount and blesses hundreds of families.

FREE CLOTHING

In 1995 we began to provide FREE clothing for needy families. Tons of clothing have been given by the TLC to help clothe the poor.

FREE MEDICAL CLINIC

In the fall of 1993 Dr. Dennis Orr asked if he could start a FREE Medical Clinic at the Total Living Center. He wanted to do this in appreciation of the miraculous healing his wife, Lucille, received at one of our healing services at Westminster Presbyterian Church the spring of 1991. I told him I felt this would be impossible, as we had no medical equipment, etc. His response was that we just provide him a room and he would provide the rest. Thus, the first Thursday of 1994 our FREE Medical Clinic opened. It has become a large part of Total Living Center's activities. Today hundreds of patients are seen each month. The Clinic has its own office and three large examination rooms. In addition, we now have Chiropractors who have become a part of the health team, and a FREE Pharmacy.

FEELINGS OF NEGLECT

Now food, clothing, medicine are consuming a large bulk of the time and energy at the Total Living Center. I was feeling guilty for neglecting what I felt to be my first and primary calling of proclaiming healing in the Name of Jesus.

OTHER MINISTRIES

As if these things were not enough to detract me from the "healing" ministry, several other ministries sprang forth. We were reaching out even further to bring wholeness to the sick and the poor. Ministries such as our FREE Counseling Clinic, Ministry to those in Prison, Ministry to the Jobless, FREE Legal Clinic, Beauty Salon, Dress for Success Program, FREE Alcoholics Victorious Program, and "Practicing His Presence" weekly luncheons. The luncheons provide an opportunity for us to meet and see and hear of the miracles of our day. It is at the luncheons individuals are interviewed concerning their healing from various diseases and addictions and their pilgrimage of wholeness in the Name of Jesus. As Jesus told John's disciples, we can tell individuals who come to the luncheons to go tell others what they have seen and heard.

MY DILEMMA

If you have gotten this far, you may be wondering how I have reconciled the direction the Total Living Center has taken in relationship to my call to the healing ministry. You can imagine how Satan has tried to divert me from these many worthwhile ministries by telling me that because of them I was forsaking my calling to the healing ministry. I found my self in inner turmoil. I certainly did not want to forsake my high calling of proclaiming Christ heals today. At the same time I was seeing so many being helped and healed through our many other ministries. Wherein, was I to find an answer to my dilemma?

THE LIGHT DAWNS

Well, the Lord provided the answer. And it is all in keeping with His sacred Word and Will. He revealed to me what we were doing to help the sick and the poor was part and parcel of a biblically based healing ministry. In fact, He revealed to me a sound, solid scriptural healing ministry is Three-Fold.

1. **Spiritual Healing** with laying-on-of-hands, anointing with oil, etc.
2. **Helping the poor** through providing food, clothing, helping those in prison, etc
3. **Medical Treatment** for the sick

Lets take a brief look at these three areas from the viewpoint of scripture.

1. SPIRITUAL HEALING

Seven times Jesus commands His followers to heal in His Name. (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:14,15; 6:7-13; 16:18; Luke 9:1,2; 10:1,9; John 14:12.) This was the suggested practice within His Church. (James 5:14) There is no doubt this is scriptural.

2. HELPING THE POOR

What does this have to do with healing? We had been doing it for sometime before I realized it was very much a part of His Word and an avenue for healing. It was one of the two principle aspects of the ministry of Jesus, that is, He healed the sick and helped the poor.

God's Chosen Fast became very significant to me. I discovered the "*fast*" the Lord wants is not refraining from food, but the giving of food. The fast the Lord wants is not one of refraining from certain foods for a short period of time, but the giving of oneself to helping others continually. Please carefully and prayerfully consider the following verses: "*I'll tell you what it really means to worship the Lord. Remove the chains of prisoners who are chained unjustly. Free those who are abused. 7) Share your food with everyone who is hungry; share your home with the poor and homeless. Give clothes to those in need; don't turn away your relatives. 8) then your light will shine like the dawning sun, and you will quickly be healed." (Isaiah 58:6-8)*

Wow, do you get it? Helping the poor is a step to ones own healing. Stop and think for a moment. Have you ever in a time of illness for yourself, friend, or loved one helped the poor in a special way as a step to healing? Probably not, and yet it is certainly a part of scripture. Now I realized the Total Living Center, led by the Holy Spirit, had moved, not away from, but near to, the heart of God. Praise Jesus.

Let us consider another key passage concerning helping the poor and what it means as far as healing is concerned. Do you realize Jesus made preaching the Good News to the poor as much a miracle as healing the sick. Notice His answer to the disciples of John concerning His being the One. "*Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached."(Luke 7:22-23)*

Now we move to the scripture portion that reveals how a believer serves Jesus and draws nigh to Him. Is not the aim of spiritual healing to get individuals to Jesus? He is the Healer. We are but His instruments. With this being said, what is the best way to get to Jesus? He reveals the answer. It is through helping the poor. "*... Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40) What is it that an individual would have done to the "least of these?" "*For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36) Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." (Matthew 25:35,36) A well rounded Christ centered healing ministry will certainly involve**

ministry to the poor either through direct ministry or through involvement in a ministry devoted to serving the poor.

3. MEDICAL TREATMENT

Here is another very good question. Should a ministry that has healing services be involved in the area of medicine? I struggled with this question as we held healing services, but also had a thriving FREE Medical Clinic. Lets look at the Word. The most important chapter relating to this is Luke 10. Verses 1-20 relate how Jesus sent His 70 disciples to heal the sick in His Name. Verses 25-37 present the story of the Good Samaritan. The injured man regained health through the administration of the medicine of his day and plenty of rest at the inn. It may have been more exciting if Jesus would have taught one of the seventy saw the wounded man. He laid hands upon him and he was healed. He jumped up and ran after the thieves, beat the evil out of them, and recovered his stolen property. But it didn't happen that way. The wounded man's healing was a process. Thus, here in this one chapter we see the blending together of spiritual healing and healing through medicine. These two approaches are not competitors. They are companions to be used to God's glory and for the good of those who are ill.

CONCLUSION

Now I see more clearly than ever that all we have done for the sick and the poor has not taken me from the healing ministry, but drawn me to the very heart of it. A believer is truly "*near to the heart of God*" when he or she is providing for the sick and the poor in addition to participating in healing services. I ask, "*Do you want to be healed?*" I answer, "*Then not only attend healing services, but get involved with medically helping the sick and with helping the poor in every way possible.*"

We invite you to become involved in our biblically sound healing ministry through your prayers, contributions, and/or personal involvement. We view the Total Living Center as a ***Bridge of Compassion*** over which you may walk into the lives of the sick and the poor. I stand at this ***Bridge*** inviting one and all to walk consistently and faithfully into the lives of the sick and the poor and to experience drawing near to the very heart of God who heals.

The three-fold ministry has led me to a concept of a higher level of healing ministry. He has enabled us to serve over 30,000 individuals through our many healing ministries. We do not hesitate at the Total Living Center to let one and all know that we stress Spiritual Healing, tangibly helping the poor, and providing FREE Medical and other practical help for the afflicted and the addicted. Thus, the bottom line is the Total Living Center seeks to heal in the Name of **The Living Christ with Tender Loving Care.**

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