

Contents

Introduction	5
Session 1 : A biblical introduction to healing	9
The aim of this session is to build a sound biblical basis for the healing ministry. It looks at healing in both Old and New Testaments, discusses some commonly held views about the healing ministry, and invites participants to share their own experiences.	
Session 2 : How do we pray? The role of the Holy Spirit	21
The aim of this session is to ensure that prayer for healing is undertaken in full reliance on the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit are examined, and participants are encouraged to open themselves to the gifts and work of the Holy Spirit as they embark on this ministry.	
Session 3 : Praying for physical healing	33
Building on the foundation of the first session, this session looks in more detail at the practicalities of praying for physical healing. The aim of the session is to look at the various approaches and possible outcomes to healing prayer, and to take a realistic look at some common pitfalls.	
Session 4 : Praying for inner healing	49
The aim of this session is to help participants develop a biblical framework for the ministry of inner healing. Participants are encouraged to take a careful look at their own psychological health, on the basis that we cannot minister to others what we have not received ourselves.	
Session 5 : Diagnosing deeper problems	65
This session explores some of the major issues surrounding the deliverance ministry. Topics covered include how to recognise the need for this ministry, and to what extent it is advisable to pray for deliverance and when to seek help from appropriately authorised ministers.	
Session 6 : Ministering the truth	81
This session looks at the ministry of Jesus, who claimed to be the way, the truth and the life. Participants are encouraged to examine the implications of this statement for themselves and their ministry, looking in particular at what it means to minister the truth.	
Session 7 : Complexity and common sense	95
This session addresses some common theological questions, looks at additional ministry resources such as family healing services and the use of oil and holy water, and touches on some of the legal implications of our dealings with people who come to us for prayer.	
Session 8 : Stepping out in faith	111
The final session is designed as a confidence building exercise. It offers an opportunity to revise and reflect together on what has been learned, takes a realistic look at some of the alternative approaches to healing currently on offer, and ends with a reminder of the basis on which we pray.	
For further reading	128

Introduction

It is often said that the Church must change if she is to stay the same. This is as true of the healing ministry as it is of every other aspect of our life together. We live now in a do-it, try-it world, a world where people are looking not so much for right answers as for authentic experiences. There is a new and growing interest in healing and the healing ministry as we learn to shuffle off some of the constraints of a production-line world and look for new ways to flex our spiritual muscles – so much so that it's hard to keep up with all the new practices and therapies on offer all around us.

Outside the Church there is an explosion in new forms of healing. A research poll conducted in 2000 found that 39% of people had tried alternative medicine of one kind or another, 32% aromatherapy, 16% reflexology, and 6% had experimented with the healing power of crystals.¹ Herbal remedies are readily available, homeopaths specialise in chronic and allergic conditions, and acupuncturists offer treatment for a whole range of problems ranging from hair loss to asthma. Many NHS practices are now prepared to offer various forms of alternative therapy as part of their primary care health improvement programmes – the NHS Directory of complementary and alternative practitioners lists some 32 healing therapies, including Reiki, Crystal therapy, Flower therapy, Iridology, Kinesiology and Shiatsu.² Even newer therapies are growing up all the time – a recent edition of the Glastonbury Oracle advertises Medicine Wheel teachings with a Native American leader from the Bear Clan, Theta healing and Angel healing, Tibetan pulsing for emotional transformation, Sound healing, and Shamanic workshops including trantric healing massage, soul readings, emotional block release, psychic rune readings, cord removal, and soul retrieval, to name but a few.

How effective are these? Well, it seems to vary. Research into homeopathy suggests that it produces beneficial results which are significantly better than placebo treatments.³ A recent systematic review of clinical trials on Reiki, on the other hand, failed to demonstrate that it is effective for any condition.⁴ Furthermore, the experience of the authors is that many people who experiment with alternative therapies based on Eastern or traditional African religious practices often report great spiritual and emotional turmoil afterwards; many such people have come to us over the years requesting advice and prayer to escape these effects. Not everything which promises healing seems in fact to bring it.

The healing ministry has been practised by Christians from the earliest times. The major difference between Christian prayer for healing and many of these alternative therapies is that it is offered in the name of Jesus. Those who offer to pray for healing claim no special expertise or power. They rest simply on the promise of Jesus that through the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit those who followed his teaching and prayed in his name would perform works greater than those he himself had performed.⁵ When Jesus first sent his 12 disciples out to minister on their own, he 'gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases... to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick' (Luke 9). A little later he sent out a further 72 people, also instructing them to 'heal the sick and tell them "The kingdom of God is near you"' (Luke 10).

And this was how the early Church understood its task. Writings from the first and second centuries confirm that healing and deliverance offered in the name of Jesus commonly led to people becoming Christians. In the fourth century Augustine speaks of seventy attested miracles; in the seventh, historian

¹ By the Opinion Research Business.

² www.nhsdirectory.org. Reiki is defined by the International Association of Reiki professionals, www.iarp.org, as 'a form of energy healing using spiritually guided life force energy (Rei-ki)'.

³ Line et al, published in *The Lancet* in 1997 see www.nhsdirectory.org. The success rate was 2.5% higher than for placebo treatment.

⁴ Lee, MS & MH Pinfel, E Ernst (2008), "Effects of reiki in clinical practice: a systematic review of randomized clinical trials", *International Journal of Clinical Practice* 62: 947.

⁵ John 14.12-28.

Bede writes of the ministry of healing and deliverance offered by the Celtic missionaries. Martin Luther in the 15th century, John Welch in the 16th, Richard Baxter in the 17th, John Wesley in the 18th and the Curé d'Ars in the 19th century all had recognised ministries of healing.⁶ Prayer for healing has always been part of what we do as Christians.

And yet there have been long periods when we have lost touch with the power of what is available to us in Christ. The 20th century was one of those times. A new emphasis on technological and scientific achievements led to a loss of confidence in all things supernatural. Anointing the sick with oil and praying for their healing seemed, well - a little naïve; and praying for deliverance from little black entities with horns and pitchforks looked plain crazy. We stopped doing it.

And yet the more grown up and modern we seemed, the more people began to look for something not just to believe, but to experience. Something that worked. 'When do we get to do the stuff?' demanded a newly converted John Wimber in California. John, unbothered by the opinions of those who said Christians didn't do that kind of thing any more, went on to 'do the stuff'.⁷ Others were doing the same, and gradually the ministry of healing crept back into the Church. By the turn of the millennium, the Church of England was able to issue a report entitled *A Time to Heal*.⁸ Prayer for healing is back on the agenda, and is being explored by Christians in churches of all types and size.

For whom then do we pray? Our lack of confidence has often meant that we pray for each other. And yet Jesus did not seem to think prayer for healing was an add-on for those already in the kingdom, but part and parcel of the good news itself. Healing, it has been remarked, is not merely an in-house perk for Christians, it is part of our witness and ministry to the world – a world which, for want of better, has turned to Reiki, Crystal therapy, Flower therapy, Iridology, Kinesiology and Shiatsu, with all their attendant dangers. The ministry of healing and deliverance is our trump card in a world where dis-ease of all kinds robs people of the peace and happiness they crave, and where increasingly their attempts to find authenticity lead them from the frying pan into the fire.

Practicalities

Piloted in Holy Trinity, Leicester over a period of nearly ten years, *In His Name* has been used to train successive healing teams who have used their newfound confidence to pray for Christians and non-Christians, initially in the context of communion services and subsequently in cell groups and in people's homes. In its original form it was taught by Alison Morgan with Mike and Ann Hutchinson, who oversaw the healing ministry at Holy Trinity for many years. Over the last few years it has been further developed by Alison and John Woolmer, who came to Leicester with long experience in the healing ministry behind him. Our aim has been to produce something which is 'pick up and go'. We have tried to build a solid theological base, but this is an unashamedly hands-on course and not a theological study course – it's designed for those interested not in having all the 'right answers' but in offering themselves in faith to God as vessels for his love to others. We have touched on all the usual controversies, but our guiding principle is articulated most clearly by John Wimber, who remarked that 'when we didn't pray, no one got healed; when we did pray, some did get healed and some did not'. We don't always understand what we see; but some of what we see is healing; and it is our experience that even when people are not physically healed they almost always benefit spiritually from the prayer they have received.

We would suggest that the course should be led by two people working together, or if that is not practical that you may like to invite in someone with expertise in, say, deliverance or inner healing to help with particular sessions. We have used it primarily in a single large church. But the course could equally well be shared amongst churches; a strong church could invite others to send representatives; a local council of churches could sponsor the course, or a deanery, group of churches or diocese might adopt the course.

⁶ For more details see John Woolmer, *Healing and Deliverance*, chapter 6.

⁷ John Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God*, Kingsway 1996, p.23.

⁸ CHP 2000.