

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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There's More: Disciples Learning To Heal

by Dan Trygg

“Summoning His 12 disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to drive them out and to heal every disease and sickness.” Matthew 10:1

“Now after this the Lord appointed 70 others, and sent them in pairs... to every city and place where He Himself was going to come. ⁹ ...heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'” Luke 10:1,9

“Lord, ...grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, ³⁰ while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” Acts 4:29-30

“Surely our sicknesses He carried, and our pains He bore...” Isaiah 53:4

“...the power of the Lord was being present for Him to heal.” Luke 5:17

We have been looking at some of the skills that Jesus taught His disciples. *Being a disciple is being trained as an apprentice.* It is not enough to be a pew sitter. **Jesus is looking for active followers, partners in the work of the kingdom of God.** The skills of being a disciple of Jesus Christ involve (1.) developing a basic understanding in the biblical truth of God, (2.) competence in studying His word, and (3.) moving beyond intellectual knowledge to personal experiential intimacy with Him. So many people don't even begin to invest in *these* areas. They just come to church, if they even do that. Then, beyond that basic understanding and experience of God, a disciple (4.) develops a lifestyle of victory over sin, and (5.) the production of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. Those who are actively pursuing Jesus will (6.) learn to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, and enlarge their ability to be led by Him. They begin to experience (7.) a freedom and confidence to speak for Jesus, and the Spirit will help them in what they say. They begin to have a growing interest in sharing their faith with others, and (8.) become skilled at drawing others to Christ. In their growth journey, they will (9.) become aware of the spiritual conflict that rages around them, and they become competent at dealing with spiritual opposition, and (10.) even casting out demons. Now, all of **these things are skills that should be part of the training of every disciple.** They are not limited to specific spiritual gifts, or only to certain divine callings. **These are areas of growth and competence that we should all expect, and come to see in our lives.** If we are not, then maybe we need to look a little closer at whether we are truly pursuing Jesus. Are we expecting what Jesus has called us to? Are we investing the time to learn? Are we stretching to grow? Are we asking the Spirit to lead us deeper, and to new areas of skill? **Have you seen yourself as an apprentice-in-training? What would that mean, if you took that calling seriously?**

Today's study addresses another area of skill that we see clearly presented in the scriptures. **God wants us to learn how to partner with Him to heal people.** Again, as we look at what Jesus did with the twelve He trained, and what we see in the book of Acts, **it is quite clear that healing was a key ingredient in the expansion of the church** in those early days. **Jesus** healed (Matt. 4:23,24). He gave authority to **the twelve** to heal, as well (Matt. 10:1; Acts 3-4; 5:12-16; 9:33-34), ...and to **the seventy** that He sent out (Lk. 10:1-9). We see that **Philip** was empowered by the Spirit to heal (Acts 8:5-7). **Ananias** was instructed to lay hands on Saul of Tarsus, so that his sight would be restored (Acts 9:10-18). The ministry of **Paul** was punctuated with healings, as well (Acts 14:8-10; 19:11-12; 20:9-12; 28:7-10).

It is also quite evident that the apostles expected that healing, signs and wonders would continue to draw people's attention to the gospel, and authenticate its message. Jesus Himself had been "attested by God with miracles, wonders and signs, which God performed through Him" (Acts 2:22), and "God had anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). Just as the apostles had been trained and commissioned to do these same kinds of works, ...healings and casting out demons..., on that last evening they were together before His crucifixion Jesus also had told them that "the ones believing in Me" should expect that they would do the same kinds of works that He had done, and even greater works (Jn. 14:12). So, it should not be surprising that, when the apostles had faced stiff opposition by the religious leaders, they asked God for two things: (1.) Continued boldness to preach the message of the gospel; and, (2.) that He "would extend His hand to heal, and that signs and wonders would take place through the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:29,30). Furthermore, Paul included "gifts of healings" among the grace-gifts God may give when His people gather (1 Cor. 12:4-9), and James, the brother of Jesus, encouraged people who become sick to call for the elders of the church to gather to pray over them, in hope of healing (Jas. 5:14-16).

So, what is the basis for our hope that God would use us for healing? (1.) **Yahweh identified Himself as the One who heals His people. He wants His people to come to Him for healing.** Under the Mosaic covenant the blessing of health was for those who kept the commandments of God, but He identified Himself as their Healer (Ex.

15:26). Moses and Aaron understood this to mean that He could heal any and all afflictions. When Miriam was struck with leprosy, they immediately implored God to heal her, which He did after a week of isolation (Num. 12:10-15). Yahweh declared that He is the only God. It is in His power to take life or to heal, and none can oppose Him (Deut. 32:39; cf. Job 5:18). He healed Hezekiah in answer to his plea (2 Kg. 20:5). The psalmist cried out for healing (Psa. 6:2; 30:2; 41:3,4; 107:17-21; cf. Isa. 38:16; Jer. 17:14). He heals all our diseases (Psa. 103:3). **(2.) God sent Jesus to not only bear our sins, but also our sickness and diseases.** The Hebrew words in Isaiah 53:4, often translated as “griefs” and “sorrows”, actually mean “sickness, disease, illness, affliction” and “pains, sufferings”, respectively. The text actually says, “Surely our illnesses He Himself bore, and our pains He carried.” In Matthew 8:13-17, Jesus healed the centurion’s servant, Peter’s mother-in-law, and many others, and Matthew observed, “...in order that He might *fulfill* the word spoken through Isaiah the prophet, “He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases.” When you read Christian books about healing, one of the questions that is often discussed is **“Is healing of sickness and disease part of the atonement that Jesus purchased with His blood?” The biblical answer is, “Absolutely!”** The very next verse in Isaiah 53 says that “by His stripes/wounds we are healed” (vs. 5). Peter saw this connection. He wrote, “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.” He quoted from Isaiah 53:5. **Jesus not only paid for sin, but also for all that sin caused, ...sickness, disease, sorrow and death.** In the fulfillment of the kingdom, *all* of these will be gone. There will be no more death or sickness, no more sorrow, mourning or pain (Rev. 21:4). **(3.) Healing was a key part of Jesus’ preaching of the coming of the kingdom of God into the world, ...He was doing the works of the kingdom, healing the sick, raising the dead and casting out demons** (Matt. 4:23,24). As mentioned above, He instructed His disciples to do the same. Jesus demonstrated healing as a normal part of ministry. There is no reason to think that has changed.

What practical things can we learn from the scriptures about how to partner with God for healing?

First, we can do *nothing* from ourselves. This is from Jesus’ own lips. *He* did nothing from Himself. In fact, He said that He *was not able to do* from Himself *anything* (Jn. 5:19)! This is so important. Jesus Himself did not simply go around healing people on His own accord. Jesus had just healed a man who had been incapacitated for 38 years. When confronted about it, Jesus said, “My Father is working until now, and I am working..., the Son is not able to do from Himself *anything*, if ever He might not see the Father doing something; what things He might do, these things the Son likewise does” (Jn. 5:17,19). Luke 5:17 says that “the power of the Lord was being for Him to heal.” Jesus did not initiate that. The power of the Lord was present. **Second, we watch for what *the Father is doing*, and respond to His *activity*.** Again, looking back to Luke 5, Jesus did not initiate the healing, or bring the power to cause the healing. Rather, He detected that the power of the Spirit was there, and it was there to heal, so He acted in accordance with that movement of the Spirit. This is true partnership. Both parties are present and involved. We have another example in Acts 3, where Peter and John were coming into the temple. There was a beggar there, who had been there for years, ...a man who was lame from birth, and who was now over forty years old (Acts 4:22). Yet, *that* day, both Peter and John detected something. Because of their previous experiences, they recognized the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit. They looked intently at the man, both of them, and called to him to look at them. He expected to receive a donation from them, but Peter said that he had no money, “but what I have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!” And grabbing him by the hand, he pulled him up and immediately his ankles were strengthened, and he began walking, leaping and praising God. Later, when Peter commented on what happened, he said, “Why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? ...upon the faith of Jesus’ name this man whom you know has been strengthened, and the faith that is through Him gave him this perfect health” (3:12,16). **Third, in most cases, Jesus and the apostles did *not* pray over those they healed, ...they spoke a word of declaration or acted to bring about the healing.** Take some time to look at the various accounts of healing, and you will notice this. Sometimes, they would pause to pray to themselves, but then they would act or speak a word of declaration to the afflicted person (e.g., Mk. 1:41). It seems to me that the prayer in these circumstances was more to get in tune with what the Spirit was doing, and to make sure that His power was available, so that they could act in conjunction with Him. They were not presuming or getting ahead of God. Rather, they were stopping to get their hearts into agreement with what He was intending to do in that situation, so that they could act or speak in faith. **Fourth, there are times when we will be asked to pray for the sick, or we will be moved by our natural concern and compassion.** There is nothing wrong with that. That, in itself, *is* an expression of our hope and faith in God. Those who would come to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). There are many examples of such cries of faith that resulted in God being moved to answer by granting healing. In James 5:12-20, if someone is sick, he is counseled to call for the elders of the group to gather to pray for him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. The text says, “and the prayer *of the faith* will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven.” Could this be “the faith” that comes through Jesus, as in Acts 3:16?