
LENT NOTES 2012 FROM THE LEPROSY MISSION

Transformation through healing

All quotations from NIV translation unless specified

Introduction

Healing is at the heart of why The Leprosy Mission exists. Its founder, Wellesley Bailey, was impelled throughout his life to bring “the consolation of the gospel” to leprosy sufferers, and that consolation involved healing at all levels – of body, mind and spirit. Along with offering new life in Christ, the Mission’s original four priorities were to give food, medication, acceptance, and hospitals and homes “overflowing with love”. Each of these, in its own way, is a source of healing for body, mind and spirit, and even today they continue to bring transformation – transformation through healing.

In this study we’ll be looking at the power of healing. Healing takes many forms and can affect us, and those around us, in a multitude of ways. Sometimes it doesn’t come at all in the way we think it will, but then comes unexpectedly in a new way, and can take our lives in a new direction. Whatever the personal experience might be, healing is transformational, sometimes at the very deepest parts of our being.

Jesus and healing

Activity Read Mark 1:21-34. This passage has been called a typical day in the ministry of Jesus – teaching, opposing evil, responding to personal need, and healing (and praying – see verse 35).

- Why is it important to set a healing ministry in the context of a teaching ministry?
- What does it tell us about Jesus’ purposes in coming to Earth that so much of his time was spent healing?
- This passage is sandwiched between Jesus’ filling with the Spirit (verses 9,10) and an example of his regular prayer life (verse 35). What significance is there in this?
- What is similar and different between Jesus’ healing ministry and ours?

Disease and healing

It’s a useful question to ask why there is illness and disease in the world, and what exactly we mean by healing.

Activity Read John 9:1-7, the famous incident of Jesus healing a man born blind.

- What is the disciples’ explanation for illness and disease in the world? If we think as they did, how would that affect our attitude to our sicknesses, and those of others? (This is often what people think about those who have leprosy)
- What is Jesus’ explanation for the man’s blindness? How can this insight help us to cope with illness, and even see some good in it?
- As we have seen in verse 3, it is wrong to say that all suffering is due to personal sin. However, sometimes there might be a link (there is a hint of this in John 5:14, and see Psalm 38:1-8 for example). Why might there be a link between sin and sickness? What does this tell us about the way God has made us as a unity of body, mind (or soul) and spirit?
- Try to come up with a definition of illness or disease that draws together what you have just been discussing

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Our response to illness

When we are ill, it's only natural that our first reaction is to want to be well again. There's nothing wrong with that of course, and let's not forget that in the great majority of cases we *do* get well again. But often, healing isn't the New Testament's starting point.

Activity Read James 1:2-4 and 1 Peter 1:3-9

Neither of these passages is specifically about illness, but their talk of 'grief' and 'trials' can certainly include illness. Often God's purpose for us is not to heal straightaway and sometimes not at all (at least in this life). This can be hard to come to terms with, so let's look at why God might allow this.

- Is good health the greatest good we can experience in this life? If not, what is the greatest good, and why?
- What are the things that James and Peter say are the results of having to go through testing circumstances?
- Is illness a price worth paying if it results in the things James and Peter talk about? Whether your answer is yes or no, give your reasons

Activity Read Hebrews 12:7-13

- What does this passage tell us about a) What God is like; and b) What kind of transformation he wants for us, and the lengths to which he'll go to achieve it?
- A recurring theme in our study so far has been the change taking place "below the surface" in our lives as a result of illness. Would you regard this as healing or "transformation", even if the physical illness remains?

Your place in healing

In this final section we'll look more specifically at healing and the transformation it can bring.

Activity Read James 5:13-16 and Revelation 21:1-4

- Do you believe people can be physically healed today in the way James presents it? Give reasons for or against.
- In what sense is healing through doctors, nurses and medical science still the healing work of God?
- The passage in Revelation presents a picture of perfect life in God's presence. In what sense can death be described as "the perfect healing"?
- Someone has called local churches "therapeutic communities", in other words, good places for healing to take place in the lives of those present. Why should this be so?
- What could you do in your church to make it a better place of healing? What could you do personally to help the healing processes in people's lives?

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Conclusion

Finish with a time of quiet reflection on our own lives. This can be an opportunity to let God show us where we might need healing, and also where we could be channels of healing for others. Close with a prayer thanking God for the transformation he brings to our lives, for all the healing we experience, and that he would help us find healing where we need it, and bring healing to others where we can.