

Perspectives on Healing Prayer

By Rod MacIvaine

Introduction: As we develop our various ministries of healing prayer at Grace Community Church, we want to clarify our view about the gifts of the Spirit and how our view correlates with other movements in the area of healing prayer. In general, I would articulate our theological position as a modified *Third Wave*¹ position that embraces a strong commitment to the supernatural power of God but also embraces faith and reason at the same time.

We do not embrace traditional Pentecostal theology that suggests the baptism in the Spirit takes place after salvation and that tongues is the necessary sign. Moreover, we are not culturally charismatic, using charismatic jargon or featuring the regular expression of gifts in our main services. However, we do believe that all the gifts are available for today and may be joyfully used.

In our healing prayer ministry, we pray vigorous prayers for those struggling and in pain, believing God for great things. At the same time, we humbly recognize that we don't always know the intricacies of God's will for the one who seeks healing.

As will be shown in this document, we don't champion the greatness of our faith. Rather, we champion the greatness of God's loving kindness towards us. While we pray for healing, we're also very good at being with people in their pain and lament, with the hope that they will deepen their roots and him.

In sum, we consider ourselves to be a *missional church* embracing mainstream evangelical theology with some *third wave* leanings. We would articulate our position in a manner similar to the way J.P. Moreland does in his book, *The Kingdom Triangle*.²

To clarify this we offer the following points:

¹ The term Third Wave was coined by C. Peter Wagner (b. 1930). It describes recent trends in the movement of the Holy Spirit from ca. 1985 to present. The *first wave* was the nascent Pentecostal movement (1905 to ca. 1960). The *second wave* was the mid-century Charismatic renewal (ca. 1960-1980). This movement spread through mainline denominations, including some evangelical Catholic Churches. The *third wave* movement had its beginnings in the 1980s when charismatic experiences rippled through the mainstream evangelical movement. Third Wave evangelicals believe that the Baptism in the Spirit happens at salvation (1 Cor. 12:13). Tongues is not a necessary sign of salvation or of sanctification. But third wave evangelicals are not cessationist in their theology. They embrace the continuation of the "sign" gifts. This would appear to be the dominant position among North American evangelicals today. See Craig Keener, *Miracles*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

² J.P. Moreland, *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit's Power*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007) pg. 165ff.

1. **GIFTS – We believe that all the gifts are for today. This has been the historic position of GCC since our inception in 1995.**

- We believe that the traditional “charismatic” gifts are still available including: tongues, interpretation of tongues, healings, miracles, prophecy, words of wisdom and knowledge, etc.
This position was hammered out by the initial board of elders (1995) and reaffirmed at various points in the life of the church. We did not articulate the practical “how” at that time, only the theological “what.”
- We do not believe that believers evidence *all* of the gifts.³ Nor do we believe that all believers will evidence *one* particular gift: e.g. not everyone speaks in tongues, or prophesies or discerns spirits.

In this sense we are more in line with a *third wave* theology that asserts the baptism in the Spirit occurs at salvation and is not evidenced by speaking in tongues. (In other words, we don’t embrace traditional Pentecostal theology that suggests certain spiritual gifts are a sign of salvation.)

- On the other hand the Scriptures command us (individuals and churches) to seek after certain gifts (especially prophecy, 1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1).

This would suggest that some gifts might be latent within a believer for years, and then called forth at a later time by the leading of the Spirit. If the Spirit creates a desire for a certain gift (even one of the “charismatic” gifts), we would assume that the Spirit would provide that gift at some point in the believer’s life.

- We also believe that some of the gifts can be (and are) counterfeited by Christians. Some counterfeits come through spiritual warfare, some through emotionalism. In our ministries at GCC we seek authenticity and genuineness in all things. We will never press people to evidence gifts they do not have.
- We have historically asked people to not spontaneously rise and speak in tongues or give prophetic words in our main service (or our small groups), since our members often invite guests who may be far from Christ. This is consistent with many churches, including many charismatic and Pentecostal churches (Jack Hayford’s, *Church on the Way*, for instance).
- On the other hand, we have always had various people at GCC quietly speaking in tongues during prayer meetings and during small group prayer. We welcome this as an appropriate expression of their gift. To reject this would clearly go against what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:39.⁴

³ 1 Corinthians 12:30 makes this clear.

⁴ We would affirm that the gift of tongues is a private prayer language that can be used devotionally to connect with God in prayer. The biblical justification for this rests on three lines of argument. 1) The controlling passage on tongues is 1 Corinthians 12-14 not Acts 2:1ff, since 1 Cor. 12-14 describes (what is presumably) the ongoing practice on tongues in local churches. 2) Paul spoke in known languages when he was ministering in churches (1 Cor. 14:26ff). But Paul also said he spoke in tongues more than “them all.” This would indicate the extensive use of tongues as a private

- While we believe baptism in the Spirit takes place at salvation (1 Cor. 12:13), we also affirm that the Spirit will often lead believers into many subsequent groundbreaking experiences with Himself.

Sometimes people will call these experiences a *baptism in the Spirit*, or a *second blessing*, etc. We will rejoice with people when they report these experiences, and we will not press for theologically precise language as they describe it.⁵

2. HEALING AND ATONEMENT – While we are committed to the biblical idea that God can heal. We do not believe God necessarily *always* heals everyone in every case. Rather, we hold to the mystery view: God is sovereign over the healing process. We joyfully submit to his sovereignty; that means we will consistently do healing prayer in faith.

A. Among those who practice healing prayer there is disagreement about how healing is included in the atonement.

- The key passage is Matthew 8:16-17 and its connection to Isaiah 53:4-5. Matthew 8:16-17 – *“That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.”* (See also 1 Peter 2:24.)
- Some believe that healing is in the atonement *automatically* (e.g. A.B. Simpson, E.W. Kenyon, K. Hagan Jr., and Bill Johnson [at times] and others). The idea is that once you come to Christ, God must heal you (at least at some point), since you are an heir to the complete atoning work of Jesus. When God does not heal, we don’t know why, but it is always God’s will that you are healed.
- Others (such as Randy Clark) believe that healing is in the atonement *potentially* but not automatically. For instance, Clark quotes Chambers: *“But we have to remember the Atonement works under God’s dispensational sovereignty.”* Chambers believed that *“the Atonement is only efficacious for healing when God sovereignly deemed it so, not as absolute law.”*⁶

B. Other theologians who suggest healing is a *potential* reality because of the atonement (but not *automatic*) include the following.

devotional prayer language. 3) We recognize that in the majority world tongues as a private prayer language is an extremely common experience as is evidenced by ethnographic missiological books. Moreover, this has been the case historically; the early church fathers were clearly not cessationists. We believe that the Western church is learning about the use of the gifts through the growth of the Christian movement in the majority world.

⁵ We will however, continue to teach that the initial Baptism of the Spirit takes place at the moment of salvation. We regard the Baptism of the Spirit as one of (at least) four key initial ministries of the Spirit including, regeneration (Titus 3:5), indwelling (Rom. 8:11), baptism (1 Cor. 12:13) and sealing (Eph. 1:13-14).

⁶ Randy Clark, Unpublished Teaching Notes, available through Global Awakening www.globalawakening.com. The following quotes by Dr. Clark likewise come from this source.

- D.A. Carson: *“There is healing in the atonement; but similarly there is the promise of a resurrection body in the atonement, even if believers do not inherit it until the Parousia. From the perspectives of the NT writers, the Cross is the basis for all the benefits that accrue to believers; but this does not mean that all such benefits can be secured at the present time on demand, any more than we have the right and power to demand our resurrection bodies”* (As quoted by Keener, *Matthew*, 178).
- John Wimber: *“Not all of those who believe physical healing is in the atonement conclude healing is automatic and immediate.”*
- R.A. Torrey also declared *“...Even if the conditions are met, it is not always God’s will to heal.... It is not always possible to pray ‘the prayer of faith,’ but only when God makes it possible by the leading of the Holy Spirit.”*
- Randy Clark: *“Healing is provided for in the atonement, but not all receive the fullness of healing in this life. Many times it is a partial healing, or a supernatural enabling that is imparted from God in the midst of weakness.”*
- Randy Clark: *“[Many in the movement] view healing in the atonement as a provision that begins in this age, but is not fully consummated until the age to come. This maintains the “already, but not yet” principle of [the kingdom].”*
- Randy Clark: *“I would conclude, like Murray, Simpson, Carter, and Torrey, that it is valid to consider healing as a provision of the atonement in this life, but not as automatic or complete healing in this life.” “We can pray expectantly for healing, but leave room for God’s greater purposes, which are higher and greater than our understanding.”*
- Grace Community Church holds to this latter view that healing is in the atonement *potentially* not *automatically*. This understanding especially drives us into the mystery position. We often state the mystery stance in the following manner: *“We don’t control when, where, how or why God might choose to heal, and therefore, we will pray consistently for the application of God’s healing grace, leaving the results to him.”*⁷
- God’s kingdom is *now* and *not yet*. In God’s coming kingdom there will be no sickness or suffering. In the present, God sometimes gives us glimpses of his coming kingdom by giving miraculous manifestations of it in the present. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught that we can *and should* joyfully pray for manifestations of God’s coming kingdom power to break through in the present.

C. When it comes to healing and God’s will we distinguish between three wills of God: 1) his *ideal* will, 2) his *permissive* will, and 3) his *providential* will.⁸

⁷ Whereas the functionally anti-supernatural view tends to limit prayer, the mystery view tends to accelerate prayer.

⁸ People use different phrases to discuss this, depending on their theological orientation: prescriptive will, perfect will, ideal will, ordained will, etc. We also sometimes add another nuance to this: God’s prescriptive will is

- Ideal – God’s ideal will is given to us in the moral commands and precepts of Scripture. For instance, God’s ideal will is that marriage be with one person for life. God’s ideal will is that we always defeat sin. His ideal will is that parents bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Permissive – Of course, because we live in a fallen world and because we are sinners, this does not always take place. Therefore, God permits things that are less than his perfect standard. He permits divorce, pain and suffering. God’s permissive will consists of those things he allows because we live in a fallen world.

Providential – When someone finds themselves in pain – physical, emotional and spiritual – it is not our role to ask why. We don’t ask if they’ve sinned, etc. Rather, we seek God’s grace and his solution in the moment. The grace God provides is something that we can celebrate. That grace may include some level of supernatural physical or emotional healing.

- In the case of God’s will and divine healing, we assume that God wants us to pray for healing in most cases since 1) he commanded the 70 to engage in ministries of healing, and 2) since his name is Healer [Jehovah Rapha, Exo. 15:22-26], and 3) since God desires our Shalom...our wellbeing.
- In the case of Paul’s thorn in the flesh, it was not God’s will that Paul be healed (2 Cor. 12:7-10). In this case, Paul’s non-healing was God’s permissive will and it was God’s providential will that Paul’s non-healing be a ministry of humility to him (“because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations”) and it would be a ministry to others.
- In sum, we prefer praying bold prayers and leaving the results to God. We typically don’t pray, “Lord, if it’s your will, please heal this person.” Rather, we discern God’s leading in our prayers and pray in the following manner, “Lord, we come to you in Christ’s name, and we pray for the supernatural application of your healing grace.”
- An exception: When God reveals to someone (like he did to Paul) that we should stop praying for healing, we should cease.
- Another exception: When someone clearly feels that God is calling them home, we wisely evaluate this, taking into account the testimony of the person, their family, and their physician. And we pray for peace as they prepare for their homecoming.

reflected in the commands and principles he’s laid down in his Word. God’s permissive will is reflected in his allowing people to do their own way. God’s providential will is reflected in God using sin and pain to accomplish a greater good.

An important clarification...

- We **do not** believe God heals in every case. The Bible does not teach that God heals in every case, nor has this been the case throughout the history of the church. Those who advocate this position promote an unlivable view that drives people into confusion and sometimes into shame. Many former advocates of this view have had to change it because it failed to work for them.
- We believe that God sometimes **DOES** allows sickness and pain. It is “from him” in the sense that he allows it. We don’t know why he allows it, and most of the time we should not speculate about why he allows it. Instead, like Job, we rest in God’s Fatherly wisdom and love to live courageously in a fallen world.

At other times, however, we do know the reason God allows pain: It is to protect us from a vulnerability, or disrupt our rebellious path, so that we do not encounter more pain in the future.

This is clear from the following verses: Deut. 28:20-29; Psalm 119:71; 119:92; John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

D. What exactly do we mean by healing?

We find the emphasis by Candy Gunther Brown (scholar of the ethnography of religion at the Univ. of Indiana) to be very helpful.

We privilege the term “divine healing” over the alternatives “faith healing” or “spiritual healing.” Most practitioners prefer the term “divine healing” because it emphasizes that God’s love, rather than merely human faith or an impersonal spiritual force, is the source of healing; it underscores the perceived need for supernatural intervention instead of implying that faith is a natural force that can be manufactured by human will; and it emphasizes that the object of faith, not simply the degree of faith or spirituality, matters in receiving healing....

The term “faith healing” is, moreover, confusing...because of its negative connotations in popular [culture], evoking images—such as the flamboyant, fraudulent...“faith healers” of movies like *Elmer Gantry* (1960), *Leap of Faith* (1992), and *The Apostle* (1997)....⁹

Although such is sometimes the case, we generally follow the narrower usage of the Portuguese and Spanish term *cura divina*, or divine cure, which implies that physical improvement is an essential component of what is often perceived as a more holistic healing process. In this usage, a divine cure is distinguished from a recovery that could be expected through the regular operation of natural processes....

⁹ Brown, Candy Gunther (2011-02-24). *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (p. 5). Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition.

The healing may not be instantaneous or spectacular, and thus not be classified as a “miracle,” but a divine healing is understood to proceed more rapidly than usual or under circumstances in which healing would not otherwise be expected (our emphasis).

3. WORD OF FAITH¹⁰ – We believe that God can heal anytime he wants for any reason he wants, even in the absence of faith. However, we affirm that robust faith is generally the ideal context for healing prayer.

A. To flesh this out, we want to compare our view to the Word of Faith view. As we develop this *sub-point (B)* below will be countered with *sub-point (C)*.

B. First, we reject the *extreme* forms of the Word of Faith movement that claims our words have supernatural power to transform reality *in every case*.

- *In the area of healing* – Word of Faith proponents believe that healing is automatic and must take place in each case. If healing does not occur, it is frequently the fault of the recipient of healing prayer. The faith healer might assert that the recipient doesn’t have enough faith, or perhaps the person is in sin. We feel this is extremely damaging to ministry, and we reject this culture of blame and shame.
- *In the area of prosperity* – Word of Faith proponents also hold to a form of prosperity theology that suggests God wants all people to be prosperous and even rich. They use many Old Testament verses connected to the Mosaic Covenant to demonstrate this. We believe they do this erroneously since the Mosaic Covenant was replaced by the New Covenant [See Galatians 2:19].

Whereas God did tie the fertility of the land to Old Covenant faithfulness, he does not do this in the New Covenant. *The New Covenant does not tie material prosperity to faithful living*; on the contrary, some passages connect faithful living to persecution (2 Tim. 3:6).

- *In the area of words* – Many in the word of faith movement hold to a form of positive confession that can be articulated like this: “God brought the world into existence by the creative power of his word. We have been given that same ability.” They argue that we who know Christ can speak things into existence by the power of our words. Some, like Copeland say we are ‘little gods.’

At the same time, negative confession (as exemplified in Prov.18:21) will bring negative results. They will say (for instance), “If you speak negativity

¹⁰ The Word of Faith movement is a subset within many Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. A distinctive feature of Word of Faith theology is that a believer can speak a word to call reality into being. According to WOF proponents when a person makes a positive confession *in faith* that confession will cause reality to change. Conversely, negative confession brings about negative results (Pr. 18:21 for example). Noted Word of Faith teachers include, Kenneth Hagan, Kenneth Copeland, Charles Capps and Benny Hinn. Critics feel that this is not only unbiblical but shares many features with Eastern Mysticism. Many Pentecostal and Charismatic theologians have denounced the WOF movement including Gordon Fee, Sam Storms and Craig Keener. Others, like Randy Clark (Global Awakening), have argued against the position without being harshly critical. We do not embrace the classic Word of Faith viewpoint, and we do not want it practiced in our various ministries. For our alternative perspective see pg. 6-7.

over this situation, you will bring negativity upon it.” Again, we would reject this as unbiblical (See below under [C].)

- *In the area of faith* – Word of Faith proponents sometimes overemphasize the active side of faith, treating positive mental attitude as something that must inevitably cause God to act, e.g. “When we ramp up enthusiastic faith, we can legitimately expect that God will *of necessity* act on our behalf.”

C. While we reject these previous *Word of Faith* extremes, we do embrace the proper biblical perspective on these four areas.

- *In the area of healing* – We believe that healing is a potential reality through the atonement, and we should, therefore, pray for healing with perseverance and joy. But we believe that when where and why God heals is a mystery. Mystery doesn’t mean we are passive about healing prayer. Rather, it means we continue to be passionate for God’s intervention, but we always leave the results to him. We will not get discouraged when people don’t experience healing, or when they experience less than 100% healing. Rather we will encourage them to discipleship within the reality of their level of suffering and always with hope for a solution.¹¹

We believe that ultimate physical and emotional healing will take place at our personal resurrection.

On the other hand, we believe Jesus taught that we can see seemingly impossible things take place through robust faith (Matt. 21:18-22). Therefore, our healing prayer should be marked with this robust, joyful & confident faith. In healing prayer we are full of joy, not to force God to act, but because God is good, and we are filled with his love. We want to pray with expectation that God will act in some way.

At GCC we will consistently nourish a vibrant faith in God’s healing grace. We will celebrate any and every answer to healing prayer.

Practical implications

- We will always ask candidates of healing prayer if they are currently under a doctor’s care. If not, we will always urge them to seek out a competent physician.
- We will never suggest that those receiving prayer adjust medications or get off their medications. We will always leave these decisions up to the patient and his or her physician. Moreover, we will not give advice about things like medication, vitamins or homeopathic procedures.

¹¹ Research on healing prayer suggests that even when recipients do not experience supernatural healing, the experience of being prayed for provides a powerful “love connection” to the church and to God. See the research by Candy Gunther Brown, *Testing Prayer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), concluding chapter.

- We will never suggest that recipients of healing prayer should avoid or postpone surgery. We will never use “words of knowledge” to inform people that they should not follow a doctor’s procedure.
 - We will never accuse anyone of lack of faith for following sound medical advice. We will never make anyone feel that they are at fault because they did not get healed.
- ➔ Following Augustine, we firmly believe that *faith and reason* work together under the hand of a sovereign God.

- *In the area of prosperity* – We believe that good financial stewardship often results in people being enriched. And we believe that God, in general, has given promises about wise stewardship. For instance, in 2 Cor. 9:6-7 Paul teaches that if we “*sow sparingly we shall reap sparingly; if we sow generously we shall reap generously.*”

We believe that those with great faith will see many of these promises realized in this life, especially as they 1) become strong and consistent givers, 2) live within their means and 3) move into a debt-free posture.

Jesus promises us an abundant life, but abundance does not necessarily have to do with earthly possessions. Some extremely faithful believers have spent much of their time in prison for the gospel. Others have only had their basic needs met on account of persecution. Yet, these same believers report that they are living a full, abundant, and blessed life in accord with Jesus’ promise in John 10:10.

- *In the area of our words* – We believe that we have genuine spiritual authority in Christ through our identification in his death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God. We believe we are seated with him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6), far above the principalities and powers of darkness. Moreover, we are believer-priests (1 Peter 1:9), who have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10; 2 Pet. 1:4).

We therefore affirm that it’s crucial to make consistent positive affirmations about our position. This should be one of the main spiritual disciplines of an empowered believer. However, we believe it’s an unbiblical leap to suggest (as Word of Faith proponents do) that we have innate power in our words to speak something into reality as God does.

- *In the area of faith* – We believe that authentic faith has an active side and a passive side. Sometimes we will be led to a more active faith; at other times we will be led to a more passive or resting faith. God will lead us into the kind of faith he wants us to manifest as we depend on him.
- Active faith: Sometimes God may give us the conviction to pray without ceasing for dramatic answers to prayers.

- *Really* active faith: Sometimes, God may tell us when and how he will answer a prayer, and thus we can pray a bold prayer of faith. Many people in the majority world report the dramatic surge of faith in emergency situations.
- Passive faith: At other times God may ask us to simply rest in him without doing much of anything.
- ➔ We will help people understand this more nuanced view of faith as they come for healing prayer.

D. We believe that extreme Word of Faith theologies sometimes morph into New Age concepts of *calling being into reality* through positive confession. In this case the Christian WOF proponent is dangerously edging toward spiritual warfare and occult-like experiences.

On the other hand we believe that extreme cessationism often morphs into functional deism by minimizing the work of the Spirit and limiting the power, activity and vibrancy of God.

The biblical middle-ground we seek is as follows...

- We seek a proper Christian imagination that passionately and creatively envisions what God can do through prayer and through personal leadings. (We believe faith is often spelled *RISK*.)
- We seek a proper Christian authority through affirming our position in Christ, embracing our authority in Christ, and seeing ourselves as believer priests.
- We seek a proper Christian meditation as evidenced by the great theologians and mystics of the church. Some evangelicals are highly critical of any sort of mysticism or contemplative prayer.¹² We believe that worldview is all-important in any definition of prayer: Any New Age mysticism, imported into Christian practice, is wrong.

On the other hand many godly men and women in the history of the church evidenced a proper *theistic* mysticism founded in theological mystery; these believers can and should be emulated.

- At Grace Community Church we seek a dynamic interplay between vibrant healing prayer and sound medical practice.

¹² Whereas some evangelicals (like Dave Hunt) have become highly critical of contemplative prayer, we are not *when it flows from a specifically theistic worldview*. Before the Bible was widely available (prior to 1611 in the English speaking world and prior to the early 19th century in the rest of the world) many godly believers built relationships with God apart from a deep understanding of God's word. They had verses here and there but nothing systematic because they did not have regular recourse to biblical study. Yet God spoke to them richly in their prayers; there is much that we can learn from their example.

4. **PROPHETIC WORDS – We believe in the continuation of the gift of prophecy, and in general, we define this gift the way Wayne Grudem does in his book, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today (Rev. Ed.)* and in his *Systematic Theology*.**

A. Grudem defined prophecy this way:

- "Prophecy in ordinary New Testament churches was not equal to Scripture in authority, but was simply a very human (and sometimes partially mistaken) report of something the Holy Spirit brought to someone's mind." In other words, prophecy consists of "telling something God has spontaneously brought to mind" (As quoted in <http://www.tms.edu/tmsj/tmsj2h.pdf> even though this source rejects the position)
- Under this definition,¹³ biblical prophecy is *not* equivalent to canonical revelation.

The NT canon closed at the end of the Apostolic era, but in the second through fourth century writers affirmed the continuation of prophetic words from Christian leaders.¹⁴ These leaders were often communicating their impressions from God.

Accordingly, this would not be *Revelation* (with a capital R), but rather reports of impressions that came from their strong ongoing relationship with God. Clearly these are not authoritative since those impressions had to be tested (1 Thess 5:19-22).

- To quote Grudem again: "*Much more commonly, prophet and prophecy were used of ordinary Christians who spoke not with absolute divine authority, but simply to report something God had laid on their hearts or brought to their minds.*¹⁵ *There are many indications in the New Testament that this ordinary gift of prophecy had authority less than that of the Bible, and even less than that of recognized Bible teaching in the early church.*"

B. Are there others who embrace this definition?

In no particular order

- John Knox (and the Scottish Reformers)¹⁶
- Various Huguenot writers

¹³ Grudem hammered out his biblical theology of the prophetic gift in his doctoral dissertation in Cambridge University.

¹⁴ See Ronald A.N. Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church: An Exploratoin Into the Gifts of the Spirit During the First Three Centuries of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984).

¹⁵ One example of this might be the prophecy that occurs in Acts 21 with the prophecy of the daughters of Agabus (21:9-14).

¹⁶ For examples see Jack Deere, *Surprised by the Voice of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 64

- George Mueller
- C.H. Spurgeon
- Andrew Murray
- John Wesley
- Jack S. Deere
- Sam Storms

C. Are there some who reject this view of prophecy?

- John MacArthur (He is a strong cessationist, rejecting prophecy as a charismatic gift. Rather he equates prophecy with biblical preaching.)
- Hank Hanegraaff
- Garry Friesen and Robin Maxon

D. A caveat to our viewpoint on prophecy.

- Not everyone hears God the same way. Some have strong gifts enabling them to sense God's movement in their lives, others do not. We need to rejoice in our own giftings.
- Some followers of Christ will be analytical and cautious; they may struggle with how to interpret impressions. Some followers of Christ more are intuitive; they receive impressions readily. Our personalities and gifts will cause us to sense God's leadings in different ways.
- Therefore, we do not think there is a formula for how one might hear from God. In fact, we would strongly argue against this. Moreover, there should be no guilt or shame if someone is not sensing God's voice as strongly or as regularly as someone else.
- The ultimate goal for every Christ-follower is that we hear God's voice through his word. We believe that God will speak to us most strongly and clearly as we are immersed in his word. Indeed, historically, men and women who have claimed very strong prophetic gifts (under our interpretation) have been people who have been strong in inductive Bible study and Scripture memory.

E. Some implications of our view of prophecy for healing prayer.

- In our healing prayer process at GCC, we are going to seek God's wisdom for how we might pray accurately over a person's condition. We expect that God might "give someone a word" that can lead to more accurate prayer. But this is not an authoritative word. It must be tested.¹⁷
- In healing prayer, we will always share these words tentatively and humbly. If someone receives a word about "anger," we don't share this in a condemning

¹⁷ 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

way: e.g. “I can see that you’re angry.” We might ask, “I’m wondering if there might be someone you’re angry at. Could that be a component?”

- We must always be humble about our impressions and then verify them in prayer to God, and then we should test them with the person receiving prayer.

5. **SUMMARY – In general, we seek a healthy blending of faith and reason as we build our ministry of healing prayer.**

- A. **ROBUST FAITH** – We seek greater faith to believe that God can do impossible things. We want the passionate child-like faith that boldly affirms our position in Christ and operates out of our authority in Christ.

We want a culture that believes God for the supernatural in the power of the Spirit. We seek an expectant Spirit-exalting culture. As a church we are seeking the greater gifts.

- B. **MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC REASON** – At the same time, we will blend radical faith with biblical and scientific reason. We will consistently encourage people to consult medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, life coaches, etc. We will esteem testing, including medical, psychological and coaching testing.

➔ *We will regard improvement through medicine, surgery, counseling and coaching as an example of God’s healing grace.*

- C. **PASSION FOR THE SUPERNATURAL** – The vast majority of the missiological literature published in the past 30 years emphasizes God’s miraculous interventions. Old theological views suggested that God worked in supernatural ways because people did not have access to his Word. Newer theological views suggest that God works miraculously in the majority world because people with few resources take God at his word. We strongly embrace the perspective of Craig Keener in his two-volume work, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*. It is our hope that this passion for the supernatural permeates the culture of our church.

- D. **WE WILL CHAMPION BOTH FAITH AND REASON TOGETHER** but seek a culture where we are always seeking after the Spirit’s power (See appendix.)

An Excerpt
Receiving the Holy Ghost
Acts 19:2

Comment: This sermon excerpt from Charles H. Spurgeon reflects the culture of spiritual hunger we seek.

You know, dear friends, when the Holy Spirit was given in the earliest ages, He showed His presence by certain miraculous signs. Some of those who received the Holy Spirit spoke with tongues, others began to prophesy, and a third class received the gifts of healing....

Have ye then received the Spirit since you believed? Beloved, are you now receiving the Spirit? Are you living under his divine influence? Are you filled with his power?

Put the question personally. I am afraid some professors will have to admit that they hardly know whether there be any Holy Ghost; and others will have to confess that though they have enjoyed a little of his saving work, yet they do not know much of his ennobling and sanctifying influence.

We have none of us participated in his operations as we might have done: we have sipped where we might have drunk; we have drunk where we might have bathed; we have bathed up to the ankles where we might have found rivers to swim in. Alas, of many Christians it must be affirmed that they have been naked, and poor, and miserable, when they might in the power of the Holy Spirit have been clad in golden garments, and have been rich and increased in goods.

He waiteth to be gracious, but we linger in indifference, like those of whom we read, "they could not enter in because of unbelief." There are many such cases, and therefore it is not improper that I should with all vehemence press home upon you the question of the apostle,

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" Did ye receive him when ye believed? Are ye receiving him now that ye are believing in Christ Jesus?

Does any man know what the Spirit of God can make of him? I believe the greatest, ablest, most faithful, most holy man of God might have been greater, and abler, and more faithful, and more holy, if he had put himself more completely at the Spirit's disposal.

Wherever God has done great things by a man he has had power to do more had the man been fit for it. We are straitened in ourselves, not in God. O brothers, the church is weak to-day because the Holy Spirit is not upon her members as we could desire him to be.

You and I are tottering along like feeble babes, whereas, had we more of the Spirit, we might walk without fainting, run without weariness, and even mount up with wings as eagles. Oh, for more of the anointing of the Holy Ghost whom Christ is prepared to give immeasurably unto us if we will but receive him!

Healing Prayer – Bibliography & Recommended Reading List

Healing: Works by Scholars Sympathetic to the Movement

The following works come from scholars who recognize that something undeniable is happening in the healing movement in the majority world. The following authors are sympathetic to the movement.

Asamoah-Gyadu, Kwabena. "Health/Healing" In *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, ed. John Corrie, Samuel Escobar, and Wilbert Shenk, 141-146. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007.

Brown, Candy Gunther (ed.). *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Brown, Candy Gunther. *Testing Prayer*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. (This is an astonishing work of scholarship, and I recommend it highly.)

Miller, Donald E., and Tetsuanao Yamamori. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. (This too is very good. Miller and Yamamori argue that the greatest force for social action around the world is the global Pentecostal movement and he has strong data to demonstrate this.)

Healing: Works by Popular Authors

The authors of the following books would likely not agree with each other because they come from slightly different (to very different) theological backgrounds, but elements of the following books offer some good ideas on what it means to offer healing prayer to those who need it. As with the rest of the books in this reading list, each one needs to be tested by the Scriptures.

Baker, Heidi. *Compelled by Love: How to Change the World through the Simple Power of Love in Action*. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2008.

Clark, Randy. *Ministry Team Manual (Kindle Ed.)*. Mechanicsburg, PA: ANGA Publishing, 2011

Frost, Henry. *Miraculous Healing: Why Does God Heal Some, and Not Others?* Fearn, Scotland, U.K.: Christian Focus Publications, LTD. 1999, 2008

Getz, Gene. *Elders and Leaders: God's Plan for Leading the Church*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2003 (See the appendix on healing.)

Johnson, Bill and Randy Clark, *The Essential Guide to Healing: Equipping All Christians to Pray for the Sick*. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books (Division of Baker Book House), 2011.

MacNutt, Francis. *Healing: Revised and Expanded – The Bestselling Classic*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1974,1999.

Stafford, Tim. "Miracles in Mozambique: There are credible reports that Heidi baker heals the deaf and raises the dead. She loves the poor like no other in this forgotten corner of the planet." In *Christianity Today* May 2012.

Tada, Joni Earickson. *A Place for Healing: Wrestling with the Mysteries of Suffering, Pain and God's Sovereignty*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2010.

Wilson, Darren. *Furious Love: This Time Love Fights Back* (DVD). Wanderlust Productions. Available at www.wanderlustproductions.net.

History: The Role of Healing Prayer in the History of the Church

The following books are by scholars of various different backgrounds, some committed Christians, other secular scholars. I've chosen to list these books because each scholar recognizes that Christianity launched a revolution in healthcare in the first century, or they recognize that healing prayer has been a strong component of the Christian faith, and there have been demonstrable effects to those prayers.

Curtis, Heather D. *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture 1860-1900*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007

Ferngren, Gary. *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

MacNutt, Francis. *The Healing Reawakening: The Reclaiming of Our Lost Inheritance*. Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books (Division of Baker Book House).

McGrath, Alister. *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution – A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2008

Mullin, Bruce. *Miracles and the Modern Religious Imagination*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996 (This book is available on google books. Beginning on page 265, Mullin argues for the declining influence of cessationism in late modern history.)

Noll, Mark A. *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000.

Porterfield, Amanda. *Healing in the History of Christianity*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009

Ruthven, Jon Mark. *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles, (Revised and Expanded Ed.)*. Menlo Park, CA: Word & Spirit Press, 2011. (This is a doctoral dissertation arguing against the assertions of B.B. Warfield that the age of miracles ceased with the close of the N.T. canon. Warfield's wife was an invalid, and Warfield cared for her for many decades while she slowly declined. Warfield prayed for her healing, but she was not healed. Warfield wrote his seminal book *Counterfeit Miracles* when she died.)

Stark, Rodney, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal, Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1997

Stark, Rodney. *The Triumph of Christianity: How the Jesus Movement Became the World's Largest Religion*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011.

Tennant, Timothy. *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think and Discuss Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009

Miracles and Healing: Popular and Scholarly Works

Keener, Craig. *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011. (This book by Keener is the finest book on miracles in print, and I suspect it will become the classic book on the subject.)

Garlow, James and Keith Wall, *Miracles Are for Real: What Happens When Heaven Touches Earth*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2011.

Kendall, R.T. *Holy Fire: A Balanced, Biblical Look at the Holy Spirit's Work in our Lives*. Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2014

Stafford, Tim, *Miracles: A Journalist Looks at Modern Day Experiences of God's Power*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2012,

Medical Biography: Doctors who Practice Healing Prayer

I strongly recommend the following books. They make for great reading and give a glimpse into three gifted scientists and physicians who are committed to excellence in medicine and prayer. If you could only read one, I would suggest Levy's book, *Gray Matter*.

Crandall IV, Chauncey W. *Raising the Dead: A Doctor Encounters the Miraculous*. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group, 2010.

Koenig, Harold. *Healing Connection: The Story of a Physicians Search for the Link between Faith and Health*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2011.

Levy, David and Joel Kilpatrick. *Gray Matter: A Neurosurgeon Discovers the Power of Prayer...One Patient at a Time*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2011.

Medical Textbooks along with Popular Works on Wellness and Healing

I am of the opinion that very few Christians are aware of the studies being done right now connecting the Christian faith to health and wellbeing. Even though some of these books are very technical, I have been profoundly encouraged in my faith as I've read that there is a strong association with practicing the Christian faith and wellness. These studies are being done by top scientists.

Koenig, Harold G., *Faith and Mental Health: Resources for Healing*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2005.

Koenig, Harold E., Michael E. McCullough and David B. Larson. *Handbook of Religion and Health*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2001 [2011].

Koenig, Harold. *Medicine, Religion and Health: Where Science and Spirituality Meet*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008.

Koenig, Harold and Vera Benner Carson. *Spiritual Caregiving: Healthcare as a Ministry*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2004.

Koenig, Harold G. *The Healing Power of Faith: How Belief and Prayer Can Help You Triumph Over Disease*. New York, NY: Touchstone, 1999.

Koenig, Harold G. *The Link Between Religion and Health: Psychoneuroimmunology and the Faith Factor*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Levin, Jeff. *God, Faith and Health: Exploring the Spirituality-Healing Connection*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001

Lewis, Gregg and Harold E. Koenig. *Spirituality in Patient Care: Why, How, When, and What* (Revised and Expanded Ed.). West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2007

Matthews, Dale and Connie Clark, *The Faith Factor: Proof of the Healing Power of Prayer*. New York, NY: Penguin, 1999

Medical Journal Articles on Wellness

Brown CJ et al., "Study of the Therapeutic Effects of Proximal Intercessory Prayer (STEPP) on Auditory and Visual Impairments in Rural Mozambique" Southern Medical Journal (2010 September) Vol. 103; Issue 9.

Carson JW et al., "Forgiveness and Chronic Low Back Pain: A Preliminary Study Examining the Relationship of Forgiveness to Pain, Anger, Psychological Distress," J Pain (2005 Feb) 6(2):84-91. (As referenced in Levy, Kindle location 3641)

Dezutter J et al., "God, Image, and Happiness in Chronic Pain Patients: The Mediating Role of Disease Interpretation," Pain Med (2010 May) 11(5):765-73. (As referenced in Levy, Kindle location 3641)

Friedberg JP et al., "Relationship between Forgiveness and Psychological and Physiological Indices in Cardiac Patients," Int J Behav Med (2009) 16(3):205-11. (As referenced in Levy, Kindle location 3641)

Spiritual Gifts: Works Suggesting that the Gifts of the Spirit Are Available Today

Carson, D.A., *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

Deere, Jack. *Surprised by the Power of the Spirit: Discovering How God Speaks and Heals Today*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.

Deere, Jack. *Surprised by the Voice of God: How God Speaks Today Through Prophecies, Dreams and Visions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.

Grudem, Wayne. *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? 4 Views*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan,

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994.

Grudem, Wayne. *The Gift of Prophecy: In the New Testament and Today (Rev. Ed.)*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000.

Howie, John (1735-1793). *Scots Worthies: A Brief Historical Account of Their Lives* (Kindle Ed.) Originally published in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1688.

Moreland, J.P., *The Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit's Power*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007

Storms, Sam. *A Beginner's Guide to the Spiritual Gifts*. Norwood, MA: Regal, 2003

Raw Data on the Google Ngram Search for the Phrase "Healing Prayer" and "Miraculous Healing"

This graph shows the frequency of the phrase "healing prayer" from 1800 to 2000 in about 5.5 million books. This raw data suggests that discussions about healing prayer and miraculous healing have spiked in the cultural conversation.

Google books Ngram Viewer

