

Praying for Healing

And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham
whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free
from this bondage on the sabbath day?
~ Luke 13:16 ~

Praying for healing is not straightforward. People of Jesus' time understood and explained illness in a way that can appear foreign to us. Many of our scientific ideas, and history of poor practice in healing ministry, can prevent our engagement with this kind of prayer. In addition, most of us have been taught to notice the physical healing that Jesus offers, and yet within most of these stories there are multiple layers of healing. The short text from Luke above indicates that, for Jesus, this healing involved several components:

- I affirmation, calling her a daughter of Abraham, granting her equality with men
- I reassurance that neither she nor her family were personally responsible for her ill health, by explaining in the terms of the culture of the time that Satan had bound her
- I freedom from restrictive social and religious legalism that said that such healing could not be done on the Sabbath

... and so health is brought by challenging the lawmakers. Her status in the community is restored, and through her physical healing she has purpose again and is enabled to play a useful role. These features accord well with some recognised current healthcare policies here in Scotland. First, that poverty is a major block to health. Second, that finding purpose and

a role in a community is a significant component for health. The work of many churches to provide social care that offers companionship, meaning and focus for many isolated people is part of the continuing healing tradition of the gospel, as much as integrating the kind of prayer practices described below.

Connecting

There is a great comfort in knowing someone else is praying for you. Offer to pray for someone daily, at the same time, for a period like a week or a month. You can invite them to join in, tuning in with you and with God.

Healing Light

Imagine God's healing light in whatever part of the body is injured, and picture the body well and full of life. And/or light a candle and concentrate on the flame. Let its light speak to you of the healing light of God that surrounds and is within us all.

Sharing closeness of God

Sometimes when we pray, all the possible negative outcomes of the situation come tumbling through our minds. In order to keep your mind focused on the beauty and wonder of God, try remembering a moment when you experienced God close to you – a particular moment in a church, a favourite place, a sunrise or sunset. Remember – and then imagine the person you are praying for and bring them into this remembrance of the wonder of God's love.

Using our hands

We all know that a gentle touch of a hand at the right moment can bring the reality of love close. You can do this for yourself.

Place your hands over the parts of your body that are suffering and concentrate on God's love, or repeat a

Bible verse to yourself. If it seems appropriate to do this for another person, check with them that they are happy for you to put a hand on them and make sure by keeping your eyes open initially, to see if they are truly relaxed with your hands on them.

Music

Music can bring healing; prayer can be singing. Sing a song for the person for whom you are praying, either with them or as you remember them. For yourself, work out what music you experience as prayerful and set aside time to let the music speak to you of the ever-present reality of God's healing love.

Praying with others

There may be occasions when one or two of you from your church are invited to visit someone who is ill. You can use any of the above suggestions. A vital ingredient in most healing is relaxation and calm for all involved, while keeping your heart and mind focused on God. Prepare by asking yourselves what will help you to create a 'healing space' where the love of God can surround you all with peace.

Another way of praying in twos or threes is for two of you to pray silently for the third person – listening, waiting upon God for a few minutes without words. Any of you may find coming into your mind a text, a word, a picture, like a message from God. Offer the 'message' without any interpretation. Through this, God can open doors, sometimes even to old hurts and painful memories. As you speak and pray about them, commit the situation into God's hands. There can be much release, forgiveness and healing. Take turns to pray for one another and be prepared to be surprised by God.

Written by JENNY WILLIAMS

Author of Why Health Matters for Ministry
(available online; type these terms into a search engine
'Church of Scotland Why Health Matters')