

Faith Stealers

There is no doubt that God has the power to heal anyone at any time. The question is whether He chooses to do so through those who are called "faith healers." These individuals typically convince their audiences that God wants them to be well and that through their faith—and usually a financial offering—God will reward their faith by healing them through the power of Jesus.

Modern False Faith Healers include Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Peter Popoff, Todd White, Creflo Dollar, and what seems like hundreds of others. But we need to have the right attitude as we speak of these imposters.

A false teacher should not just be put on our hate list. They should be up front on our prayer list. We can protect ourselves from these false teachers while disagreeing with them in a God-honoring way.

Televangelist faith healers have spread across late night television stations like gangrene, claiming to heal the sick and hurting. Most have been easily exposed.

Peter Popoff was caught using a radio device to simulate the gift of knowledge and they spotted something in his ear. They put a radio scanner to pick up the message. Elizabeth Popoff was saying, "Hello, Petey. I love you. I'm talking to you. Can you hear me? She went on to describe names, tables, afflictions, etc.

Healing those in wheelchairs? In order to heal people in wheelchairs, the faith-healer never picks people who have a personalized wheelchair. These are people who are actually handicapped. Instead, they always pick from those who have the same type of wheelchairs, which belong to the auditorium. That is, when elderly people come walking into the stadium, an usher will give them a wheelchair to sit in, but they aren't actually physically handicapped. Thus the faith-healer can spot such a wheelchair and pick a person who can already walk. Regarding one person who was "healed," said "The chair was supplied by an usher. I'd never been in a wheelchair before in my life."

Healing irregular legs? Faith-healers often heal subjects of irregular legs, by causing one to grow longer than the other. However, this is a slight of hand trick, where the magician pulls out a show to make one leg look longer than the other.

Benny Hinn tells people that only those who give will be healed. He brings in around \$400,000 per night or \$100 million per year. Benny Hinn's followers may not know about how all of their donations are spent. For example there's Hinn's palatial new home, now being built for \$3.5 million in an exclusive gated community overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The plans call for more than 6,000 square feet — 7 bedrooms, 8 bathrooms and a basement garage with enough

space for ten cars. Who's paying for that? Not pastor Benny. That mansion on the Pacific is considered the Hinn ministry's church residence or "parsonage," and the ministry is picking up all the expenses for land, construction, even property taxes.

We could spend hours on the exploits and financial scamming that Christians subject themselves to in the pursuit of healing. While these scammers rake in millions, those trusting them are allowing this charade to go on. Without gullible desperate people who don't know the Scriptures, faith healers have no one to heal. Remember that the money going to these imposters is coming from Christians. They are literally stealing money from the faithful that could be used for the gospel.

So called faith healers are tapping into something that is very real. They recognize that many who follow Jesus really do have faith in Him. Their faith has been put to the test by their illness and their cracking foundation has been exposed. Rather than trusting God for their healing their faith fails them and they turn to these false healers.

2 Timothy 4:1–5 (ESV) 1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Notice something that is often missed in this passage...This is not just about teaching the word is also about living it out. People will stop listening to the truth and they will wander away and stop living it. God has promised to heal each and every one of us. He has also promised....that in this world we will have trouble.....but look at the last verse....endure suffering. Why is that there? Endure suffering?

What makes believers seek other truths faster than anything else? When our lives become hard. When obstacles are in our way. As soon as things don't go our way....we tend to blame God...and seek our own answers. It is in suffering that you either glorify God or deny Him.

1 Peter 4:12–13 (ESV) 12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.

James 1:2–4 (ESV) 2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

So you know what they didn't say....Consider it joy when you meet trials of various kinds because God will bring a faith healer to you and if you pay enough money they can provide a quick fix to your illness.

The Psalmist never said "My hope comes from Benny Hinn who will be in Tampa next month....No...He knew...

Psalm 121:1–2 (ESV) 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? 2 My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

But we are in week 2 of our discussion about the Spiritual Gift of Healing. We have said that this gift is active today. God healed in the past and He heals today. But is this the way God heals? And remember that the purpose of all the Spiritual gifts is to advance the gospel message by validating it.

Faith Healers claim to heal because Jesus healed. So it is logical to assume that since the Spirit of God is doing the healing and since God never changes, then they would be healing in the same manner that Jesus did. In fact, when looking at the Spiritual Gift of Healing we should ask ourselves...is this the way Jesus did it?

By comparing the healing ministry of the Lord Jesus to that of the modern faith healers, we can determine whether their claims have any basis in Scripture. If, as they say, they heal through the same power and in the same way that Jesus healed, we should be able to see marked similarities between them.

Mark 1:29–34 (ESV) 29 And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. 31 And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. 32 That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Mark 1:29-34 gives us a description of just one day of Jesus' healing ministry. His power to heal—and to do all kinds of miracles—was evidence that He had power over both the physical and spiritual effects of the curse of sin. He healed those afflicted with physical diseases, illnesses, and injuries, even raising the dead, and He cast demons out of those who were possessed by them. Only God can rescue us from the results of the Fall of man into sin—disease and death—and by His miracles, Jesus proved His deity.

There are several things to note about Jesus' Healings. Knowing these help us dismiss false healers quickly.

First, Jesus healed instantly. Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:31), the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:13), Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:41-42), and the paralytic (Luke 5:24-25) were

all healed immediately. They did not have to go home and wait to get better, as is the advice from many faith healers who claim that you need to go home and give more because what you sow you reap.

Second, Jesus healed totally. Peter's mother-in-law was fully functional after being healed from an illness so severe she was bedridden. When Jesus healed her, she rose immediately and prepared a meal for all who were in the house. The blind beggars in Matthew 20:34 were given instant sight. The paralytic man through the roof immediately and powerfully got up and walked out.

Third, Jesus healed everyone that the Father told Him to heal. They were not required to be pre-screened by the disciples before coming to Jesus for healing, as is the standard procedure with the healers today. There was no healing line they had to qualify for. Jesus healed all the time in many places, not in a studio with carefully-controlled circumstances. There were days when Jesus literally healed everyone and there were days when Jesus healed only one of everyone...and there were days when Jesus healed no one.

Fourth, Jesus healed actual organic diseases, that had visible obvious demonstrable manifestations. Illnesses everyone could see and examine. Jesus to our knowledge never healed anyone of a headache, or allergies, or back pain, or subjective symptoms that could not be validated. . He healed leprosy, blindness, and paralysis, always miracles that were truly verifiable. Finally, Jesus healed the ultimate disease—death. He brought forth Lazarus after four days in the grave. No faith healer can duplicate that. In addition, His healings did not require faith as a precondition. In fact, most of those He healed were unbelievers.

Fifth, Jesus never placed the condition of faith on healing. While those who had faith he commended for their faith and said it has helped them get well....there are many who had no faith....didn't believe in Jesus and didn't even know who He was....

Finally, there is no evidence in Scripture of Jesus receiving anything other than praise for healing anyone. He didn't take up an offering, didn't sell Holy Water, didn't sell Jesus napkins. In fact, He typically healed those who could offer nothing in return except praise and worship.

When Jesus healed, we find not charismatic jumping around, emotionalism, no speaking in tongues, no rants and ravings, no fits and trances, and no emotional sermons beforehand. In fact, when Jesus healed someone there was no big scene, it was quite informal. The one who was sick might touch Jesus, or Jesus might touch him, but there was no shaking him or smacking him in the forehead. At times, Jesus just lovingly spoke to the person, and they were healed

When Jesus healed physical illness, the cure was not by mental factors of mind and body. On one Sabbath, Jesus entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. Jesus said him, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was restored. Psychosomatic healing cannot cure a withered hand. Certainly, there is no psychosomatic healing when raising the dead, which Jesus did with Lazarus, who had been dead for four days. (Matt. 4:23; Luke 6:6-11; 8:49-56) There was not one person who simply made small improvements in their healing; Jesus fully healed every disease and every affliction. We never hear of words like "disappointment" or "deception" in connection with Jesus' healings. Even Jesus' enemies, the Jewish religious leaders complained, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs." (John 11:47-48) Do we notice the differences?

It was obvious to everyone that when Jesus healed people....He completely, fully and instantly healed them. No one could argue the outcome. The paralytic were dancing, the blind were examining everything, the deaf heard music, and the demon possessed were completely at peace and calm.

Why, if faith healers have the power to heal, do they not walk the halls of the hospitals healing everyone and releasing them all? Why do they not go to clinics and cure all the AIDS patients? They do not because they cannot. They do not have the power of healing that Jesus possessed.

His power to heal—and to do all kinds of miracles—was evidence that He had power over both the physical and spiritual effects of the curse of sin. He healed those afflicted with physical diseases, illnesses, and injuries, even raising the dead, and He cast demons out of those who were possessed by them. Only God can rescue us from the results of the Fall of man into sin—disease and death—and by His miracles, Jesus proved His deity.

By His miracles...Jesus proved His Deity. In other words, if you claim to be God you better be able to do the things God does. That is what Jesus did...He spoke His creation to be calm, He healed diseases that had been present since birth....and He raised the dead to life.

The healings and other miracles served as a sign. The Jewish people had been God's chosen people for 1,500-years, and now God was choosing another way for humankind to approach him, i.e., Christianity. Thus, the healings and other miracles were a sign that Christianity was now the Way and the Truth. The apostle Paul wrote,[1]

Hebrews 2:3-4 English Standard Version (ESV) 3 How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

What is critical to remember is that the First Church was focused on proving Jesus was God. He claimed to be God. If He was not it was blasphemy punishable by immediate death....They wanted to know....Are you God? Are You the Messiah? The primary focus of first-century Christianity was not miracles but the bearing witness to Jesus Christ.

We focus today on Did Jesus really heal a blind man, really calm a storm and really raise a man from the dead? They didn't ask those questions because the answer was obvious. The storm was....calm.....The dead man...was eating dinner.

What they asked was does this prove that He is God?

This is why Christianity grew from five hundred disciples in 33 AD to over one million by 125 AD, less that one hundred years later. The miracles simply were the evident demonstration to the Jews that God had chosen another course of drawing close to him. Thus many believe that after the Christian congregation was well grounded in the first-century, the healing public gift of the Spirit was no longer needed.

Matthew 7:21-23 Updated American Standard Version (UASV) 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.'

I have said that I believe that God heals people miraculously today through the Gift of Healing by the Holy Spirit. He does so to advance the gospel. He does so, In my opinion, in the same manner that He has always done so. He didn't rent a cathedral, didn't hold a synagogue healing service, and He didn't make the healing the focus of His message. He never promoted Himself as the healer and never took credit for healing. Usually He told the healed person to be quiet about who healed him.

False healers are really easy to spot....This is low level spiritual fruit stuff. Let me give you some of their lies that even further help identify them.

Myth #1 You are Healed by Your Faith

We are not healed by our faith, we are healed by our faith IN JESUS

Healers will often say that your faith alone is something that you need to stir up inside. Here we have a fact mixed with myth. It is not what we believe, but in whom we believe. Those that teach faith healing teach you to believe in your faith. They say things like "if you believe" or "if you claim it" or "if you live in it." It is always based on what you do and the faith that you have in yourself....and not on whom

you believe in. So it is just "I believe" I can be healed...not "I believe in Jesus. Confidence in our faith is just another way of having confidence in ourselves. It is based on us and not based on our relationship with Jesus.

Romans 10:17 (ESV) 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Now many people read this and assume that when it talks of the word of God it is talking about the Bible. However, they forget that when this passage was written, the N.T. was not completed yet nor was the printing press invented. Most of the population was illiterate and could not read nor was the Bible available for them to read even if they could learn. It was hand copied and kept in synagogues and libraries and not open for just anyone to get ahold of.

What the Apostle Paul was talking about was Jesus. John called Jesus the word of God in John 1. So faith comes by hearing. Hearing what? The voice of God, or Jesus. So faith comes at the initiation of God. We don't must up faith on our own. It is given to us as we abide in Christ and hear His voice. Faith does not heal us, on God does. Believing that your faith heals you puts you in control of your destiny, not God.

Myth #2 If You Stand Fast In Your Faith You Will Be Healed In Time

Once again they substitute faith or healing for Jesus. They use the passage in Hebrews 10:23 to justify this belief. Let's take a look at this passage in context.

Hebrews 10:19–23 (ESV) 19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

This passage is not talking about holding fast to our faith, but instead is talking about having faith in the relationship we have been given with God Almighty. We are given the promise of a relationship. The promise that we can come to God with our needs. The promise that we are welcome to draw near to God. It is not about holding fast to our faith or being healed by faith. It is talking about holding fast to God himself!

So our faith is in our relationship with Jesus. That we are ok whether we are physically healed or not.

It is more than believing in your heart that God heals. The truth is that God is the God who heals. Faith is trusting the God who heals. Faith is radical, absolute

surrender to the God who heals. Faith is not holding on for your healing but holding on to the God who can heal you.. If your trust is in God who heals, then when He heals you is secondary to belonging to the Healer. In other words you care more about your relationship with the healer than you do being healed.

Myth #3 Confession Brings Healing

They base this on misunderstanding the Scriptural Role of Elders in the Church.

James 5:14–16 (ESV) 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

This passage is addressing the Spiritual healing that comes from confession of sin. Not necessarily a physical healing. There are times when we are sick physically and times that we are sick Spiritually.

I see people all the time going through trials- the context of James' book- and their faith starts to waiver. They begin to doubt God and start considering walking away from the faith or choosing to go against God's desires. Remember this text comes on the back end of James teaching about persevering during trials so that we can be complete and lack nothing.

Some get in trials and begin to waver in their perseverance. Their faith begins to fade...They are spiritually exhausted. James is telling us that when that happens....we are to go to the Elders of the Church....Why? So that their faith can cover us and build us up.

15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Note it is the prayer of the Elders that covers the one who is fading. With the strength of the faith of the elders this person can be raised up in faith. In a sense, the elders are giving the one fading a transfusion of faith to get them through the trials.

Then notice a very key word...IF....If he has committed sins....he will be forgiven. IF? If he has committed sins...if he hasn't what is he confessing?

This passage does not say that if you are sick you must have committed sins and you will never be healed until you confess them to the elders....No.

The confession is that our faith is wavering....and we need the help of the elders.
We are confessing that we are spiritually anemic.

If during this time of struggle we have chosen to sin....those sins will be forgiven
when we confess them just like every other sin we confess.

Confessing your sins....particularly to another person...does not bring healing.
Healing comes from God. Spiritual encouragement and strength can cover you
during times of doubt but note that God not the Elders lift you up.

There are many other myths about healing that we could cover....but the answer is
always the same.

The Spiritual Gift of Healing comes from God and God alone. He sometimes uses us
to be the ministers to others during times of physical and spiritual healing.

This gift, like all the others, flows from God, through us, to others in order to
advance the gospel. We don't own it...can't make it happen...and can't claim to be
the gift.

I have experienced the gift of healing....

Pregnant Woman in our Church

My Struggle with possible ALS Symptoms

My Sisters healing of crippling back issues.

I believe that God heals today. But not through the charlatans that call themselves
faith healers.

If I truly believed that I could heal people you would never get me out of the
hospital and out of the pediatric oncology floors. Right now I would be releasing
people from their dependence upon ventilators.

We don't choose who gets healed...We don't determine if someone gets
healed....We don't do anything to deserve to be healed....We will all get healed
when God determines it is best and for almost all of us it will be on the other side
of eternity...not during this life on earth.

Please don't buy the lie that you healing or lack thereof is in any way based on you
earning it through you modicum of faith.

How do faith-healers get away with this?

First, faith-healers "blame the victim." People are told that any failure of the healing magic is due to lack of their faith. They, not Jesus or the healer, must take the blame."^[13] The faith healer is never incompetent or a fraud. Instead, they blame the sick person for having a lack of faith.

Even in NT times, miracle workers weren't always able to heal. For instance, even the great apostle Paul writes, "Trophimus I left sick at Miletus" (2 Tim. 4:20). He couldn't heal Timothy's "frequent ailments" (1 Tim. 5:23) or sickly Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25). Even Jesus was not always able to perform miracles in Nazareth (Mk. 6:5; Mt. 13:58). This does not mean that faith fills Jesus with power. Instead, Jesus wasn't able to heal in these places because he knew that more miraculous activity would only damage their already hardened hearts and their stubborn lack of faith.

Second, the first amendment has led to corruption in religious circles. Because of the first amendment to the U. S. Constitution (that the government will not pass laws involving religion) American churches are free from normal requirements for disclosure like those applying to businesses. Churches can keep their books secret, and even the government cannot audit them if they refuse. Unfortunately, this well-intentioned law has resulted in the church being the most unaccountable institution in America. Churches have become the perfect venue for criminals and con men to ply their trade while remaining unaccountable and even remaining tax exempt! Paul's standard—being able and ready to prove where the money goes—is long forgotten in many modern churches.^[14]

The amounts of money asked for and received by religious figures are enormous. Moreover, it is banked tax-free. The IRS has declared that all such money—except for the preacher's declared personal income—is exempt from taxes... Churches do not even have to apply for recognition of their exemption.^[15]

Third, Christian leaders often lack the discernment or the courage to expose false teaching. Truthfully, often the question comes up after the person asking has already decided this faith healer is legit. They simply don't listen to wise counsel.

Should we expect to see healings today?

Yes and no. We believe that God still heals people miraculously, and sometimes, this happens through people with this particular gift. However, we should consider a number of observations with regards to biblical healings and modern faith healers:

First, generating false miracles doesn't help the cause of Christ. Clearly, the overwhelming majority of faith healers are using magician's tricks or manipulation to create fraudulent miracles. Paul warned us about men who were false magicians, turning people away from the truth (2 Tim. 3:8-9).

What is hard to understand is that Secular people, people who don't believe in Jesus, see these healers as charlatan and fakes. It is obvious to them. And yet those who have the Holy Spirit....who should have discernment.....are falling for this stuff all the time.

Second, miracles are infrequent in the Bible. We often think miracles are frequent in Scripture, but that's because these are all in the same book. We turn a page, and another miracle occurs. But in the narrative, hundreds of years may have passed in between miraculous events!

For instance, Israel wallowed in slavery for 400 years without seeing any miracles. Moreover, Sarah gave birth to Isaac at an incredibly old age (which was an incredible miracle), but Abraham and Sarah had to wait a very long time to get the promise of Isaac (30 years). Even a powerful prophet like John the Baptist didn't perform any miracles (Jn. 10:41).

While the book of Acts contains many miracles, we need to remember that these events are the highlights of 30 years of ministry.

Third, sometimes miracles can distract us from God's message. For instance, followers of Christ sometimes pursued him just to get a free lunch, rather than caring about him or his message. While God will validate himself through miracles (e.g. burning bush, prophecy, miracles of Jesus), he is also careful not to distract us from Himself with miraculous acts. Many believers become so obsessed with witnessing miracles that this will dominate their relationship with God.

Fourth, God does heal people miraculously when he sees fit.

Fifth, Paul outlines a proper view toward these charismatic gifts. In 1 Thessalonians 5:19, he writes, "Do not quench the Spirit." If God is moving powerfully in healing miracles, we should be glad and thankful about this (v.18)! It isn't our role as believers to be overly skeptical about miraculous activity. However, in the immediate context, Paul writes, "But examine everything carefully" (v.21). In other words, while we should welcome miraculous acts of God, we should also be discerning about alleged miracles, too. As Christians, we should be the first to identify false faith healers.

God still works miraculously today, and as believers, we should welcome the miraculous acts of God. But modern faith healers have exploited both the Bible's teaching on miracles and those who have come to them for healing and hope. We must reject them and protect the name of Christ. Lets review some truths of biblical healing.

1. Healing comes from God. No Scripture condemns the legitimate use of doctors or medical science, but one of the names of God is Jehovah-Rapha meaning "the Lord who heals." The Father has the power to heal the whole person. Spiritually, Physically,

Emotionally, and Mentally. Jesus healed every disease and sickness among the people in Galilee and everywhere He went in order to authenticate the Gospel and His Messiahship.

2. The gift of healing is biblical. The Holy Spirit gives gifts to the Church (1 Corinthians 12:8-11), like the gift of healing (1 Corinthians 14:1). God knows best and He distributes the gift of healing according to His will (Hebrews 2:4). Besides honoring God and glorifying Jesus, healing is also for the common good of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:7). Healings are also a strong sign the reign of death will one day come to end. Jesus healed while proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23) and gave His disciples and others power and authority to heal diseases as they also proclaimed the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2; 10:1-9).

3. God may say 'no.' Christians are not promised good health. In the Old Testament, when Moses cried out to God to heal Miriam's leprosy, the Lord did not heal her immediately (Numbers 12:1-15). Ahaziah was refused healing because he consulted with a pagan deity (2 Kings 1:1-17a). In the New Testament, Paul left Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20b), had to deal with his own continuing affliction (2 Corinthians 12:7-9), and counseled Timothy to "drink a little wine" to help with ongoing ailments (1 Timothy 5:23). God doesn't give bad things to His children. But as a loving Father, He may say "no" to healing and instead use afflictions and suffering to allow us to bring glory to Him.

4. Christians can hinder their healing. Christians can hinder their own healing in at least five ways.

1. Christians may have unconfessed sin. Confession is important preparation to healing. We must take care with this, however. Some believe all sick people are guilty of secret sins. That idea discounts Scriptures like John 9:1-3 where Jesus made it clear neither a blind man's nor his parents' sin caused his blindness. But if we want God to heal us and we know we have unconfessed sin...we need to confess whether healing comes or not.

2. Christians may neglect healing by failing to ask for it. After stepping over many who desperately wanted to be healed.... Jesus looked into the heart of a lame man and asked, "Do you want to get well?" A strange question for a man who had been lame for 38 years! Maybe Jesus saw he was reluctant because he was addicted to the attention and charity he received. Perhaps his lameness became entwined with his identity. Sometimes the Lord wants to heal us, but we haven't bothered to ask him!

3. Christians may fail to surrender to God's purposes. We need to be on God's agenda not our own. As we pray for healing, we need to be surrendering for His plans for our future. We pray until we have peace. Healed or not.

4. Christians may hinder healing through lack of faith. If you are a follower of Jesus and you doubt that He can heal you, then your faith becomes an obstacle to

healing. It is not about the healing....but rather your relationship with the One who heals.

5. Christians may come to God with timid prayers. Christians need to pray with confidence, trusting God's goodness and grace (Matthew 7:11), and pray with conviction that God will reward those who pursue Him (Hebrews 11:6). This is not name it claim it but it is an understanding of our relationship with Him. We are His children and if healing fits into His plan we should expect to receive it.

We need to get honest with God and ask ourselves some questions: Do I truly believe that God can heal me? Do I truly believe that God's loves me if He doesn't heal me? Is my love for God conditional- will I love Him the same if healing never comes? Am I concerned that others will think I lack faith or have sinned if I pray and God does not heal me.? Am I more concerned about God's agenda or my own? Have I thanked God for the healing that I have already received through Christ? Can I from my heart truly say like Jesus... Not my will but Your will be done.

6. Both healing and suffering can serve a higher purpose. God may use physical suffering for a higher purpose than we understand (Isaiah 55:8-9). God sometimes heals to bring glory to Himself and encourage others to put their faith in the Savior. We see this with the death of Lazarus and Jesus raising him back to life (John 11:1-45). Other times, healing does not come. But even with impending death, there can be a higher purpose. A dying believer can point the living toward the Father and His message of hope in Christ.

7. Ultimate healing awaits in heaven. For the believer, death brings ultimate healing—no more death, sorrow or pain forever (Revelation 21:4). To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). Believers can hate sickness and disease—just as God does—while longing for that day when they'll be safe in heaven from the ravages of pain and all disease.

""He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

So the Spiritual Gift of Healing is like every other gift. It is from God....it is God working through us...and it is completely under His control, His discretion, His authority and His desire. He is not a genie and we cannot rub a lamp.

Jesus healed people because He had compassion on them. He healed them because He loved them. He healed them because He showed them mercy. He healed them because He was full of grace. Those things have never changed. But at the same time, while he had compassion, love, mercy and grace for all....He didn't heal all.

Jesus likely stepped over dozens of people to heal the one lame person at the Pool of Bethesda. Why? Because on that day that was what the Father had ordained.

We will spend a lot of time in our lives praying for the healing of those we love and that includes for each other. God will decide if healing fits into His plan or not. Most of us will have to wrestle with a NO answer. Miracles are rare. But we get to a point where we are ok with that. Because God has already healed us.

We were born in sin. Spiritually dead.....doomed to Hell. We needed a miracle and though Jesus and our faith in Him we have received it. We don't need God to do anything else. His grace is sufficient for us.

When you and I truly embrace what God has already done for us. Physical healing is not the measure of His love. If He heals us we are good and if He doesn't we are just as good.

But decide once and for all right now that your healing will come from God and God alone. Not a doctor, not a famous hospital, not a wonder drug, and not from any other source on this earth.

Your faith...your hope....your trust...are in Christ and Christ Alone. Never depend upon man to heal you. Your miracle is only yours to request and God's to give. Let's Pray.