



Talk 14 – Does God Heal Today?

Duration 43 Minutes
HTB Transcripts

Key:

Personal Story / Testimony that Nicky Gumbel tells in the classic Alpha talk. These may be replaced with a live speaker's personal story or the speaker may tell the story about Nicky in the same way Nicky tells stories about others.

Story that Nicky tells about someone else (about a friend or a story he heard or read about).

Quotes are key to the talk to emphasise a point and to enable guests to engage and relate to a point made. There is now a way that people can seek permission to omit or replace quotes used in the original talks. A quote should be replaced with something equally effective to maintain the balance of teaching, story, and references to other information sources.

Key Quotes will need approval to change (these will be identified by a comment in the left column). Please email publications@alpha.org with your request.

Key Bible Passages are identified and you may wish to display these visually for your guests.

Red type identifies a part of the key teaching text that may be removed or altered for contextualisation.

Text left untouched is the standard key message content of the Alpha talk.

NOTE: Key elements of this script are: personal stories, humour and reference to media / popular culture to draw the guests in to engage with the talk.

Parts of the talk may need to be contextualised for other contexts or cultures but make sure you maintain the key elements of humour and personal testimony. Notice how quotes, and stories are used throughout to add emphasis to the main points of the talk (theology and testimony).

NOTE: The strength of this talk is the use of personal testimony and stories to illustrate biblical/theological points. You may tell stories about Nicky (in the same way he tells stories about others) or you may think of your own effective examples of healing testimony.

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[Try to replace this with your own story of when you first experienced a healing miracle. Try to talk about any challenges you faced as well as the realisation that God does heal. Try also to lead effectively in to looking at what the Bible says about healing.]

Back in 1982 a man called John Wimber came to speak at our church. John Wimber was the pastor of the Vineyard Church in America. And at the time back then, I was a lay member of the congregation, I was practising as a barrister. And I have to say, when I saw John Wimber I was deeply cynical about him — for a number of reasons: partly because of how he looked, and partly because he was an American. Now, as you know, I love the Americans and have since repented of this appalling attitude that I had at the time! And as you know, we've learnt a huge amount from them, and are deeply grateful to them. But at the time I was deeply suspicious.

He came and he spoke here on the Sunday night on the whole subject of the Holy Spirit and healing, and wonderful things happened. But I still left deeply cynical. The next night he came to speak in the Spring — down there, the room down there — to about seventy leaders in the church. And again I arrived very, very cynical. And he spoke on the subject of healing. And I'd heard talks before on healing, and that was fine. But then he said at the end of the talk, 'Now we're going to have a coffee-break, and when we come back from coffee we're going to do healing.'

Well, we had never 'done' healing before. And so we had a very long coffee-break. Everyone was having more cups of coffee, and third cups of coffee. And then we came back in, and the people who'd been at the front felt it would be selfish to keep those seats! And so they moved up to the back!

And then he said that his team had been praying and that they'd had a number of words of knowledge. And he defined words of knowledge like this: 'a supernatural revelation of facts about a person or situation which is not learnt by the efforts of the natural mind but is made known by the Spirit of God. This may be in the form of a picture, a word seen or heard in the mind, or a feeling experienced physically'.

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So he said that his team had had a number of these words of knowledge. And then he gave them out. There was no faith in that room, no expectation at that moment of anything — except a slight hope that he might fall flat on his face!

Well, he then went back through the list and he said, 'Well, the first person', if I remember rightly, it was a man who'd injured his back aged fourteen chopping wood. And to my amazement this guy got up and walked down and said that was him. And they prayed for him.

Then there was another one, and then there was one again about a back problem, which Jeremy Jennings, who is the Pastoral Director on the staff here, he got up and he came forward. And that night he received healing for his back. And as they went through this list, and one after another after another came down and were prayed for, you could feel the level of faith in the room rising.

There was one word of knowledge which was not responded to, and that was that there was a word that there was a young woman there who was barren. Well, we're British — we don't even talk about that, let alone come forward in response to a word like that! So he waited.

And eventually a friend of mine called Sarah Wright — we had no idea that she had been trying for children for some time and that they had been unable to conceive and they were having various tests. And she came forward, and he said, 'What's your name?' and she said 'Sarah' — now, of course, there's good precedent in the Bible for being called Sarah and being barren! And so he prayed for her. And nine months later, she gave birth to a little baby boy! Although conception, I hasten to add, didn't take place in the Spring!

The extraordinary thing is, although there was so much going on that night, and people I knew being healed — of course, I know now that they were healed; I didn't know then; it only looked as if they'd been healed — I still left that night deeply cynical.

The following evening he was speaking over in Church House to anyone who was in a small group in the church. We were a much smaller church at that stage — there were about 250 people — and we were crammed into Church House. I had been in court that

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day, practising as a barrister. I was wearing a three-piece pinstripe suit, stiff white collar, looking very pompous, and I was late, Pippa and I were late. And you know how it is in the Anglican Church — we fill up from the back. First people to arrive take the back seats. And so the only seats left when we arrived were the front two seats. So Pippa and I went and sat right in the front.

Again he spoke on the subject of Spirit and on healing, and again he said that his team had had various words of knowledge. And again he gave out some of these words of knowledge, and people started to stand up all around the room. Then he said, 'There are ten people here who have athlete's foot.' Now, I happened to have athlete's foot — but I was not going to stand up! Nine people stood.

And I was sitting next to my wife Pippa, and she was going like this: 'That's you!' and I'm saying, 'No, no, no, I'm fine.' But eventually the pain in my ribs became so intense that I decided it'd be less painful if I did stand up. So I stood. And this very nice American on the ministry team, he came over and he said, 'Would you like me to pray for your athlete's foot?' So I said, 'No, thank you very much indeed.' I said, 'I'm perfectly happy having athlete's foot.' I said, 'In fact, I find it very satisfying being able to scratch it when it itches.'

So he was extraordinarily gracious, because he said, 'Well, is there anything we could pray for?' So I said, 'Well, what I would really love to pray for is the power of the Holy Spirit in my life.' So he said, 'Okay, we'll pray for that.' And he started to pray.

All I can say is that after about thirty seconds I experienced the power of God in a way that I had never experienced before in my life. I know this is not true for everybody, but for me there was a physical manifestation. It was like ten thousand volts of electricity going through my body.

In fact, it was so intense, I really couldn't take it any more. But this American, I think he'd only just joined the ministry team, because he only had one prayer that he prayed, and his prayer was 'More power, Lord!' And every time he prayed this prayer, the power increased.


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So eventually I didn't know what to do. I thought the only thing I could do was pray against him! So I started praying, 'No more power, Lord!' But because he only had this one prayer, he carried on: 'More power!' And eventually there was a kind of shouting match going on between him and me, right in the centre. By this stage everybody else in Church House had stopped praying and was watching what was happening right here!

I think John Wimber must have had difficult people in his meetings before, because he said, 'Oh, take that one out!' So they carried me out through the French windows of Church House. And as I was being carried out, John Wimber said this: he said, 'God is giving that man the ability to tell people about Jesus.' And although it was never something I was very good at, it was something I really longed for.

And so that night when I got home, I started to reread the Bible, to see what it says on this whole subject of healing and the kingdom of God.

Of course, God heals with the cooperation of doctors and nurses and the medical profession. But the more I've looked, the more convinced I am that we should expect that God will also heal miraculously today.



Talk Point 1

HEALING IN THE BIBLE

And what I saw, as I looked at healing in the Bible, that as you look at the Old Testament, God promises healing for his people. It's his character to heal. He says, 'I am the LORD who heals you' — as part of his love for us. And there are several examples of miraculous healing in the Old Testament — for example, Naaman.

But if God acted like that in the Old Testament, when there were only glimpses of the kingdom of God and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we can confidently expect that he will do so even more now that Jesus has inaugurated the kingdom of God, and the fact that we live now in the age of the Spirit.

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So when you come to the New Testament, we find the very first recorded words of Jesus in Mark's Gospel are this. Would you like to turn to Mark chapter 1, verse 15? Jesus said this:

'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'

The kingdom of God — that expression, or 'the kingdom of heaven', which Matthew uses interchangeably with 'kingdom of God'; it means exactly the same thing — that is used 82 times in the first three Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke.

The word 'kingdom' means not only a political or geographical realm, but carries this notion of ruling and reigning. So the kingdom of God is the rule and the reign of God. And this kingdom — and this is a little bit complex, and a lot of theological books have been written on this subject — but basically this kingdom is both now and not yet.

[You may choose to use this illustration or you may use your own explanation. This refers to the chart visual in the Alpha Guide or The Alpha DVD.]

And there are a couple of diagrams just to try and make it a little bit easier to understand.

CHART 1 THIS AGE
AGE TO COME

CHART 2 AGE TO COME
1st coming
2nd coming
THIS AGE

Comment [sd1]: Is there a specific style for this? Please do amend

The Jewish expectation — if you just look at the top diagram for the moment — the Jewish expectation was that this age that we are living in would come to an end and that would be followed by the age to come. The age to come would be when the messianic king arrived and there would be a completed kingdom. And you'll see there the orange line is for this

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age, and the green line is the age to come.

That was the Jewish expectation. Jesus' teaching was a modification of this. What Jesus was saying, in a nutshell, was that this age would not come to an end with his arrival. So the first line there, the blue line, is the first coming of Jesus. When Jesus came he inaugurated the kingdom, so the age to come started — that's the green line — that they were expecting. It started, but the previous age, this age, continues — until the second coming of Jesus. Then the kingdom of God will be complete.

But in the meantime we live in this period between the times, when the kingdom has come but it is not yet complete. So we live between the first coming and the second coming — at a time when it's both this age and the age to come.

The first time Jesus came, he came in weakness. When he comes back, he'll come with power and great glory. History is moving towards this glorious climax. There are 300 references in the New Testament to the second coming of Christ.

When Jesus returns, it's going to be obvious to everyone. History as we know it will end. There will be a universal resurrection and a day of judgment. There'll be a new heaven and a new earth. Jesus himself will be there, together with all those who love and obey him. It'll be a place of intense happiness which goes on forever. And we will have glorious new resurrection bodies that will never die, there'll be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. All who believe on that day will be totally healed.

But until then, there's this element of waiting. As Paul puts it in Romans, he says: 'We groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies.' In other words, the total redemption of our bodies has to wait for that second line, the second coming of Christ.

And it's important to keep this eternal perspective as we look at this subject of healing. Because at this present time not everybody is healed.

[Try to replace this story with your own examples of a person who did not get healed.]

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I think of a very good friend of mine called Patrick Pearson-Miles. Patrick Pearson-Miles often gives this talk on Alpha. Patrick himself has not been healed — he has total kidney failure. He's been on dialysis for must be about fifteen years now. And he's a remarkably brave man, but he's also a man of great faith. And he has prayed, and we have prayed — we have prayed for him over and over again. And he's not been healed.

But he was really helped by a conversation that he had with John Wimber, who himself has died. And John said to him, 'You know, the real gift is the gift of salvation, eternal life, all the things that Jesus gives. And if we're healed in this life, that, if you like, is a bonus.'

So there's this future aspect, but at the present time, what Jesus was saying is the kingdom of God is now, it's here. And what we see are signs of the approaching kingdom. He says: 'The kingdom of God is among you.' The kingdom is something which can be discovered and experienced now!

And throughout the Gospels we see that Jesus saw his ministry as a fulfilment of the promises of the Old Testament. And he went on to demonstrate this present reality of the kingdom by all that he did during his ministry — forgiveness of sins, healing the sick, dealing with evil.

So we live between the times, when the completed kingdom has not yet arrived, but the kingdom of God is near, as Jesus puts it. This age goes on, but the powers of the future age have broken into history. Now, that is what the theologians call an 'eschatological in-breaking' — so there!

It's an eschatological in-breaking. Now, what does that mean? It means: the *eschaton* is the end — that's the second coming of Jesus, the age to come — has broken into history, and therefore we get a foretaste of it.

[Try to replace this with your own example.]

Let me use an analogy. Today is a heatwave: glorious summer in England — that in itself is a miracle, I suppose! But we are in the middle of this heatwave. About three months ago — I think it was 19 March — we had freak weather for England. We had a day when it was

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70 degrees, fantastic sunshine, and it felt like summer had arrived — but it hadn't: a week later it was freezing cold, frosts at night. But that day was an 'eschatological in-breaking', if you like, of the summer. It was a foretaste. It let us know that summer was coming; it wasn't that far away.

And what Jesus' ministry shows is that this future kingdom is coming, it's near. And Jesus demonstrated that by preaching the good news, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons. Do you know, over 25 per cent of the Gospels is about the healings of Jesus. Jesus didn't heal everybody in Judea, but we often read of him healing individuals or groups. It was part of his kingdom activity.

Would you like to turn to Matthew chapter 4, verse 23?

'Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom' — kingdom was absolutely the central theme in the teaching of Jesus — 'preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.'

So, Matthew tells us, that is what Jesus did. Then he sets out how he did that. So chapters 5, 6 and 7 is the Sermon on the Mount — how Jesus taught. Then he tells us how Jesus healed — chapters 8 and 9 are nine healing miracles. And then chapter 9, verse 35 is almost identical to Matthew 4:23:

'Jesus went through all the town and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.'

That is a grammatical device known as an *inclusio*: that's to say, Matthew uses the same verse at the beginning as at the end. They didn't have punctuation in those days, so it was a way of saying 'I have finished that section.' So he says, 'This is what Jesus did in his ministry: he told people the good news, and he healed the sick.'

Then having finished that section, Matthew says, 'Now, this is what Jesus told his disciples to do' — Matthew 10, verse 1:

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'He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.'

And verse 7, he says:

'As you go, preach this message: "The kingdom of heaven is near." Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons.'

So Jesus did it, he commanded his disciples to do it. Not just the twelve disciples, but — if you'd like to turn over a few more pages to Luke chapter 9. Luke chapter 9, verse 1:

'When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.'

Luke chapter 10, verse 1 — it wasn't just the Twelve:

'After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.'

And verse 9 — this was his command to them:

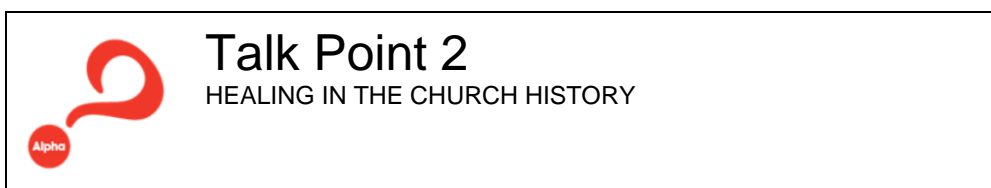
'Heal the sick who are there and tell them, "The kingdom of God is near you."

So that is what Jesus did, that is what he commanded his disciples to do, and then at the end of the Gospels — for example, Matthew chapter 28, verse 19. So we've seen what Jesus did. We've seen what Jesus commanded his disciples to do. Then at the end of the Gospel he commissions them. And he commissions them with these words:

'Therefore go and make disciples of all nations' — that includes everybody here tonight — 'go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them' — that's you, if you become a disciple of Jesus — 'teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.' Now, what did he command them to do? Tell people the good news, and heal the sick.'

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And as you look on in the New Testament, that's what they did. After the Gospels you get the book of Acts. You know, I'm so stupid — it hadn't clicked: the book of Acts is called Acts! They didn't just talk about it; they did it. They preached the gospel and they healed the sick. So healing is one of the signs of the kingdom inaugurated by Jesus, which continues to this day. So we should expect God to heal miraculously today as part of his kingdom activity.



So that's healing in the Bible. Then as we look at church history, we see that healing was a normal part of the activity of the early church.

So, for example, we read in Irenaeus, who was writing in the second century, it says: 'Others still heal the sick by laying their hands on them, and they're made whole.'

Origen, who was born around 185 AD, says: 'The name of Jesus can take away diseases.'

St Augustine of Hippo, perhaps the greatest theologian of the first five centuries, he wrote a book called *The City of God*, and in that book he talks about it — he says: 'Even now miracles are wrought in the name of Christ.' And he just lists example after example after example of blind people being healed, all kinds of miracles. And many of them are in great detail. Christians in every age have continued to obey Jesus' command to heal the sick.


As time went on, it was mainly by setting up hospitals and other institutions to relieve suffering. This has been one of the great achievements of the church. But God is still healing people miraculously today.

Raniero Cantalamessa, who was the preacher to Pope John Paul II for about 24 years, writes this: 'Today we have two ways to face up to the problem of ill health: the way of

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human nature and the way of grace. By human nature, in this sense, encompasses science and technology and all our resources — in short, all that we have received from God in creation and all that we have developed from that by using our intelligence. But then there's this second way: grace, which indicates faith and the prayers by which, as God may will, we sometimes obtain healings in a way that goes beyond the scope of human resources.'

'Against disease and ill health,' he writes, 'a Christian cannot be satisfied to use only the facilities of nature — to set up hospitals or work alongside with the structures of the state to provide care and comfort. Christians have a very special power of their own, given to them by Christ. He gave them authority to cure every disease and every sickness. It would be an omission to fail to have recourse to this power and so fail to hold out hope, especially to those to whom science denies all hope.'



Talk Point 3

HEALING TODAY

[You may use this story or replace it with an equally moving testimony. If you use this story you may remove the text in red.]

I remember meeting here a woman called Jean Smith, who was in her sixties. She was from Cwmbran in Wales. And she arrived here one Alpha evening as a visitor, and she introduced herself to me. And she told me what had happened. She said 'Sixteen-and-a-half years ago', she said, 'I went blind.' She had an infection which had eaten away the retinas and mirrors behind the eyes, and apparently they cannot be replaced. So she had a white stick, and she had a guide-dog — I think the guide-dog's name was Tina. And she was in a lot of pain, actually.

And in her local church in Wales she went on Alpha. She went on a weekend, and during the weekend she experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in a way she'd not experienced before. And the amazing thing was that the pain that she had been in for all those years

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just went. And she was so thankful to God she went to church that night to give thanks to God. And it was a communion service, and the minister in her church said he would like to anoint her with oil as a sign of this healing that had taken place over the weekend. And he anointed her with oil.

And as she wiped away the oil, she looked up, and she could see the communion table in front of her. She went home that night, and she said it was amazing, because she had not seen her husband for sixteen-and-a-half years. She could not believe how white he had gone!

God is a God who heals. One day we shall have a new, perfect body. In this life we never reach perfection. But when God heals someone today like Jean, we get a glimpse of the future, when we will receive the redemption of our bodies. Of course, no human being can ultimately avoid death. Our bodies are decaying, and at some point it might be right to prepare a person for death rather than to pray for healing. Thank God for the hospice movement — the hospice movement, you know, gives dignity to the terminally ill and is another outworking of Jesus' commission to take care of the sick.

So we need to be sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. John Wimber used to say that. When we prayed for no one, no one was healed. Now we pray for lots of people, not everyone's healed, but some are.

And when we pray for someone, even if they're not healed, it's usually a blessing. Certainly it was a blessing for me — my athlete's foot wasn't healed at that moment, but I'm so glad they prayed for me.

Some, of course, are given very special gifts of healing — gifts of healing. But that doesn't mean that we should leave the praying to them, because Jesus' commission is to all of us. Just as the commission is to all of us to tell the good news, although some have a particular gift of being evangelists, so it is with healing.

So how in practice do we go about it? Of course, it's God who heals and not us. So there's no technique involved; we pray with love and simplicity. The model of Jesus was compassion. That was his motive for praying for people — he loved them. And simplicity:

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because it's not our prayer that heals people; it's the power of God, the name of Jesus.

And we have found that words of knowledge can be very helpful. It's one of the ways in which God speaks. This is not the way that it has to take place, but it's one very practical model which we use here and we're going to use here tonight. And that is that we pray — and we've been praying earlier this evening. Those people who are leading and helping have been praying that God would give them words of knowledge about people here tonight. Sometimes it comes through a picture, an image, maybe of a part of the body that God wants to heal. Sometimes it's a sympathy pain — that's to say, a pain that somebody feels in their body which they know is not theirs, but maybe God's speaking to them about something that he wants to do. Sometimes it's through just an impression, a word that is seen or heard in the ear. For example, some of them can be quite specific.

[You may choose to use this story or replace it with another story. You may amend the text in red to re-tell the story.]

On the last course, Philippa Pearson-Miles — I talked about Patrick with the kidney failure — his wife Philippa has this gift, a particular gift of receiving very specific words of knowledge. And because Patrick and Philippa were giving the talk on healing last term, she gave out some words of knowledge.

And one of the words of knowledge she gave out, she said she believed that there was someone here — she didn't know this naturally; she knew it through the Spirit of God speaking to her — she said she believed there was someone here who had a root canal problem. And then she was quite specific: she said, 'Your name is John, and you're aged about 42, and you work with vibrant colours. You were a rebellious teenager' — and she gave lots more details like that — his father had died, and various other details.

Well, there was a guy called John Falzen who was here. And he's actually 44 — he's about 42! He works with vibrant colours — he's a photographer. He had been a rebellious teenager and there'd been a lot of sort of unsettled relationship with his father, who had died. And he found it a great release to actually ask forgiveness for that. More than that: instantly the root canal problem — which he had: he'd had a root canal and he was getting

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a lot of pain and he was planning to go to the dentist to get it sorted out — but it was instantly healed, actually at the moment she gave out that word of knowledge.

But very often the words of knowledge are not as kind of specific as that; it can be quite general. Sometimes people get up here and just say, you know, something like ‘right knee’ or ‘left elbow’, and people think, ‘Oh, what is that! You know, anybody can do that! I can’t believe that’s going to have any impact.’

[You may tell this story about Nicky or you may replace it with your own testimony or a story about someone else.]

About four-and-a-half years ago I had a cartilage operation on my right knee. And a few months later I was starting to get pain again, it was swelling up, and I was having problems with it. On the equivalent evening of that course there was a word of knowledge for a right knee. And then someone else got up and had a word of knowledge about a right knee.

And then another person got up and had a word of knowledge about a right knee. And then another person got up — there were four words of knowledge about a right knee.

I did not respond to any of them, because — ‘Well, you know, it’s rather embarrassing, isn’t it! And it just seems rather insignificant — a knee, I mean, you know, why ... And anyway, I’m sure there are lots of people who have worse knees than my knee.’ So I didn’t respond to it.

Then we went down into the small group, and what we do is what we’ll do tonight, we say ‘Does anybody respond to any of those words of knowledge? Could we pray for you?’ And one or two people responded and we prayed for them. The leaders asked whether anybody else, and I didn’t respond, I didn’t say anything at all. I just kept quiet. I’m quite self-conscious and I don’t like being the centre of attention, so I didn’t say anything!

And then the leader said, ‘Well, let’s break up into small groups and pray.’ So there were just three of us. And one of the guests on the course, he looked at me and he said, ‘Did you respond to any of those words of knowledge?’ And I’m ashamed to say I was about to lie and say, ‘No, I didn’t!’ And then I thought, ‘I can’t lie!’ So I said, ‘Yes, I did, actually,’ and

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I told him what it was. So he said, 'Well, could we pray for your knee?' So I said, 'Well, okay!' and they prayed. And I've had no problem with it since then.

We have a very simple pattern for prayer. We say, 'What would you like to pray for?' Sometimes we may need to ask God if there's a root cause.

[You may use this example or find your own example of someone who was healed as a result of dealing with unforgiveness. Once the person forgave, they were healed.]

There was a woman called Sylvia, who's a member of our congregation — and I'm telling you this because I've had permission from these people to tell these stories — but she had lumbar backache. It was a form of arthritis, interfering with her sleep and movement.

And as she was being prayed for by a woman called Marian, Marian had the word 'forgiveness'. And after a struggle she realised there was somebody she needed to forgive, and she forgave that person. And she was able to drive her car all the way to Yorkshire and back that weekend without any pain. And it was almost totally healed.

Then she was praying later with someone called Milly, and she just felt she ought to write the person a letter telling them that she forgave them. As she posted the letter, she was totally healed.

How do we pray? There are various models in the New Testament. The usual is to pray in the name of Jesus, to ask the Holy Spirit to come, we normally lay hands on people, sometimes we anoint with oil. Then we ask the question, 'How are you feeling?' Some are healed; some are not. Some get better but are not totally healed. Jesus once prayed for a man who was blind, and he said, 'Do you see anything?' and the man said, 'I see people, but they look like trees walking around.' And Jesus prayed again a second time, and this time his eyes were opened and his sight was restored and he could see everything.

What next? After praying it's important to reassure people of God's love for them, regardless of whether they're healed or not, to give them the liberty to come back, to pray again. We avoid putting burdens on people.

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Again, I love what Raniero Cantalamessa says: 'We're free and able to ask the Holy Spirit at any time to heal us. But if the Spirit does not do it, there's no reason to think that's because we have no faith, or that God does not love us, or that God is punishing us.'

So we don't put burdens on people — we go on praying, and we try to ensure people's lives are rooted in the healing community of the church, where long-term healing takes place.

And it's important to persist in this area, not to get discouraged if you don't see immediate, dramatic results. **The reason I go on praying is not so much that we've seen masses of people healed; but because Jesus commanded us to do it. And that's why I would go on doing it even if nobody was healed.**

[Try to tell an inspiring story of find someone with an inspiring healing testimony to raise faith as you end the talk.]

There was a man called Lee Duckett, aged 25, atheist. Never been to church in his life. Telephone engineer. We used to have Mercury telephones in the church, and Lee Duckett came to mend the telephones in the church. He walked into the reception area and he noticed the receptionist, also 25 years of age and a very attractive young woman.

So as he was mending the telephones he was trying to think of a good chat-up line. His problem was this: here was somebody who worked in a church, and Lee Duckett had never been in a church before in his life. So he didn't know what an appropriate chat-up line was for someone who worked in a church. But as he was working on the telephones, he thought he'd come up with a good one. So he went up to her and he said, 'Excuse me, could you tell me a good Bible to buy?' And she said, 'Certainly I could recommend a Bible for you, but,' she said, 'you might like to come on Alpha which we run here.'

Well, he was willing to do anything! So he came on the course, and he said as an engineer he loved it — it kind of made sense, it followed a logical progression. He came on the weekend, and during the weekend he gave his life to Christ. He came to church for the first time in his life that Sunday night. There was a word of knowledge for a back problem, Lee

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Duckett went forward, he was prayed for — his back was miraculously, spontaneously healed by God.

Afterwards he wrote me a long letter — his entire life history! He talked about how he'd been into mediums, ouija boards, magic, and then he described what happened to him that night. He says: 'My life has completely changed. I now look at the world through different eyes. I feel love for everyone and an inner peace that I never imagined could exist. Now when I meet people, I want to tell them about Jesus. If only they knew Jesus like I am learning to know him.' That was Lee Duckett, a Mercury telephone engineer.

On the next course a woman came up to me and she handed me an even longer letter than Lee Duckett's letter! This was the most depressing letter I've ever read! It said her father was an alcoholic, she became an alcoholic, there was sexual abuse, drugs, truancy, harder drugs, domestic violence; she went to see a therapist — that didn't work; then a psychotherapist — that didn't work; so she went to a hypno-psychotherapist — that didn't work. And I was getting more and more depressed!

And then I came across this sentence: 'And then I got a telephone call from a man called Lee Duckett, who is a Mercury telephone engineer. He had found what I'd been searching for all these years. God has forgiven me because Jesus Christ removed all my sin when he suffered crucifixion and died for us all. The burden has gone from my shoulders and I'm filled with great hope, joy, excitement and love. And all I want to do is serve Christ in whatever form he chooses.' Now, she was one of seven people Lee Duckett brought on the next course. At the end of the course, at the Celebration Party, she introduced me to seven members of her family and friends who she had brought on the next course.

Two years ago Lee Duckett got married — not to the receptionist — but to the administrator Alpha! All that went back to a moment when God acted supernaturally in Lee Duckett's life. God is a God who healed in the past and still heals today.

May we pray.

Father, we thank you so much that you are a God who heals, and Lord, we pray tonight that once again you will come by your Spirit among us and heal people here. In Jesus'

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name, amen.



Talk 14 – Does God Heal Today?

Duration 43 Minutes
HTB Transcripts

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Prepared by:
Alpha International, HTB Brompton Road, London SW7 1JA.
Email: publications@alpha.org

Website: alpha.org

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