

## Understanding Biblical Healing

**Activity 1: Before reading on, or watching the video**, please take a couple of minutes to write in your own words a definition/description of healing?

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Here is my definition after many years of studying and pondering this topic:

Healing occurs through the integrating forces that restore, transform, sustain and nurture the whole person (body, mind, spirit) at each phase and in every dimension of life, and within relationships of the person to the creation, to other people, and to God. Christian healing is a lifelong process which occurs by the sovereign grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Our transformative growth toward wholeness (shalom) is made complete when we die and are restored to God for eternity (van Loon, 2004).

**Activity 2:** As you go through the video please pause the video at the beginning of each new word and look up the Bible verses relevant to that word and consider what the healing entailed. The Old Testament has three key words translated to, or informing the concept of biblical healing. [NB The following work is based on the book by Rev. Dr Harold Taylor, Taylor H, 2007, *Sent to Heal. A handbook on Christian healing*. Roseville, MN: Speedwell Press (You can purchase the book online from Order of ST Luke in Australia, I highly recommend it).

### Introducing biblical healing

- **All people need healing** - All sin and all need restoration (Romans 3:23 *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”*)  
God provides all healing. God is active in all Creation & human knowledge, skills, gifts use what God providentially provides. Salvation through Jesus Christ provides healing for eternity.
- **Healing is God’s plan for all people** - In Jesus, God heals and saves lives.
- **Healing is of the whole person** - our church Health and Pastoral Care (HPC) ministry addresses cause of disease and dis-ease in any of the person’s dimensions.
- **Healing is more than curing disease** - wholeness of body, mind and spirit. (Story of ten lepers illustrates - Luke 17: 11-19. (Jesus asked, *“Were not all ten cleansed [cured]? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner [Samaritan]?”* Then he said to him, *“Rise and go; your faith has made you well [healed].”*) Physical healing is an essential aspect of HPC.

- **Healing is made complete in death** - All creation decays (Romans 8: 18-25) (...<sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God"). Our whole person (body, mind, spirit) needs ongoing renewal, but our complete healing comes in death where we are made whole in and through Jesus Christ.
- **Healing is integral to God's ministry for his Church**- the Gospel message is that healing and salvation are available to all who ask in Jesus Christ. That's 'Good News' and God commissions his church to share it in word and deed.

### Three key words are used to describe healing in the Old Testament:

**a. Rapa – Rophe** Exodus 15:26 Jehovah Rophe: *'I am the Lord who heals you'* to what you were meant to be, who restores you.

- ❖ Exodus 15:26 cure physical disease
- ❖ 1 Kings 18:30 repairing the alter
- ❖ 2 Kings 2 :21-22 restoring sweetness of water
- ❖ 2 Chronicles 7:14 restoring land to productivity

Healed to be productive, functional, for God's intended purpose.

**b.Sapo** - cure of physical sickness leading to recovery and restoration to normal function.  
2 Kings 5:3,6,7,11. Physical healing was not an end in itself, it was for a larger purpose.

**c. Shalom** - peace, wholeness, wellbeing the 3 meanings of shalom are interrelated:

#### c.1. General physical and psychological wellbeing

- ❖ Psalm 38:3 physical health
- ❖ Genesis 43:27-28 general wellbeing
- ❖ Jeremiah 33:6-9 abundance super overflowing
- ❖ Numbers 6:24-26 positive state of rightness and wellbeing

Shalom is a state of rightness, 'OK-ness', complete wellbeing, things as they should be (not just absence of turmoil, illness or conflict, etc.) It is of the whole person.

#### c.2 Meaning positive social relationships

- ❖ 1 Kings 5:12 peaceful relations between nations
- ❖ Ezekiel 34:23-26, Isaiah 54:10, God's covenant of peace/ harmony with his people
- ❖ Isaiah 32:16-17 peace expressed in justice and tight relations in society

Shalom involves just and healthy relationships between people and nations, no war, no conflict. (A word we need to reclaim – it sounds good to me!)

#### c.3 Meaning personal integrity, honesty, straight forwardness in moral and ethical living

- ❖ Psalm 34:11-15 seek peace, act with integrity and honesty
- ❖ Psalm 37:37 man of peace, blameless, upright, straight character

If we put the three meanings together Shalom = physical wellbeing + right social relationships + good moral behaviour + positive spiritual relationships → whole health of the person and their relationships with others, the creation and God!

## **New Testament - five important words**

There are five important words used throughout the NT which shed light on what the Bible means by healing:

- a. **Sozo – soter** to rescue or set free, release people from some power or control, so they can perform their full purpose (saved to serve God) Luke 8:48, James 5:15
- b. **Therapeuo** to cure from sickness disease, and restore to healthy function, Luke 8:43
- c. **laomai** (usual translation of rapa/rope in OT) restored repaired to health and effective functioning, Luke 8:47
- d. **Hugiano** to be sound, complete, well rounded in order to be a functioning part of society John 5:6,11,14-15 (Do you want to be who you were intended to be?)
- e. **Eirene** (translated shalom in OT) e.g. Luke 8:48, 1 Thessalonians 5:23

NB. The Passage Luke 8:43-48 of the woman healed from bleeding uses four of the above words to describe her healing. She was:

- restored and cured from her condition
- rescued from societal alienation and subsequent poverty and oppression
- saved to serve God in the gifts he has given her
- provides with shalom and wholeness of body mind and spirit.

This indicates that a biblical concept of healing is a much larger concept than simply cure of a physical disease!

### **From OT and NT we can conclude Biblical healing is:**

- comprehensive
- relates to the whole of life not just physical cure of disease
- all aspects are important and work together to influence each other to move the person toward whole health and function
- a process - a journey toward wholeness in body, mind and spirit
- described in terms of harmony/unity in relation to God, self, others and creation.

[Source: Van Loon A 2018, *One Another Care*, Wayville South Australia: Baptist Care SA, pp.7-8]

Reference: Taylor H, 2007, *Sent to Heal. A handbook on Christian healing*. Roseville, MN: Speedwell Press