



TOPIC 7

"How Can We Encourage People To 'Hang In' For Healing And Blessing"

by Canon Jim Holbeck

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INTRODUCTION:

Those of us who are involved in healing ministries recognise that ultimately it is the Lord Himself who heals. This is what He said of Himself in Exodus 15, “... *I am the LORD, your healer.*” We see that throughout human history God has been in the process of bringing healing to those who cried out for Him for help. We saw that especially in the ministry of Jesus as He went around preaching the gospel and healing the sick. As Jesus said, when people saw Him performing miracles of healing, they were actually seeing the Father at work through Him, “*John 14:10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.*”

It is an incredible privilege to be used by the Lord in a healing ministry in helping bring healing into people’s lives. It is all also an awesome responsibility to minister in such a way that He gets all the glory.

In this topic we’re going to look at how we can encourage people to hang in for the healing and blessing in spite of all the negatives surrounding them. We live in a very negative world where there is very little expectancy that God, if He exists, can do anything about our human situations.

In chapter 1 will be looking at how we need to affirm God’s desire and willingness to bring healing.

In chapter 2 will be reminded that God Himself is the healer who decides how and when and through whom healing will take place. We look at Jesus and see how He ministered as the perfect healing minister. Will find that even with Jesus healing took place in various ways.

In chapter 3 we look at the need to encourage people to increase in their faith. There is a great deal of negativity in the world and sometimes it is difficult to exercise faith in the midst of such negativity.

In chapter 4 we look at how we need to see healing in the broader context of God’s will. We’ll be reminded that God has a plan and purpose for all His children and we can ask Him to bring healing to us as we seek to fulfil His will for us.

In chapter 5 will be considering how we might minister to those who have terminal illnesses. There will also be suggestions as to how we might minister to such people.

1). We Need To Keep On Affirming God's Grace, Love And Power To Those Whom We Are Seeking To Help

It is part of our human experience to realise that some people appear to be wonderfully healed and others do not seem to receive the healing that were hoping for. It is often a temptation to us to dilute the word of God (and to diminish the promises of God) to fit in with our limited experience of God's healing power. God's power is always going to be infinitely greater than any individual's experience of it.

However we need to affirm that our God Yahweh is a God of grace who loves His people and who can bring transformation into human lives today.

i). The Willingness Of God To Heal

We see in the ministry of Jesus that He was willing to heal all those who came to Him for help. One such example is a man who came to Him suffering from leprosy. The man expressed his conviction that he believed that Jesus could heal him. However, perhaps as an unclean person, he was unsure whether Jesus would be willing to heal him or not. *"A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Mk 1:40*

Jesus affirmed his willingness to heal the man, *Mar 1:41 Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." 42 And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.* The man had reached out in faith believing that Jesus could heal him. Now he had the confirmation that Jesus was both willing and able to bring him the healing he had requested. The willingness to touch and heal the untouchable leper stemmed from the compassion of Jesus toward a man in need.

ii). The Ability Of God To Heal

In the story of the leper above we see that he believed Jesus could heal him but had doubts about his willingness to do so. In another story of the Gospels we see a different scenario. A man believed that Jesus would be willing to heal his son but had problems concerning the ability of Jesus to do so. When Jesus asked the man how long the boy had had the demon the Father replied, *Mark 9:21 From childhood," {22} "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."*

Jesus responded to the father's words, *"if you can do anything"* by using the father's words *"if you can"* and stating a truth the father needed to know, *{23} "'If you can?'" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."* Jesus was affirming the power of God to bring changes in human situations and also the value of prayer in helping to bring these changes about. The boy's father responded by affirming his faith and yet at the same time affirming his realisation that there may have been

pockets of unbelief in his belief system, *Mk 9:24 Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"* Such a request has been on the lips of many believers through the ages who really do trust in God but who also believe their faith needs to grow. Such a cry to God is a mark of Christian maturity, not of immaturity.

2). We Need To Affirm That God Himself Is In Charge Of The Whole Healing Process, Not Us. Jesus The Perfect Minister

It would be very helpful to examine the ministry of the best minister of God's healing love and power in human history. Fortunately we can do so because his name was Jesus. We look at some of His healings to see how "the Perfect Minister" fared in His healing ministry.

Jesus' healings took many forms. Even as He ministered perfectly in doing the will of His Father we see that the healings were quite different. We see for example the following:-

1). The "How" And "When" Of Healing Were Open To Him

It means that we cannot predict how healing will take place, unless He shows us what He is going to do.

- **Healing can be instantaneousness.** That was so in the life of the leper in Mark Mk 1:42, *Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.* Many of us have witnessed those wonderful times when healing takes place instantly in the life of the person receiving prayer. But even Jesus did not always bring instantaneous healing.
- **Healing can be progressive.** In the story of the blind man in Mark 8 we see that there were two stages involved in the healing of the blind man. *Mar 8:22 And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. 23 And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking."*
- Jesus had touched him once with a healing touch. There had been a change in the man's eyes. He was now aware of shape and movement. People looked like trees walking. The blind man did something that we are all meant to do. He didn't get angry with Jesus when he wasn't perfectly healed. Rather he affirmed the healing he had received to that moment and he was grateful for it. (It may be true that unless people affirm whatever healing they have received, expressing their gratitude for it, they may fail to open themselves for more healing.)
- The blind man's healing became complete when Jesus touched him a second time, *Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Mar 8:25.* It reminds us that if Jesus was the perfect Minister and healed in stages, it means that there will be times when God brings his healing through us in different stages.
- It was a joy for us in the Healing Ministry in Sydney to see people becoming more whole and healed as we ministered to them over a period of weeks or months as they kept coming to our Cancer or Chronic Illness weekends.
- **Healing May Be Delayed.** Lk 17:14-19.
- Luke records Jesus entering a village and being met by 10 lepers who stood at

a distance. They asked Jesus to have mercy on them. He told them to go and show themselves to the priests. Why would Jesus want them to do that? They had been to the priests before. The priests had declared on that occasion that they had leprosy and were therefore unclean. The only reason why they would go now to see the priest would be to have them declared to be no longer unclean if the leprosy had gone. Luke records the significant words, *Luk 17:14 And as they went they were cleansed.* As they moved to walk away from the presence of Jesus and from the hoped-for source of healing, their healing came. It was literally their stepping out in faith to receive their healing at the command of Jesus. Unfortunately only one of them came back to thank Jesus for His healing. He was the only one to hear these affirming words from the lips of Jesus, Lk 17:19 *"Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."* He now had 2 evidences for his healing, his inner experience and the outward declaration of Jesus that he had been healed.

- In the Healing Ministry in Sydney we had many occasions when people came to the Wednesday night Healing Service and received prayer for healing. They shared with us later on how their healing came as they travelled home on the bus or the train. Others shared how they woke up next morning with all the symptoms gone and their healing complete. Their healing was delayed. For others it was some time later that they realised that they had been healed and that their healing had come imperceptibly over a period of weeks.
- It was a great encouragement for us to realise that though nothing seemed to happen during the service, God had heard the prayers and brought His healing in His way and in His time.

ii). Healing May Come In A Different Way To What We Expect

Very often as we pray we may have in our minds the way we believe God is going to bring His healing. Unless we are careful we may fail to see God's answer when it comes. In the well-known story of Naaman the leper in 2 Kings 5, we read how this important man went to receive healing from Elisha. *2Ki 5:9 So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. 10 And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." 11 But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. 12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage.*

Naaman almost missed out on his healing because of his wrong attitude. He expected that (in his idea of protocol as an Army commander) the man of God Elisha would welcome him. Instead it was a servant who met him. He had in his mind that Elisha would simply wave his hand over the leprosy and he would be cured. That didn't happen either. The final straw for Naaman came when he was asked to go and dip in the Jordan River. It was an insignificant river compared with the rivers of Damascus from whence he had come. Naaman felt insulted.

God's healing for him would come through a different person, in a different way, in a different place. Fortunately his servants virtually told him to humble himself and receive the healing in the way it was being offered. He did so and was healed.

There was another occasion when a man came for healing and was healed, but not in the way he expected. The story is told in Mark 2. *Mar 2:3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. 5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."*

He came for healing for his lameness. Jesus spoke to him about his need for forgiveness. Not only was the man forgiven, but Jesus said to him, *"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."* *12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"* The man had received a more complete healing than he ever expected.

It is true that often people come for help in a certain area but God who knows their deepest needs and ministers to them on a different level altogether. And then very often He heals the sickness they wanted Him to heal.

iii. Healing Can Be More Profound Than We Asked For.

Very often people come to us for healing of some physical ailment. But as they are exposed to the truth of God's Word they may recognise that their deepest need is emotional healing. The medical world has recognised that what goes on in someone's mind may have a great effect upon their body. So they talk about psychosomatic illnesses. The psyche (mind) can adversely affect the soma (body). That is why when some people are healed of deep emotional hurts there is a corresponding healing in their bodies.

Or it may be a couple have relationship problems. Their relationship needs to be healed and restored. But that healing may come when one (or both) of the parties is spiritually healed by receiving forgiveness in Jesus and becomes motivated to forgive the other person.

On other occasions people come to a healing service for physical healing. But as they hear the gospel preached they respond to it and receive Jesus as Saviour. It means that their whole life begins to be changed from that moment and they become more open to God's touch upon every area of their lives,

iv. Healing From A "Common-Sense" Change In Behaviour

Sharing The Load. Delegation. The story is told in Exodus 18 of how Jethro (Moses' father-in-law) gave him good advice. He saw that Moses was being overwhelmed by the people coming to him for advice. So he told Moses, *Exo 18:17 ... "What you are doing is not good. 18 You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out,*

for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. 19 Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, 20 and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. 21 Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. 22 And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace." 24 So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. 25 Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. 26 And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves.

It was good common sense. But as some wit has remarked, "The trouble with common sense is that is not very common!" Moses was able to survive by learning to delegate. He had to set out clearly for the whole nation what God was expecting of them. Then judgments for the whole nation were made by delegating his authority to others qualified to do so whilst he handled only the most serious cases.

v). Healing By Changing From A Weakening Life-Style

Tiredness

This is a common factor amongst church workers. There is always some much to be done and it seems, so few to do it. A very good question we all need to ask ourselves is this, "Whose expectations am I trying to meet?" One person of whom I asked the question replied, "I think I'm trying to meet everybody's expectations. It just can't be done. It's killing me!"

Jesus got his priorities right. He prayed to His Father in these words in John 17:4, *I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. At the time He said those words He hadn't preached the gospel to every creature. He hadn't cast out all the evil spirits. He hadn't won the allegiance of the religious leaders or the total allegiance of all His apostles. He hadn't won the allegiance of the general population. But He HAD accomplished what God wanted Him to do.*

All that God requires of us is that we meet His expectations, not the expectations of other people or even our own unrealistic expectations. He is working in us so that we can work out our salvation through the bodies He has given us. Phil 2:12-13, *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

Believers are to see their bodies as His temples through which He can show His presence and through whom He can manifest his glory, love and power. (1Co 6:19 *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.* It behoves believers to keep their bodies in good order so that God can do in and through them what He longs to do.

Changing Eating/ Drinking Patterns? 1 Tim 5:23

There was a young Christian leader who had frequent illnesses. In some churches today people would say to him. “You must have some secret sin in your life”. Or “You don’t have enough faith to be healed!” St Paul had appointed a young leader just like that. His name was Timothy. So this was his advice to Timothy, (*No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.*) 1Ti 5:23. St Paul must have realised that the water in the area which Timothy lived had impurities that had led to Timothy’s illnesses. So the common sense advice was for Timothy to have less contaminated water and a little more purified wine.

vi). Healing By Asking God To Show Us The Barriers Hindering Healing

We may not always realise it but many of us have barriers to receiving God’s healing grace. One of the barriers is the questioning we have in our minds regarding God’s love and His ways. We try to figure out why He doesn’t always answer prayer in the way in which we thought He should. Or we may have not seen answers to the prayers we have already prayed. The Old Testament character Job had many questions he asked of God because of the terrible things that happened to him in life. However there came a time when God challenged Job as to his attitude to Him and Job replied, *"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 3 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 4 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.' 5 I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; 6 therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."*

Job had to realise that he should not be judging God but rather allowing God to judge him. He eventually yielded to God in repentance and in a declaration of faith. The end result was that Job was once again blessed by the Lord, *Job 42:10 And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.* God’s ways are often beyond our understanding and we need to trust Him and commit our lives to Him rather than continue asking Him to explain Himself.

3). We Need To Encourage People To Increase In Their Faith

We all live in a very negative world in which most people are antagonistic to God. In such circumstances it is difficult to remain positive in our faith. However we need to, not only for ourselves, but also for those whom we are trying to help.

i). Affirming The Promises Of God

We need to recognise that what we say and affirm in life becomes part of us. If they are positive affirmations based on God's Word then our faith will increase. If we think and speak negatively ignoring the truths of God's Word we are not living by faith. There is a helpful truth in Proverbs 18:7, *A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul.* Affirming positive faith-filled statements are encouraging and strengthening. Emphasising the negative makes us even more negative. It means that we should be filling our minds with the truths of God's Word especially His promises to those who trust Him.

ii). Praying The Prayer Of Faith

There are those who say we need to learn and keep on praying the "prayer of faith". One gets the impression from some writers that praying the prayer of faith always brings the right answers. However when I came to examine the phrase "the prayer of faith" in the Bible there was only one reference to it in James 5:15. In most translations it is simply "the prayer of faith" and in other translations it is "the prayer offered in faith". Such prayer shall "save" or "heal" the sick. So this prayer of faith is not some magical prayer or incantation that perfectly produces the desired result. Rather it is coming before God in prayer believing that with Him all things are possible and that He can do "*more than we can ever ask or imagine,*" Eph 3:20.

It is true that faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains. But faith is not meant to be a static thing. It is meant to be a growing dependence upon God with a growing expectancy that He can do more than we ask or imagine in answer to our prayers. Paul encouraged the church in Corinth that, as their faith increased, his own ministry would become more effective among them, *2Cor 10:15 We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others. But our hope is that as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged.* Paul also commended the church in Thessalonica for the growth in their faith and love, *2Thess 1:3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.*

iii). Faith Can Grow. A Greater Expectancy Comes From A Greater Faith

It is an exciting prospect then for us to realise that if a mustard seed size faith can move mountains it may be possible as we pray with a greater expectancy, to see even bigger mountains removed. In a healing ministry we are not meant to focus so much on the size of our faith but on the Person in whom we have our faith, the

Lord Jesus.

Our prayers have to be offered in faith believing that God hears our prayers and wants to answer them. The writer to Hebrews in Chapter 11 describes what faith is, Heb 11:1, *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* The writer also affirms this truth, Heb 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.* There are times when it is difficult to imagine certain people being healed because of the severity of their illness. But that's where faith comes in. Another translation of Hebrews 11:1 says *Faith gives substance to our hopes.* There are times when we have to thank God by faith for the healing that is coming until we can thank Him by sight. Faith brings into being the substance or the reality of healing.

iv). How We Can Help Others Combat The Negativity Around Them

There are many in the worldwide church today who believe in "cessationism". In other words miracles and healings have ceased either with the death of the last apostle or with the formation of the New Testament canon of scripture. That is their worldview and they refuse to countenance the idea that people can be healed today. It appears however that God Himself does not know about this new form of theology! He just keeps healing people today in Kingdom love and power!

One woman I met was distraught because her minister said he did not believe in healing. She herself had been miraculously healed of virulent cancer. I shared with her something that she said helped her in the situation. It is a simple truth we can share with others who may be in similar situations. It is this simple truth. People who are healed are living "on the inside of their healing experience". They know they've been healed by God in answer to prayer. Those who don't believe in healing are "outside" of these people's experiences. They cannot know that inner truth. They are in no position to deny the experience of the healed person.

4). We Need To See Healing In The Broader Context Of God's Will

One truth I taught in trips to Florida that the late Dee Ann Thomas of Winter Park picked up and ran with was this. It was in the form of a prayer. She said she learned to pray it every day. *“Lord heal me for Your sake, so that I may do Your will to Your glory, for the rest of my life.”* I called it “an unselfish prayer for healing” which I continue to pray regularly. It is true that God answers the prayers of those who reach out to Him for help but who have no desire to serve Him. But He delights in those, who out of gratitude to Him, long to serve Him for the rest of their lives. They are fitting in with His plan and purpose for them.

We have seen in earlier studies that God has a plan and purpose for our lives. For example, in Philippians 2:12-13 Paul writes that we are to work out in our lives what God is working in us, *Php 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* We see the importance of these words as they show us the need to respond to what God is working within us. He takes the initiative. We need to respond to that initiative. He helps us even in our responding. He gives us the willingness, the motivation and also the empowering to do He wants us to do. This is for His good pleasure. In other words God takes pleasure in seeing us relying on Him to do what He has for us to do.

A similar concept is also seen in Ephesians 2 where Paul reminds his readers that they had been saved by grace through faith. They had been recreated in Christ to do the works that God had for them to do, *Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* We could say that these works have been prepared for us from all eternity in the mind and purpose of God. We do them (as we walk in them) as we continue to walk in Christ Jesus. We need to be healed in every way so that we can know what those good works are, but also that we might be motivated and empowered to do them.

Peter likewise saw that God had a purpose for His people. They were meant to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, *1Pet 2:5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.* They were meant to become, *“a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.* Why? So that they might *“proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”* Theirs was to be a total commitment to Christ who'd made forgiveness and healing available to His people, *1Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

When we realise that God heals us as a means to equipping us to do His will, it

means that we can be expectant for healing when we seek to crown Him as Lord of every aspect of our lives.

5). How Can We Encourage Those Who Have Terminal Illnesses?

Terminal illnesses. But from whose point of view? I have met many people who had so-called “terminal illnesses” some 40 or 50 years ago who are still alive and well today. Terminal illness is a description by the medical profession to indicate that someone’s present illness if left untreated will eventually be fatal. However God is the one who determines the length of our lives. Human expectations may be a guide and they are to be taken seriously and acted on when the threat is real. But we can ask God to heal us so that we live out the fulness of our days according to His timetable, not ours or anyone else’s. If Jesus, in His life on earth as a human totally committed to God, could speak to the advanced decaying body of Lazarus in the tomb and have him walk out of the tomb in his healed body then He can do something less dramatic about our lives as well.

It means that we have to minister to people as though they had the rest of their lives to live. (Which is true whether it be weeks, months or decades). This is not living in denial. It is living with faith that God Himself is in control. So the emphasis is to be upon life and not focused upon death. We want every person no matter how old they are, or how sick they might be to reach their full potential in Christ. So we are encouraging them to live even as some of them are preparing to die.

1). Never Promise What You Have No Power To Guarantee

I have never felt right to say at any of the 1000 plus healing services that I have led, that those who received prayer would be immediately healed. As we have seen above that didn’t happen even in Jesus’ ministry. What I could say to people was this. If they reached out to Jesus for help they would not be disappointed. Most folk came to our services with a hope their physical illness might be healed. Many of them did receive the physical healing for which they were hoping. Others did not but they received far more than they were expecting in transformed lives (if not later, totally healed bodies).

There were those who came to our healing services and seminars as a very last resort. Many of them experienced spiritual healing as they received Christ as Saviour and experienced God’s forgiveness for their sins. Others received various degrees of healing so they knew that God had made a difference. Others didn’t experience a lot of physical healing but began to experience the love of God in a new dimension. Or they experienced the peace of God which they had never known before. These are all part of the wonderful healings God can bring to His people in today’s world.

ii). Never underestimate God's kingdom love and power to bring about change

As I entered our auditorium to begin a new seminar for those with cancer and their carers I was saddened to see a young woman in her 30s lying on the floor. She had terminal cancer. She had been given only a few weeks to live by her oncologist. I wondered whether she would survive even the first hour of the conference. In fact she survived the whole two day conference. Then she came back for the next conference some weeks later. She survived that one too. At the third conference she was positively glowing. Now some 20 years later she still alive and vibrant in health and personality. My initial unspoken reaction when I first saw her was "You don't look as though you have much longer to live." God's attitude was "With me all things are possible." He was right and I was wrong.

On another occasion I had an urgent call to pray for someone in our local hospital. When I arrived the medical staff told me that she would die within a couple of hours. She was in a coma and I was assured that by the staff that she would never recover. Nevertheless I read Psalm 23 and prayed the Lord's Prayer and another prayer releasing her into God's loving and healing arms and left the room. Imagine my surprise two days later when I was visiting the hospital to see this woman sitting up in bed. She called me over and said, "I recognise you. You came and prayed with me and prayed that Shepherd Psalm and the Lord's Prayer. You've got on the same tie and sports coat!" Two days before in a coma! A couple of hours before her imminent death! Yet here she was alive and ready to have a chat with me! In fact she was out of hospital in a couple of days and back at work as a School Cleaner within a couple of weeks! God alone knows the end of our days.

When God tells us in His word that He can do far more that we can ask or imagine, we need to take Him seriously. We may have seen some incredible answers to prayer and so we have a lively imagination as to what God can do. However God lovingly God reminds us that we cannot even begin to imagine the great things that He can do. The power of God will always be beyond our comprehension to understand it. "Incurable" is not a word that features in God's dictionary.

iii). What To Pray When You're Not Sure What To Pray

It is true that God helps us in our prayers. Paul wrote about this in Rom 8:26 -27, *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit.*

However we have all been in ministry situations where we have been uncertain as to what to pray for the person before us. Some people cope with the situation by praying and then adding "If it be Your will" at the end of the prayer. That is not really helpful for those who are being prayed over. It brings into question God's willingness to heal. That is not what the sick person needs to hear in their confusion and weakness.

I use another prayer. It's part of a prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray. I find it useful to use these words from the Lord's Prayer, "*May Your kingdom come and Your will be done.*" In praying such a prayer we are honestly asking God to come into the situation in kingdom power and work in such a way that His will is done in the life of the one for whom we are praying. Only He knows what His will is for each individual. So we are not praying contrary to His will when we pray in this way. We are not promising the person something we can't deliver. Nor are we putting limits on what God can do.

It means too that when we pray for people who are disadvantaged, we are not placing limits on what we expect God to do. Only He knows their full potential in life. Our prayer is that they will receive blessing and healing to reach their full potential, as HE sees it.

iv). Hanging In For The Long Term When The End Seems To Be Near Humanly Speaking.

(Some Practical Suggestions)

Because the All Saints' Winter Park Healing Ministry is seeking to take their ministry out to other places such as retirement villages etc., it may be time to think about some of these suggestions. They could apply also when ministering to very ill folk in Glennon House.

Some folk will eventually feel that their death is imminent. They may seem to be at peace with the prospect. What changes might we need to make in our ministry approach in such situations?

This is the time especially for listening. Some people may believe that they are approaching death. At such a time they want someone with whom they can share their hopes or their fears. It is also a time when they may want to have answers to a number of questions. The best approach is to answer the questions as simply as possible and leave it to them to see if they want to go deeper in that area. People at this stage in the pilgrimage do not want to be preached at. They want to be listened to and have any concerns they have to be addressed.

It seems to be appropriate to share the word of God with them, then a good thing to do would be to ask if you can read them some of their favourite Bible verses (rather than your favourite passages). You may want to give them time to explain why those passages mean so much to them. When we read to them with or without explanation of the verses, we are ministering to them. If we allow them to tell us why the passages mean so much to them, they are ministering to us. This is one way in which they are affirming to themselves and to us the truths of His word. It means too that they feel they are making some positive contribution in life even in

their weakened state. This could be a mutual time of blessing.

Don't be afraid of silences. It may be that the person is thinking of deep personal issues which they may eventually share with you. It could be that they are seeking to put into place the various memories that they have. Or it may be that they are finding it difficult to express their thoughts or their feelings in words.

As we pray for them we can commit them into the Lord's loving healing protective hands. He knows what He wants to do in the person's life. We don't. This came home to me in a dramatic way several years ago when I went to visit a man in hospital suffering from cancer. He had recently become a Christian in his 60s and said he would like to receive Holy Communion in hospital. As I arrived at the Ward the sister in charge told me that he had gone into a coma. His family had been told some hours before that his condition was deteriorating. They had come from all over the country. I walked into the room where the family were gathered and told them that I'd come to give the man Holy Communion. But it was obvious that he was in a coma. I told the family that I would pray for him before I left. I laid my hands upon his head and committed him into the Lord's loving healing protective hands.

As I finished the prayer and opened my eyes I heard gasps from those gathered around the bed. I looked up and saw that the man had come out of the coma. He smiled at me and said, "Jim, I see that you've come to give me Holy Communion. I will just greet my family first and then we can have Holy Communion together." I took out the bread and wine from my little portable Communion set (a little First-Aid box I had adapted for the purpose with a little silver egg cup [given to our daughter at her baptism] for the chalice) and discovered I had put in there the exact number of wafers for everyone to have Communion. It was a very precious time together.

As I went on to visit other parishioners in hospital I noticed on my return that he was talking enthusiastically with all the members of his family. I heard the following day that after his family had left in the evening he relapsed again into a coma and died several hours later. The family who were astonished by what they'd seen happen on that day later gave me a proper portable Communion set. In the circumstances it was one of the most amazing Communion services I'd ever taken and the family were very deeply touched.

I was glad in retrospect that I had committed him into the Lord's loving healing protecting hands rather than just committing his spirit to the Lord. I probably had in mind that he would never recover from the coma and therefore would not be able to join in Communion. But God answered the prayer by laying HIS healing hands upon the man and made possible a holy and awesome experience that none

of us will ever forget.

One definition I have for prayer is this, *“Prayer is inviting the Lord to come into our human situations in His kingdom presence, power and love, to make the changes He wants to make.”*

THE END