

## Biblical Guidelines for Healing Prayer

Healing prayer is a delicate balance between hopeful expectation and common experience. While we have full confidence that God can heal and full assurance of his desire to bless his children, we also know that in scripture and in the present day, not all people are healed. We must not let the fact that some are not healed cause us to reject God and not pray. We must not let the fact that some are healed cause us to expect that all people should be healed. Rather we must strike this delicate balance, praying with boldness, praying in faith and hope, yet also having a foundational confidence in God that he cares for us even when he chooses not to heal.

There are several truths in scripture regarding healing, which we must keep before us whenever we approach God in healing prayer.

1. **God is able to heal anyone:** One need not look any further than the life of Jesus Christ, who is the exact representation of God's being (Heb 1:3). Matthew summarizes Jesus' ministry in Matthew 4:23 "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." With God, all things are possible.
2. **God heals to magnify his glory:** God heals in order to bring glory to his name and uphold Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. As Jesus said in John 9:3 of the man born blind, "this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." In the same way Peter pointed people to Jesus when healing came to a crippled man. Acts 3:16 "By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see."
3. **God invites us to pray for healing:** In Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus invites us to ask seek and knock. In James 5:14 we are invited to request prayer for healing. James 5:14 "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord." We are also instructed in James 4:2 that some blessings are not received for lack of prayer.
4. **While scriptures reveal that many are healed it is also clear that not all prayers for healing result in healing:** The clearest example of this is found in 2 Corinthians 12, where Paul prays for the removal of a thorn in the flesh, but God says no. While we are not sure what exactly Paul was referring to, it is clear that sometimes God does not heal, but decides rather to give someone the grace to endure. 2 Corinthians 12:9 "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." Such lack of healing is never evidence that God is indifferent. In fact from God's perspective, even death can be a blessing. (Philippians 1:21)
5. **Healing Prayer requires faith:** Time and again when Jesus healed someone, he told them that their faith had made them well. (See Luke 8:48, Matthew 15:28) Furthermore in James 5:15 we are told that "the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. ..." We must remember that faith is not a guarantee of healing, but lack of faith can block healing.

6. **Some answers to prayer come only through persistence:** In Luke 18 Jesus tells the parable of the persistent widow in order to show us that we “should always pray and not give up.” Not all healings are immediate. At the same time, however, God may testify to your spirit that the answer is no. This is the example of Paul with the thorn in the flesh. He was persistent, praying 3 times, but after that God said no, my grace is sufficient for you. (2 Corinthians 12)
7. **Sin can cause illness and block healing:** While we must be clear that not all illness is the result of sin, (see John 9:1-3) some illnesses are. In John 5:14, Jesus did say to a crippled man that he healed “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” Furthermore in the instructions on healing prayer in James 5, those praying for healing are counseled to confess their sins. James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. When praying for healing, we must first be sure to be right with God.
8. **Some illness is caused by spiritual attack:** Again we must be clear that not all physical illness comes from demonic attack, yet it is clear that some physical conditions are caused by this. In Mark 9:25 we see an evil spirit that caused a boy to be deaf and mute. “... he rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” Therefore if a spiritual attack is discerned or potentially discerned it is appropriate to pray against the evil spirits.
9. **We are given instructions for healing prayer in James 5:13-18:** While there is no one context in which healing prayer must be offered, we are given a biblical pattern in James 5:13-18. In this passage there are several elements:
  - a. The sick person may at any time make a request of the elders / leaders of the church to pray.
  - b. The sick person must be right with God, confessing all sin.
  - c. The sick person is anointed with oil to signify the power of the Holy Spirit.
  - d. Those praying should pray in faith.
  - e. Those praying should also be right with God, for it is the prayer of a righteous man that is powerful and effective.
10. **The Laying on of hands:** The scriptures give us examples of Christ and the apostles laying hands on people as they prayed for healing. (Mark 6:5, 8:22-25 and Acts 28:7-10) The laying on of hands is not necessary, but it signifies the giving and receiving of a blessing as well as the imparting of the power of the Holy Spirit. It is done as an act of compassion.

All in all, may we pray for God’s healing with bold expectation, knowing that God invites us to pray for healing and that he gives good gifts to his children. Yet may we also have a full confidence that God knows best. May we glorify God in all circumstances, whether receiving the grace of healing, the grace to live through suffering, or the grace to be with Christ in death.

## Checkpoints for those desiring prayer for healing

1. **Do you have a clear conscience before God and men?** Unconfessed sin, persistent sinful living, having no faith in Jesus Christ, holding unforgiveness towards another or any outstanding offenses towards another can block healing prayer.
2. **Do you sense any spiritual attack?** Have you any sense from God that your condition may be caused by demonic attack? Have you been involved with the occult or any person who is involved in the occult. Have you been exposed to any such situations? Have you been ministering to any person with such involvements?
3. **Does your inner spirit lead you to pray for healing?** Is God giving you the desire to be healed, or does God seem to be saying to you “my grace is sufficient in weakness” or even, that this might be your time to be with the Lord?
4. **Are you willing to receive God’s answer no matter what it is?** Do you have the same attitude as Christ in the garden who prayed “not my will be done, but yours” This does not mean that you should not pray with faith, but at the same time you must recognize that God is in control.
5. **Do you have faith in God’s healing?** Can you come to God with confidence in his goodness and power? Are you willing to pray boldly according to God’s invitation to us to pray?
6. **Are you willing to express that faith by asking for prayer?** Are you willing to follow the pattern of James 5:13-18 by asking the elders to pray?

## Checkpoints for those praying for healing

1. **Do you have a clear conscience before God and men?** Unconfessed sin, persistent sinful living, having no faith in Jesus Christ, holding unforgiveness towards another or any outstanding offenses towards another can block healing prayer. James 5:16 says that the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. This righteousness certainly means righteousness through faith in Christ, but it also means righteousness lived out through the power of Christ.
2. **Can you pray with faith?** While we must recognize that God will answer according to his will, we must also recognize that God tells us in James 5:15 that “the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well.” We must therefore make our requests in faith and not tentatively. We must believe that God can heal and that he listens to faith filled prayer.
3. **Do you have an open ear to the Spirit?** The Holy Spirit will provide discernment as to how to pray. He will lead us to the source of this illness whether it is spiritual attack, sin or physical. Be attentive as to how the Spirit leads you to pray. He may also lead you to ask specific questions to the person receiving prayer for healing.