

Chapter 5

Define the Problem

Jesus Asked Questions:

Not all illnesses are alike. They come in a variety of types, causes, and cures. Different illnesses require different medications for treatment. A doctor has to determine what the illness is before he can prescribe medicine. When you go to the doctor, he will do an examination, will ask you questions, runs some tests, check your blood, your urine, and perhaps ask for an X-ray, MRI, CT scan, and/or a battery of other tests. These things are normal procedures for diagnosing the problem. The medical professionals must identify the ailment and any contributing factors before they can apply a diagnosis and remedy. There isn't one pill that cures all ailments.

Sometimes there are important delays before a physician can jump to a hasty conclusion. The same is true in the spiritual realm. We go to the Great Physician to be made whole. He wants to know all about the affliction. His asking questions is part of coming up with a diagnosis and a treatment. Jesus asked questions of those he was to heal. We don't have all the interviews with those healing candidates, but we have a few and they are revealing.

We Cannot Diagnose But We Can Discern

Whether you are praying over your own illness or going to the elders for prayer and anointing. It is important that you discern any cause and effect that would influence your healing.

I am not suggesting that elders can diagnose the cause of other people's sicknesses. Nor am I implying that Satan instigates all diseases or that they are caused by some sin. Some are, but most aren't. But if we miss addressing spiritual issues, the person will remain sick and it will look like God doesn't care or doesn't answer prayer. So, if you are facing your own sickness, you need to ask some questions that Jesus asked. Or if you are an elder or pastor helping to anoint and pray with someone for healing. It is always a good idea to ask some defining questions.

We need to ask questions in order to discern the illness. Some illnesses are brought on by bad life-style choices. Some are trials to test our faith. Others may be a chastisement from God or the Lord trying to get our attention about matters of the heart.

If we do not know the source, how can we pray effectively? We would look pretty foolish to pray over a sick person as though the devil needed to be cast out, when in fact, the devil had nothing to do with it. Even with questions, we will not always

know the source of the affliction. But asking the questions often helps the seeker evaluate his own heart and life. I am not suggesting we interrogate someone wanting to be healed. Too many questions would appear to be an inquisition.

So, what do we do? We should depend on the Holy Spirit's discernment as we ask careful questions of ourselves. With the elders, it is important to ask questions without implying any accusation or condemnation.

Questions Jesus Asked of Sick People

Jesus didn't just walk around with a magic touch and heal everyone, regardless of their spiritual state. He often asked questions of people wanting to be healed. He wanted to discern the cause, the source, and whether they had faith to be healed. Sometimes it seemed almost ridiculous to ask a blind man by the roadside pleading for help, "What do you want me to do for you?" The Lord seemed to find it important for the supplicant to ask specifically what he wanted Jesus to do.

1. *"How long has this thing been going on?"* – Mark 9:21
2. *"Do you believe I can do this?"* – Mark 9:23
3. *"Do you believe I have divine power to do this?"* – Matthew 9:28-31
4. *"What do you want me to do for you?"* – Mark 10:51
5. *"Do you believe I am the Son of God?"* – John 9:35
6. *"Do you want to be healed?"* – John 5:6

Jesus' Instructions and Commands

After healing people, Jesus often gave instructions and commands. When Jesus encountered ten lepers in Luke 17, he instructed them to present themselves to the priests, and as they were on their way, they were healed. In John 9, Jesus told the blind man to go wash in the pool of Siloam. In Matthew 12, Jesus told the man with a withered hand to stretch out his hand. When he followed Jesus' instruction, his condition was completely healed. It seemed always the faith of the one pursuing healing was as important as Jesus' touch. In Nazareth he could do no great miracle except to lay his hands on a few sick folk and heal them.

Why? Because of their lack of faith.

Jesus' Commands

1. *"According to your faith be it unto you."* – Matthew 9:29
2. *"Don't tell everyone, but tell your family and friends."* – Luke 8:56
3. *"Go home and tell everyone."* – Luke 8:39
4. *"Go show yourself to the priests."* – Luke 17:14
5. *"Go and sin no more lest a worse thing come on you."* – John 5:14
6. *"Go and sin no more. (woman in adultery)"* – John 8:11
7. *"Who did sin? Neither, but for the glory of God."* – John 9:3

Diagnostic Questions Before Anointing and Prayer

As elders and pastors, when we are called on to pray and anoint the sick, we are standing in the stead of Jesus, representing him. It is important that the elders use their spiritual discernment and gifts of the Holy Spirit to minister to the sick. We should never hurriedly pray over the sick without first having some knowledge of the person and the problem.

My first question for an unknown person is to find out if they have been born again. I want to know whether they are a believer. I will still pray for them either way, but knowing this will give me a better handle on how to pray for them. If I find they are not sure or have never invited Jesus Christ into their life, I address that first and try to lead them to saving faith in Christ. I have led many people to Christ who come for healing.

My second question is to ask why they have come and what is the problem or ailment they are asking us to pray for? I ask them to be specific about the problem.

My third question usually is, "What do you want God to do for you?" Many come asking for prayer but have not really thought about being specific about what they are asking God for. Jesus asked a blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?" It seemed obvious, but Jesus wanted the supplicant to say it out loud. "Lord, I want to see!"

My final questions are, "Do you believe God can and will hear your prayer?" "Do you believe God wants to heal you?"

Many times people come believing in our prayers rather than in God hearing their prayers. It is the prayer of faith that saves the sick, not the prayer of petition.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Hebrews 11:6 says, *“He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”*

Over the years, some mature and wise pastors encouraged me to ask questions before laying hands on anyone. This has helped me. There was no standard set of questions to ask. We don't want to interrogate them, and we don't want to intimidate them. We want to understand the person, his or her needs, as they come to the Lord for help.

Some questions can be fairly benign, like, “Why did you come for prayer? What do you want God to do for you? What is going on? Have you seen a doctor? What do the doctors say is wrong and what needs to be done?”

1. Do you want to get well?
2. What do you want God to do for you today?
3. What will you do with your healing when you receive it?
3. Do you believe the Lord is able and willing to heal you?
4. Is there anything in your life that hinders God answering your prayer?
5. How is your marital relationship with your spouse?
6. Is there anyone you need to forgive right now?
7. Have you dabbled in any occult practices? (psychics, palm readers, tarot cards, Ouija-board, fortune tellers, astrology, horoscopes. amulets, crystals, etc.)

These are questions we ought to be asking ourselves when we are praying for healing. I have a pastoral colleague who encourages those seeking healing to fill out a form answering these kinds of questions. I don't believe Jesus would ask people to fill out a detailed form before receiving a prayer for healing. But sometimes the questions you ask can start the process of them evaluating their lives after you have prayed. Sometimes, you can sandwich the questions into the prayer that you pray. I don't always remember what I pray for an individual. I rely on the Lord to put words in my mouth and pray as the Spirit gives me utterance. For instance, you might pray for healing then add, “Lord, if there is anything in his/her life that hinders your healing touch, will you reveal that to her/him this week?”

Attitude Adjustments Are Needed

I remember two such prayers that brought angry responses. The first was a woman who was going to have surgery on a carotid artery and wanted the Lord to heal her and spare her life. As I prayed, I must have asked the Lord to reveal to her any attitude that needed to be corrected in order to be healed. I really don't remember what I prayed, but it wasn't blunt or offensive.

Two weeks later, she was back at the altar and told me she was mad at me because I offended her by what I prayed. I asked her what I prayed and she said, "You asked the Lord to correct my attitude and complaining spirit." (I'm sure I didn't say that, but that is what she understood.) She said she went home ranting and raving to her husband about how dare that pastor say she needed a change in attitude. Her husband listened quietly for a couple of days, then he said, "But he's right, you know. You do complain a lot." She said that shocked her into repentance. "Now pastor, will you pray for my healing?" I gladly prayed for her healing, which God granted a few weeks later.

A Visiting Woman

Another was a woman I barely knew. She was new to our congregation. She came for healing. I asked a few questions, then prayed for her physical need. Later that week, she showed up in my office livid that I would imply in my prayer that she was having an affair. I explained I did not remember praying that for her and I would never intentionally imply that in my prayer. A few weeks later, people reported to me that she left her husband for someone she met online. God works in mysterious ways.

A Severe Back Pain

A member of our church had been experiencing severe back pain for some time. It was bad enough that people in her workplace knew about it. There were days she could hardly walk because of the pain. As I prepared to anoint and pray for her, I asked her a few questions, then I asked, "What will you do if the Lord heals today?" Her response was one I often get, "Well, I will feel better!" I clarified what I meant, "How will you glorify the Lord when He heals your back?" Her response was immediate and excited. "I am going to tell all the customers in my restaurant what the Lord has done!" We prayed, God healed her within 24 hours. The next week she told me what the Lord had done in healing her back pain and that she was telling everyone who would listen how the Lord healed her.

Woman Received Christ

One morning, we had many people coming to the front of the church to be prayed for, some for healing and some for other issues. In tears, a young woman came to me with a request for her son, who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness that week. She explained the situation to the elders. Not knowing her, I asked if she was a born-again believer and if she had ever asked Jesus Christ into her life. She said no, she hadn't, and she had never heard of that until that morning. I presented the Gospel to her, and she prayed to receive Christ. We then anointed and prayed for her on behalf of her son. Two weeks later, she was back again, this time to tell us the miracle the Lord had done. They had taken the son back to the doctor, only to find there was no trace of that fatal illness.

Conclusion

The point of all this is this. If you are seeking the Lord's healing, ask yourself some of these questions before calling on the elders to pray for you. Even if you are just praying for your healing without the help of the elders, ask yourself tough questions.

The key question you should ask yourself is whether there is anything in your life that would hinder the Lord from hearing and answering your prayer. If there is, confess it to the Lord, repent, receive forgiveness, and then make your request known to God.

When you approach elders to anoint and pray for you, be prepared to listen to whatever the Lord may reveal to you during their prayer. If there is something you need to make right with a husband or wife, then do that first. If there are some attitudes that need to be adjusted, then ask the Lord to heal that first. In other words, sweep your cobwebs out of the way so that nothing comes between you and your Savior.

Think About It

Chapter 5: Define the Problem – Jesus asked questions

Do you want to be healed? Of what?

If you could ask Jesus anything about your healing, what would it be?