

Is There
a Conflict
Between
Divine
Healing &
Medicine?

Roger Sapp

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Is there a Conflict between Divine Healing and Medicine?

By Roger Sapp

Introduction

Questions about the relationship between supernatural healing and medicine often come up in various ways. This is not really surprising. Once a Christian has acknowledged that supernatural healing is possible, then he or she is likely to wonder about the relationship between what seems to be two different ways to approach getting well. This is further complicated by widely differing views on this subject.

Some Christians - a vocal minority - take a very negative view of medicine and believe that Christians should never be involved with doctors or medicine. They may accuse Christians of unbelief who seek to get well through medical means. Likewise, they may even accuse people of being involved with sorcery when they use medicine. Other Christians take a less negative view of medicine and doctors and do not believe that God has a problem with medicine. Another group is simply unsure of what to think about this all together and is influenced by what they are hearing in the moment. The way that someone comes to a conclusion is largely dependent upon how they draw their understanding of God's will.

The Christ Centered Approach

We draw our understanding of God's will in healing from Christ. This approach in healing has borne much fruit over the years. We have seen more than 30,000 supernatural healings, miracles and deliverances occur since 1993. We describe our approach as "Christ-centered." This phrase has come to be a common term but has a distinct meaning to us that others who use the same terminology may not understand.

Being "Christ-centered" goes beyond being aware of the importance of the cross in the matter of healing. It is awareness that Christ shows us the perfect will of the Father in His actions, attitudes, teachings and commands. Therefore, when serious questions about matters in healing ministry arise, we answer them according to what is revealed in Christ's ministry. What direct evidence can we draw from Christ's ministry concerning medicine and doctors?

Christ's Behavior towards the Sick

Perhaps, we can start with what Christ does not do as He heals the sick. Christ never suggests that someone who is seeking healing needs to quit using medicine or refuse medical care. Christ never indicates that there is

a conflict between receiving medical care and receiving healing. Some seem to have created a conflict in their own minds that is not reflected in the ministry of Christ. This conflict takes this shape:

If you go to a doctor, then it demonstrates that you do not believe in Christ as Healer. Therefore, in order to receive healing, you must refuse medical care.

Some may even intensify the conflict in their own minds and believe that the use of medicine is sorcery. (This can be accompanied by the related accusation that doctors are sorcerers.)

These negative ideas are simply not present in the New Testament. Beyond that, we have seen the Lord heal a multitude of people who were receiving medical care at the same time that they were healed.

For example, in the past we had a Tuesday night meeting where I would teach each week a Christ centered message on receiving and ministering healing. After I would teach, the entire group would minister to those who wanted to receive ministry. On one Tuesday evening, a young man came who was very sick with cancer. He was also suffering nausea because he had taken chemotherapy that day. He was diagnosed with two large cancerous tumors. One tumor was under his ribs and one in his hip. His facial color was gray from the chemotherapy. We laid hands on him and within moments, his color changed to pink and he was warm all over. The nausea was completely gone and we were fairly sure that he was healed. He went back to his doctor and after some x-rays, his doctor in amazement said that one of the tumors was completely gone and the other was half the size that it was previously. After a second time of prayer with him, he was completely free from cancer. Now, keep in mind that this man was under medical care both before and after his healing. Obviously, Father did not require him to refuse medical care. There is no call to repentance from seeing a doctor or using medicine for the purpose of healing recorded in the New Testament despite there being thousands of healings being recorded.

Christ Speaks Well of Doctors

Again, taking a Christ centered approach to this subject; we need to observe what Christ had to say about doctors. There is one statement from Christ about doctors that appears in all three Synoptic Gospels. The context of the statement is the Pharisee's condemning Christ for his ongoing eating of meals with sinful people. Christ says in response to

them:

"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick." (Matthew 9:12, Mark 2:17, Luke 5:31)

Hopefully, any honest reader can note that Christ is certainly not condemning physicians. This is a positive statement about medical care. Christ expects the Pharisees to acknowledge this common sense about doctors. Christ is saying that "Sick people need a doctor." Christ does not expect His opponents to argue with this common sense about doctors as some unwise Christians will do today. The Holy Spirit seems to want to emphasize this statement by causing it to appear three times in the Gospels.

In saying this, Christ is identifying with doctors in a positive way. Christ is declaring Himself to be a physician to these people. There is not a hint of condemnation of doctors or medicine in this statement. It is an endorsement of both. Additionally, there is another positive statement by Christ about medicine or doctors. It only appears in the Gospel of Luke. Luke writes:

"And He (Christ) said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your home town as well.'"" (Luke 4:23)

Again, Christ identifies with physicians in a positive way as He notes the sharp criticism of His ministry. Christ quotes an apparently well-known proverb among Jewish people of the First Century. The First Century Jews believed that physicians were involved in healing. (They did not believe that doctors were sorcerers.) Christ says that they will "no doubt" quote the proverb about Him. While these people were challenging Christ to do in His hometown what He had done elsewhere, neither they nor Christ were being negative about physicians. Quite the contrary is true. Christ and His hearers believed that physicians were involved in healing people and should heal themselves as well.

Beyond this, Christ does list sins in some passages. He does not mention practicing or using medicine as one of these sins. If it is wrong to go to a doctor, then Christ would address this as sin but He does not do this. Christ - who is deeply committed to supernatural healing - does not condemn physicians. This should be convincing evidence. The fact of His validation of physicians by His statements should be enough to settle this matter with any reasonable person.

Occasionally, someone will innocently but ignorantly think that there were no Jewish doctors in the First Century. However, this is simply not true. In Christ's statements, he certainly expects His hearers to understand exactly what a doctor does in healing. The New Testament does record doctors functioning among the Jewish people. For instance, the story of the woman with the issue of blood begins with this piece of information:

And a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse, (Mark 5:25-26)

Mark does not indicate that going to a doctor was a sinful thing for her to do. The passage does not refer to these doctors as "sorcerers" when it could have done so. Later, when she encounters Christ, He does not address her going to doctors as a sin either.

Despite the fact of their ineffectiveness in helping this woman, she had access to "many physicians." In discussing this verse, the Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible says:

"The Rabbis ordained that every town must have at least one physician, who was also to be qualified to practice surgery, or else a physician and a surgeon."¹

These physicians were not considered "sorcerers" in any way.

No Guilt by Association

Some that condemn doctors, point out that doctors may be involved in the sin of abortion, misusing their authority to prescribe drugs or some other abuse. However, this is a condemnation of many people in a profession based on what a few of bad character may do. It is "guilt by association." This is like saying that a few policemen do bad things, therefore they are all evil. It is like saying that a few Christian ministers are greedy, so they are all evil. Hopefully, no one believes this "guilt by association" argument against medicine and doctors. Most doctors do a lot of good but that does not make an abortionist a good person either. We should recognize bad reasoning when we hear it.

¹Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, Volume 3, pg. 1430, 1997 edition

Paul Speaks of Luke the Physician

Because we are Christ centered, we start with Christ as the foundation of what we believe and practice. Then we observe what the rest of the New Testament says. What does the rest of the New Testament reveal about doctors and medicine? The author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles is Luke, the physician. Some may not be aware that Luke was often a companion of the Apostle Paul as he traveled throughout the Roman Empire. Paul does identify Luke as a doctor. Luke was present with Paul when Paul wrote this:

"Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings..." (Colossians 4:14)

Again, the absence of condemnation of the medical profession is certain here. Quite the contrary is apparent. Paul is supportive of Luke's profession as a doctor. Paul did not have to mention that Luke was a doctor. He would not have mentioned it if he had thought negatively of doctors and wanted Luke to cease being a doctor. Yet, the Apostle Paul makes it plain that he approves of Luke being a doctor.

Paul does not distinguish Luke as a different kind of physician who doesn't really use medicine because he believes in healing. That idea is certainly not present here. That idea cannot be added to support someone's negative view of doctors when that idea is absent from the New Testament..

By the fact of Luke continuing to be a physician and a strong believer in Christ, it does support our view that it is entirely possible to believe the Lord for supernatural healing while under the care of a doctor. It is also possible to be a doctor, like Luke, who believes both in natural and supernatural healing. I have personal relationships and acquaintances with a number of Christian doctors who both practice medicine and pray successfully for the sick to be healed. The idea that you can't do both is certainly erroneous and not found in the New Testament. In order to continue to condemn doctors, you really have to disregard the fact that Paul does not condemn his companion Luke and does approve of him being a doctor.

The Greek Word for "Sorcery"

The Apostle Paul writes using the Greek word "pharmakeia" in Galatians Chapter 5. That passage says this:

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger,

disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

The Greek word "pharmakeia" is translated as "sorcery" in the above verses. Because this word "pharmakeia" meant at that time "the use of medicine, drugs and spells." Some have become fearful that any use of drugs, such as in modern medicine, is sorcery. This would be pretty frightening if it meant that taking two aspirins for a migraine headache was enough to cause you to not inherit the Kingdom of God. It would hardly be consistent with the gracious God that Christ reveals for someone having a serious heart attack who receives medical help to survive would be excluded by God from inheriting the Kingdom. This negative view of God is very wrong.

We need to look a little deeper at this word. It appears in several places in the New Testament and is translated as "sorcery" or "sorcerer" in modern versions of the Bible but never as "medicine" or "physician."

Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words says this about this Greek word:

The use of drugs, whether simple or potent, was generally accompanied by incantations and appeal to occult powers, with the provision of various charms, amulets, etc., professedly designed to keep the applicant or patient from the attention and power of demons, but actually to impress the applicant with the mysterious resources and powers of the sorcerer.²

These "sorcerers" that Paul is describing were involved in pagan religious practices and calling on false gods for spiritual power. These sorcerers were creating intoxicating drugs with the purpose of entering the spirit world through visions and hallucinations. They provided these intoxicating drugs for others to do the same thing. This is, of course, similar to people taking drugs today to get "high." Since the passage lists "drunkenness" as a sin of the flesh, it fits that taking drugs to become intoxicated perhaps could be considered "sorcery." However, modern drugs – taken only for the purpose of intoxication - do not seem to have the element of pagan worship attached. Likewise, the word "sorcery" follows the word "idolatry" in the verses above and they are certainly related. In this case,

² Vine's Dictionary, Pg 587.

"pharmakeia" means the use of intoxicating drugs and spells to practice an idolatrous pagan religion.

It is fairly obvious that Paul drew a distinction between what Luke was doing as a physician and what sorcerers were doing. It is also clear that Christ was making that distinction. The Jewish doctors in the First Century were not practicing sorcery. They were healers. Doctors today are not practicing sorcery any more than doctors were in the First Century. Doctors today are healers in the same way as they were in the First Century.

The modern word "pharmacy" being "borrowed" from this ancient Greek word centuries later does not mean that modern creation of drugs and modern use of medicine is sorcery. People go to doctors today to get well or to stay well. People do not go to doctors today to obtain intoxicating drugs to enter the spirit world.

Medical doctors are not calling on false gods to heal people. Sorcery cannot be done accidentally as God looks at the heart. In order to be a sorcerer, you must be calling on false gods intentionally. Most doctors are not spiritually oriented at all. Most have no interest in the spiritual realm.

While the modern word "pharmacy" does come from the same Greek word, it is reasonably certain that you will have difficulty finding a modern pharmacy that has medications on hand that have the sole purpose of allowing you to enter the spirit world through hallucinations and visions. It is also reasonably certain that you will have trouble finding a physician that will write you a prescription for a drug so that you can enter the spiritual realm.

The idea that someone going to a doctor with a sinus infection - who receives an antibiotic to deal with the infection - is involved in sorcery and the doctor himself is a sorcerer is simply ludicrous. Just because someone "borrowed" this Greek word in more recent times to describe a place to obtain healing medications - a pharmacy - does not mean that it is the same idolatrous pagan thing that Paul was describing.

Words, over long periods of time, do obtain new meanings and new usages. Despite the same Greek word being the root, the meaning of the word has changed in modern times. A "pharmacy" is not involved in a practice of pagan worship of false gods. It exists to aid physicians in healing their patients. It does not exist to aid sorcerers in the practice of idolatry.

To illustrate, the Olympic Games were originally Greek athletic contests. These contests were held to honor the false Greek gods such as Zeus. To say now that when an athlete participates in the Olympic games that they are involved in the worship of false gods simply because these contests originated that way would be simply unreasonable. It is the present spiritual content of a practice (and not its origin) that makes it righteous or evil. The athletic contest remains but the honoring of false gods has completely disappeared over the centuries. Likewise, the use of medicine remains but its connection with pagan idolatry has long disappeared and was never a part of modern western medicine.

The Greek Word for Physician

There is no relationship between the Greek word for "sorcery" and the Greek word for "physician" in the New Testament. They do not appear together in any passage. The New Testament does not say anywhere that physicians are practicing sorcery. The Greek word translated "physician" in the New Testament is "iatros."³ It comes from the root word "iaomai" which means "to heal."⁴ In other words, in the Greek New Testament, the word for "physician" literally means "healer."

The root word "iaomai" is found 26 times in the New Testament. In most of these texts, this Greek word refers to Christ healing the sick. This Greek word - that means "to heal" - never refers to something evil. In other words, when the New Testament speaks about physicians, it uses a word that comes from the same root word that is used repeatedly in describing the supernatural healing in Christ ministry. The writers of the New Testament could have used the Greek word for "sorcerers" but chose to use the always positive Greek word that means "healer" to describe those involved in medical practice. This is very significant. Those that teach or suggest that doctors are practicing sorcery are dangerously wrong.

Use All Godly Means to Get Well

Because of having confidence that Christ will heal the sick supernaturally, I would have everyone receive healing in that way. However, the reality is that I cannot reach everyone with the help that they need. Many are confused on the issue of healing. Many will have difficulties receiving healing without significant help from a person who is fully equipped to minister to them. There is much traditional and legalistic thinking on healing today that interferes with people receiving supernatural healing. Thankfully, for the sake of these people, the Bible does not discourage receiving healing using natural means.

³ Strong's #2395

⁴ Strong's #2390

The Apostle Paul offered a principle in his letter called First Corinthians that pertained to the nature of food offered to idols. This principle has application as we consider natural medicine. Paul wrote:

Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience sake; for the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains.
(1Corinthians 10:25-26)

Meat sold in the meat market in Paul's day was often left over from the pagan blood sacrifice of animals. Paul said a Christian could eat this meat without asking if it was involved in pagan worship. The reason was simple and powerful. Paul said: "For the earth is the Lord's and all it contains." Despite the fact that the meat had been used in an evil practice, it still came from an animal that was created by God and was ultimately owned by Him. God retained ownership of all created things even if they are being used for evil at times. The meat could be eaten because it came from God and was still owned by God.

God is creator and ultimate owner of both the natural and the supernatural. Just because God heals supernaturally doesn't mean that all the natural medicines that He has placed in His creation now belong to the devil. The natural realm still belongs to God despite its misuse at times by the world's fallen system.

Natural Healing in the Bible

Both Old and New Testaments indicate that we should seek all reasonable and godly means - both natural and supernatural to receive healing. Here are a few things that reveal that natural healing was completely acceptable to God and not considered sorcery in the Bible.

Job was afflicted by boils. Here is what the Bible says:

Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. (Job 2:7-8)

Job was aware that boils needed to dry out. He scraped the sores so that they would drain and he sat in ashes which would have dried out his sores.

God speaks through the Prophet Jeremiah of the "Balm of Gilead." It was apparently an effective natural remedy. Jeremiah writes:

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has not the health of the daughter of my people been restored? (Jeremiah 8:22)

God connects the work of a balm - a natural remedy - and the work of a physician with the restoration of "health." God expects that balm and physicians ought to produce health. Obviously, God did not think that physicians were sorcerers or the use of a natural remedy to be sorcery.

In another situation, the Prophet Isaiah said this to King Hezekiah who was dying of a serious infection which had formed into a serious boil:

"Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. And I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake and for My servant David's sake. 'Then Isaiah said, "Take a cake of figs." And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. (2 Kings 20:5-7)

God healed Hezekiah and did it through what appears to be a natural remedy; a cake of figs was laid on the boil. All true and lasting healing comes from God whether natural or supernatural. In some cases, like this one, it may be difficult to distinguish a natural healing from a supernatural healing.

Paul told Timothy to use a little wine medicinally. Paul wrote:

No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. (1 Timothy 5:23)

Despite Paul having much supernatural healing in his ministry for Christ, he did not think that it was wrong for Timothy (or anyone) to use a natural means to promote health. Medical research in our day has shown that drinking a small amount of wine daily is very good for the digestive system, the heart and overall health. (However, too much wine will seriously damage health.)

Luke recorded Christ telling a parable of the use of wine and oil to treat an injured man. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Christ said:

"But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him (the wounded man); and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to

him, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. (Luke 10:33-34)

Christ speaks in a very positive sense of common natural care of a wounded man. In this parable, the Samaritan is the only one who does the right thing. If Christ was negative about natural healing, He would not have included natural healing methods in this parable. The alcohol in wine is antiseptic. It will clean a wound and kill microbes that can cause infection. Wine will also coagulate blood, soothe the wound and promote faster healing.

The Risen Christ spoke to the arrogant Church at Laodicea in the Revelation and used a reference to a natural remedy. Despite the fact of Christ correcting their arrogance and using figurative language, He refers to this natural remedy in a positive way. Christ says that they need "eye salve to anoint their eyes" that they may see.

I advise you to buy from Me... eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. (Revelation 3:18)

We have already mentioned the woman with the issue of blood having access to many physicians in Jerusalem. Despite their inability to help her, Christ does not reprove her for seeking help from them. We have also mentioned that Luke, the companion of Apostle Paul, was a practicing physician. Paul does not indicate that Luke was involved in sorcery.

Natural means to healing were not condemned by God. In fact, He created these natural means by placing these healing substances in nature. Would it be logical for us to believe that God would place these healing substances in nature and then condemned those who used them of practicing sorcery? No reasonable person would come to this very odd conclusion. God did not accidentally place these healing substances in nature. It was His gracious intention that the sick and injured would be able to receive help in this manner.

Medical Science Helps Multitudes

Surely, we can acknowledge the undeniable fact that medical science and the function of doctors have helped multitudes of people. Many diseases that previously killed millions of people in epidemics such as polio and smallpox have been largely wiped out where there is adequate medical treatment. Cures to these diseases have been found by medical science. Some illnesses that previously killed millions - despite still having no

complete cure - now kill few people. This is because medical science knows what to do when someone contracts one of these diseases. They know also how to prevent the spread of many infectious diseases. The list of diseases that previously killed a high percentage of infants has gone from dozens to just a few now. Cancers that previously killed people quickly and painfully are now becoming more and more treatable due to advances in understanding and treatment. There are medical breakthroughs on the horizon that will cause many cancers to be a thing of the past.

The use of prescription drugs keeps many people alive who would have died without them. For example, many people would be blind today, would face amputation of limbs, and would have organ failure except for medical treatment of diabetes. Many older people would be blind today except for the medical treatment through surgery that removes cataracts. Many people would have had strokes or heart attacks that are alive today due to medical treatment of high blood pressure. There are a thousand examples of how medicine and doctors prolong and enrich life through their care.

In writing this, I am not advocating medical treatment over supernatural healing. I am just stating that the attitude that there is something spiritually wrong in the use of medicine is simply not validated by Christ or the rest of the Bible. While each person's situation is different, it is entirely possible for believers to do both things without compromising. We can believe that God can help us through medicine and supernatural healing at the same time. We have seen this happen on a number of occasions. Perhaps using medicine until we receive divine healing is a wise choice that we can adopt without compromising our faith in Christ as Healer.

Many effective medicines today are drawn from herbs that God has given for healing in creation. The New Testament mentions the healing nature of the leaves from Tree of Life. The Revelation says:

And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:2)

The leaves of the Tree of life are for the healing of the nations. God, in His kindness and mercy, provides both supernatural and natural healing. Likewise, in the Old Testament prophecy of Ezekiel, he relates a similar truth about all the trees in the future. Ezekiel writes:

*"And by the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."
(Ezekiel 47:12)*

Their leaves will be for healing. Today, many effective medicines have been obtained by studying what God put in nature. Here are a few that have been around for a while:

Aspirin -used as a pain reliever and particularly effective against certain forms of arthritis when taken in moderation. Its formula comes from white willow bark and was used as early as 400 BC. Recently, research has shown its protective properties when taken in small amounts daily. The daily use of small amounts of aspirin has been shown to significantly reduce the possibility of a stroke, heart attack and certain forms of cancer.

Digitalis - used to treat those with congestive heart failure. It is extracted from Foxglove plants and has been successfully used since the 18th Century to treat congestive heart failure.

Metformin - presently used primarily for those who develop Type 2 diabetes. It is the most widely prescribed drug for this condition. Beyond this, it has recently been discovered that it has a significant effect on killing cancers of various types. Many people will eventually take this drug to help treat cancer as more doctors understand this. Some medical authorities are predicting that the cancer rate in America will be cut in half just as soon as physicians prescribe it for those with cancer in their family lines or who presently have cancer. Metformin also significantly prevents strokes and heart attacks. This drug's formula originates from the French Lilac, a plant used in folk medicine for several centuries.

Taxol - one of the best anticancer drugs that is presently available. It comes from the bark of the Pacific Yew tree.

There are thousands of drugs that have been drawn directly from nature. Half of all anti-cancer drugs introduced since the 1940s are either natural products entirely or medicines derived directly from natural substances. Around 70 percent of all new drugs introduced in the United States in the past 25 years have been derived from natural substances found in nature.

In writing this, no reader should think that the author believes that all drugs are beneficial. Because of financial motives, the drug industry creates

many dangerous, ineffective drugs. Often they start with the formula in nature but because they cannot patent a natural substance, they change the formula slightly in order to be able to patent the drug. This can and does create dangerous drugs. Nevertheless, God has placed in creation itself many beneficial substances.

Unfortunately, even beneficial substances in nature can be misused. For instance, God has provided in nature substances that are very effective pain killers. However, they can be abused for the sake of becoming intoxicated. Nevertheless, these substances are still good in themselves. This requires some clear thinking. Perhaps an illustration would help. I own an automobile. We call them "cars" in America. This car is very beneficial to me and my family. However, I know of people who misuse their cars. They drive unsafely, too fast and often ignore the laws concerning driving. They may even drive their cars when they are intoxicated. However, just because someone else abuses their car, this is not a good reason for me to cease using my car. Likewise, God has provided in nature, many helpful substances that can be used as medicines. Just because someone abuses these substances, it is not a good reason for the rest of us to not use them safely when they will be a help to us and our families.

God is ruler of both the natural and spiritual realms. In the natural realm, God has provided help to man through natural substances such as herbs. We may yet discover that all of the natural afflictions of humanity have a counterpart in nature that will aid in healing of that affliction. Condemning the realm of medicine as sorcery suggests that this portion of creation belongs to the devil when it actually belongs to God. God has graciously provided help to the world, even to those who do not believe in supernatural healing.

The Danger of Condemnation of Medicine

There have been some prominent religious groups that have condemned medicine as sorcery. Coupled with this condemnation, they often teach, that someone will not be healed supernaturally if they fail in their faith by using medicine. (We know that this is false out of much experience.) Many of these groups have had multiple deaths that could have been avoided. They have ruined their witness for Christ in their communities because of people dying that could have lived on with medical treatment.

In a few cases, Christian leaders have been charged with "practicing medicine without a license" or "manslaughter." Some have been convicted and incarcerated. Some have been successfully sued by the families of those that they influenced to refuse medical treatment and died as a result.

In other words, this belief that Christians must not use medicine has produced some very bad fruit such as the premature death of a parent, a child or a spouse.

The worst criticism of healing ministries - by the Church and the unbelieving world - comes as a result of those misguided ministries who reject medicine. Because some teach this unwise view of healing, the secular media presents all who believe in supernatural healing as being opposed to medicine. Rejecting medicine and doctors is so unreasonable that it undermines the acceptance of supernatural healing. It discredits even those ministries who do not reject medicine. It so undermines the acceptance of supernatural healing that it causes many unnecessary deaths of people who could have been divinely healed. If these people had heard a more reasonable and biblical presentation of healing, they could have received supernatural healing even as they sought natural healing.

Rejecting medicine - as being sorcery or unbelief - would not be so dangerous and unwise if supernatural healing was automatic. The reality is that not everyone receives their healing quickly or easily. The presentation of a legalistic God, who condemns sick believers for using medicine, certainly does not help someone receive a supernatural healing. In contrast, presentation of Christ who wants to help everyone no matter what they have been doing medically is the truth and certainly works much better to help people receive healing.

We give the Good News about Christ the Healer to people. They qualify for healing because of what Christ has done for them through the cross. They do not disqualify because they have used medicine and are under a doctor's care. Christ shows us His willingness to heal by healing all who come to Him. He never turns anyone away. Christ never separates people into those who qualify for healing because they have rejected medical care and those who don't qualify because they have been to a doctor. He heals all who come to Him.

Misleading Examples Out of the Past

Occasionally, someone will teach that some successful healing ministries out of the past never had need of a doctor such as John G. Lake or Smith Wigglesworth. These presentations are often misleading and state things that they cannot possibly know for certain or omit significant details.

Often biographies fail to record what some might think are contradictions such as the use or need of medicine or doctors. The writers of biographies are trying to present the successful healing ministry in the best light

possible. Therefore, they do not present failures in getting people healed or even the ministry itself needed medical help. They only present the successes of these ministries and tend to ignore or omit their failures. Unfortunately, this tends to mislead people about the truth about these ministries.

While his healing ministry was amazingly successful, John G. Lake's first wife, Jennie, died of a stroke. This information comes from Lake himself. If she was the same age as Lake at the time, she was 38 years old. In other words, Lake did not successfully minister healing to her. Again, this is certainly not a criticism of Lake but an attempt to reveal the truth that even amazingly successful healing ministries do not get everyone healed even their own family members. It would be wonderful to say otherwise but it would simply not be true.

John G. Lake himself suffered a serious stroke in 1935. He died two weeks later, on September 16, 1935, at the age of 65. In other words, Lake himself did not receive a divine healing of this stroke. Again, this is not a criticism of him personally but it is a reality that we cannot deny.

Today, there are excellent medical treatments of strokes that perhaps would have saved Lake's life and enabled him to have several more decades of service to Christ. Perhaps Lake's first wife Jennie would have benefited from modern medical care of strokes also.

Smith Wigglesworth, in his later life, suffered painfully from kidney stones. He refused any medical treatment. This apparently went on for many years but the condition eventually passed. While we can be thankful for the amazing supernatural healings in the ministry of Smith Wigglesworth, he had to endure for many years this condition. While it may be a matter of interpretation, it does not appear that he was supernaturally healed but the condition passed more naturally as it often does today.

Smith Wigglesworth, like Lake, had a young wife - Polly - die early in his healing ministry. Healing biographies often give scant details about the deaths of the members of a minister's family. This is true concerning Polly. It is sufficient to say that Polly did not receive a healing.

I was ministering in England to a group of Christian leaders who were all interested in healing ministry. We were doing a "Question and Answer" Session. The subject of Smith Wigglesworth success in healing ministry came up. Some were under the impression that everyone he prayed for received healing. I said that this is hard to know since only his successes

are recorded. I went on to say that I suspected that he ministered to some who were not healed but because many were healed very dramatically, these facts of some failures were obscured by his amazing successes.

There was an elderly minister in the audience that day that stood up and said that his family had been members of Smith Wigglesworth's church. He had observed Smith Wigglesworth in healing ministry as a teenager. He went on to say that what I suspected was accurate. He said that people would line up and Smith Wigglesworth would pray for them. In most cases, nothing seemed to happen and Wigglesworth would move on to the next person.

Sometimes, Smith Wigglesworth would pray for a dozen or more before someone received a miracle or healing. The excitement that the miracle caused would overwhelm the fact that most were not receiving healing. This elderly man went on to compliment me and said that he observed that I had a much higher percentage receiving healing than Smith Wigglesworth.

He went on to compare me further with Smith Wigglesworth. He said while the healings and miracles in Smith Wigglesworth's ministry were a lower percentage than in my ministry, Smith Wigglesworth had more dramatic and unusual miracles than I seemed to be having in my ministry. I asked him how long he had observed Smith Wigglesworth. He said that he had observed him for a decade. Then I asked him how long he had observed me. He laughed and said "Two healing services."

I then made the point that dramatic miracles did not occur everyday in Smith Wigglesworth's ministry but those that did were very memorable. A decade of observation probably meant that he had a dozen or more stories to tell of dramatic miracles in Smith Wigglesworth's ministry. This elderly man said that this was true. I told him that this was also true in my ministry. I had several dozen stories to tell of very dramatic miracles along with tens of thousands of less dramatic healings. This is probably true of most, if not all, healing ministries. There is a tendency to focus only on the dramatic and only on success. We then report only that which we think edifies other people. The problem with this is that only revealing the successes of a ministry misleads people and causes them to come to wrong conclusions.

In Conclusion

I have been doing full-time healing ministry since 1993 and have closely observed healing ministries since 1972. Despite much hype to the contrary from some ministries, I have never seen a healing ministry get everyone

healed that they prayed for. In fact, in recent years I have heard the 100% claim come from several ministries. It would be wonderful if it were true. Unfortunately, I do meet unhealed people in our meetings who have been to these ministries claiming a 100% result.

Whenever you hear a 100% claim, examine it for yourself to see if it is true. If you really want to know the truth, ask the people who came needing healing about their result. Until ministries are actually obtaining a 100% result - reported by the people themselves who have the healing need - Christians have no right to discourage people from seeing a doctor.

Let me offer this guideline for healing ministry that comes from the medical profession. The Latin phrase "Primum non nocere" is taught to medical students as the first principle of the practice of medicine. It means "first, do no harm". Here's the application for healing ministry:

If you cannot immediately produce supernatural healing in the persons that you encounter, you ought not do or say anything that could cause harm to them. To discourage them from medical treatment when they are unprepared to receive a supernatural healing could cause harm to them. Beyond being illegal in most places, it is also very unwise.

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