

A Year of Healing

We are declaring 2012 to be a year of healing and I want to take a few moments this morning to point us in the direction I believe the Lord wants us to go in regard to healing. When we talk about a year of healing, I know that means different things to different people. Each of us have our own ideas about healing and health. Each of us likely have our own ideas about divine healing and what God's will is regarding healing. Each of us likely have some varying interpretations of Scripture when it comes to the concept of healing. Because I'm the pastor, I have the opportunity to share my thoughts and perspectives with you but I hope we open an ongoing conversation about healing and all that means for us as followers of Christ. I also recognize I have the responsibility to share what I believe to be a balanced biblical view concerning healing and as always, I take that responsibility seriously and will do my best.

We are going to take a many pronged approach to this subject. You see, I believe healing is about more than just God miraculously taking away our sickness or disease. It is about more than just the absence of sickness or pain. I think we make a mistake if we reduce healing down to just God intervening to deliver this temporary house we live in from physical sickness or injury. Healing involves, or at least I think our understanding of it should involve, a broader, grander look at God's plans for us and what he desires for us. There is an eternal purpose being carried out in our lives and healing and all that goes with it, is a part of that purpose.

I have begun to think about healing as part of a process. It is part of this journey of redemption we are on. Sin left us broken and shattered in every aspect of our life but when we come to Christ, by God's redeeming grace and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit he moves us toward healing and wholeness for our life. I can't say for sure what that wholeness looks like for you and your life - it may look different for me and my life, it may involve physical healing or it may not, but by God's grace he is moving us toward wholeness. Bear in mind, we are moving toward heaven and what we would acknowledge is ultimate and complete healing – healing in every sense of the word. But between here and there, I believe God has provided healing for us at many different levels of our lives.

This year, as we engage in this conversation about healing, we are going to talk about miracles and miraculous healing. Later in the year we are going to go back to our flannel board series and this time take a look at some of Jesus' wonderful healing miracles in the New

Testament. We are going to talk about healing and health and our responsibility as the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are going to talk about mental and emotional health. I've had several people ask if I would share about my own battle with depression and I will do that this year. I believe God wants us to experience healing for our damaged emotions. I believe he wants us to be healed from some of the scars and wounds of our past. He wants us to have a redeemed and spiritually renewed outlook and perspective on life. Remember he declares us to be more than conquerors not victims. That is a redeemed and healthy outlook on life

I believe God wants to provide healing and health in our relationships. We will talk about healing and health for family and marriage. You'll notice in the bulletin about an upcoming Marriage Encounter Weekend. So many marriages have been enriched and transformed through this weekend experience. Robert and Cherilyn Chorette are the coordinators for Marriage Encounter and would be happy to talk with you about it. Don't let the money stop you. There are scholarships available to help you attend. God wants you to have a healthy marriage and I pray this year of healing will include healing for marriage relationships.

But it's not just in marriage. I believe God desires all our relationships healed and healthy. I believe God wants single adults to experience healthy and holy relationships and I also believe God wants single folks to experience wholeness in your life - with or without a marriage partner. You aren't incomplete as a single person. You don't need to spend your life waiting for someone to "complete you." Jesus was a single adult - do you think he needed a wife to complete him as a person? God has healing and wholeness for all of us and that includes singles. I've asked a special guest to come and address that topic this spring.

I believe healing is about holiness. God wants us to be spiritually healthy and holy and I believe that impacts our physical and mental and emotional health as well. I want us to find some ways beyond Sunday morning sermons to focus on spiritual health, spiritual formation and transformation. Remember I said I felt the Lord calling us to find the quiet this year? I want us to find some quiet times where we can gather in the Lord's presence and find that healing we need for our spirit and soul.

We make mistakes along the journey and there is healing for broken lives and broken hearts. God still provides second chances and more. We will have some special guests throughout the year that will share their stories of God's redemption, of God's healing, of his

miraculous provision and grace that has brought healing and hope to their lives.

We are going to talk about faith and grace and how it applies to healing. For me, any discussion about healing has to include a discussion about suffering and why God's doesn't heal everyone. It saddens and angers me that people have been made to feel so guilty and condemned if they haven't been healed. Shame on the churches and the shepherds who have heaped guilt on top of illness and grief in the lives of God's people. We don't have all the answers concerning healing. I certainly don't. No one does. I'm not sure we are meant to. But we are going to explore what the bible says and we are going to pray for God's healing to be manifested in any way he chooses among us. We see in part, but thank God for the part we can see, the part we do experience. Thank God for his healing purposes at work in our lives. I believe God has some good things in store for us this year.

I'm going to share more about this next Sunday, but I'm going to ask our friends, Larry and Dee McNeill to join me here. Some of you know may recall that when the McNeill's were pastoring here in Tulsa that Larry went through a terrible illness. Both of them have encountered serious health problems over the years. They have both been hospitalized in several countries and been treated by over 50 top doctors, specialists and surgeons. Larry has had more than 70 surgical procedures on his esophagus. Dee has been battling with a rare auto-immune disease and chronic pain and yet in the midst of this, God has proven himself faithful over and over and they continue to go and serve and do all God has called them to do.

Larry, do you believe in healing?

What do you say to people when they ask, "why hasn't God completely healed you?"

How do you (or did you) answer when people say (said) "If you only had enough faith, God would heal you."

What are some of the lessons you've learned through sickness?

What would you tell someone who is battling with chronic pain or illness this morning?

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." John 10:10

"...for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

Philippians 2:13