

What the Bible Has to Say About Public Healing

Coming into the Christian ministry along the periphery of the Pentecostal/charismatic movement, I've had a front row seat to a preponderance of sensationalism and showmanship.

Loud, boisterous evangelists laid hands on the sick with theatrics that would make even the most seasoned Broadway performer envious. Intercessors with big hair, colorful shirts and gaudy jewelry would bring out mop buckets as it came time to drive out the demonic. They claimed that they needed an ample container to capture all the "green puke" of those being exorcised.

Witnessing excesses like this made me reticent to publicly minister in the gifts of the Spirit. I didn't want to contribute the "sideshow atmosphere" that permeated Spirit-filled churches. I honestly didn't feel like Jesus needed another "circus performer" clambering for the adoration and applause of the crowds.

Disrupting My Sensibilities

However, decades into my Christian walk, the Lord saw fit to upset my sensibilities. He revealed that sometimes He wants to cause a spectacle. Although displeased with gaudiness and fleshly ambitions, God nevertheless desires for the supernatural to erupt in the mundane.

After going through an agonizing season of soul-searching, I became convinced that the Lord wants to bring healing, deliverance and other displays of power into the public sphere. As I studied the New Testament, I noticed Jesus deliberately positioning things so they would have maximum public exposure.

In one example, Matthew declares, “As they went out, they brought to Him a mute man possessed with a demon. And when the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke, and the crowds were amazed” (Matt. 9:32-33). In another passage Luke writes, “He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the crowd marveled” (Luke 11:14).

I was astounded as I realized that Jesus wanted unbelievers and immature Christians to witness the inexplicable signs of the kingdom.

It’s hard to assure others that the dominion of God has broken into history if we’re reluctant to provide any authenticating signs. The Lord is inviting each of us to step out and take a risk for the glory and honor of His name.

A Personal Experience

When I traveled to Argentina a few years ago, I was determined to explore this reality further. While leading an evangelistic meeting on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, I brought up a man with a small hand-brace in front of several hundred people. He had recently broken his thumb in a soccer accident and had been experiencing severe pain.

After asking him to share details about his accident, I fervently interceded for him in front of this mass gathering of unbelievers. After saying “Amen,” I compelled him to remove his brace and start moving his fingers. If God didn’t do something astounding, my evangelistic ministry probably would have been over.

It gives me great joy to tell you that as soon as he removed the brace, his hand was completely whole. He was able to wiggle his thumb in front of the crowd and proclaim the glory of Jesus.

That evening, multitudes came to the Lord. A powerful public

sign pointed them to the glorious Creator of the universe.

Since that experience, I have desired to continue in this exhilarating pattern as often possible. On some occasions, I see more take place than others. Nevertheless, I remain convinced that God wants people to witness a demonstration of His power.

Continuing Disruptions

In the midst of ongoing intercession, the Lord continues to bring insight and revelation. It's easy to imagine that we have things figured out when we honestly only see in part.

As I endeavored to operate in the gifts of the Spirit, I realized that I needed to examine what was happening in my own heart. What was the underlying reason for my intercession? Was I doing it to draw attention to myself? Hopefully, I wasn't becoming the very embodiment of what once repulsed me.

Motivations matter immensely, and I knew that my sole purpose must be to bring honor to the Lord. In a rough season of personal reflection, I sensed that it was sometimes appropriate to make a scene, but other times it was not.

Within this same realm of understanding, I also garnered some practical insights through my ministry travels. While certain supernatural expressions might be effective publicly, others honestly didn't fare as well.

Many times when I ministered, the biggest breakthroughs didn't transpire until late in the prayer time. Some of the greatest encounters took place when most of the congregation had gone home. God spoke to me and said, *"Sometimes I want My glory hidden."*

There are occasions when the Lord doesn't want to elicit a testimony at all. He is simply enabling a discrete encounter with His goodness and mercy. To make it anything more would

undermine His gracious intentions.

In reading the Gospels, I observed similar patterns with Jesus. In the healing account of a deaf and mute man in Mark 7:32-35, the apostle asserts, “He took him aside from the crowd” (Mark 7:33). Later when praying for a blind man in Mark 8:22-25, we’re reminded that “He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town” (Mark 8:23). Some of the most dynamic expressions of ministry occur outside of the public sphere.

Entering Into a Baffling Tension

While Jesus desired for all to witness His glory, many of His greatest miracles transpired far from the gaze of the crowd. Nevertheless, even as a believer’s underlying motivations are scrutinized, there must be a willingness to embrace the scandal of the public spectacle.

I’m not sure that believers will ever stop contending within this baffling tension. Everyone wants signs and wonders, but few are willing to wrestle with the ongoing discomfort and challenge. God desires to bring humanity into greater realms of glory. However, He wants to know whether you’re willing to travel along a disconcerting trajectory.

The apostle Paul reminds us that in the midst of everything else, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the ages for our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7). {eoa}

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