

Bill Johnson: You Don't Have to Settle for Fruitlessness

Bill Johnson has made quite an impact with his healing ministry, but it didn't suddenly materialize out of thin air. Randy Clark interviewed Johnson about what started his ministry, who candidly shares how curiosity, conviction and impartation led to finally seeing healing happen.

Randy Clark: To get started with this interview, Bill, the first thing I want to ask you about is your life story. How did it happen that you began to feel this call, this burden to pray for the sick? What did God do? Were there any experiences or circumstances you can think of that were connected to this call? Could you tell us about it?

Bill Johnson: I grew up in a home where we believed in healing; the practice at our church was to pray for the sick. I don't remember ever seeing anyone healed; it was more like we believed in it, so we did it. But I don't remember growing up with any expectation that something would happen. And we were usually too afraid to check people out after we prayed. When we did, we never saw anything.

Still, a belief that healing could happen was in my DNA. I grew up that way; my family history is very strong in that area. Even though healings didn't seem to be taking place when I was growing up, I remember hearing stories about healings that took place in a previous generation. That probably played a huge part in my life because it planted seeds in me. I knew healings hadn't just taken place two thousand years ago, or just overseas in Africa or Brazil or somewhere. I knew they had taken place here in the United States, even if they had happened years before.

And I just got hungry. You keep reading the gospels and you

find that healing never leaves the gospels—it's always there, on every page. At some point you have to deal with it. You either have to turn a cold shoulder and think, "This is just not for me; it's not for this time. Or else you're obligated to pursue healing and find out more about it. I wound up telling myself, I may stink at this, but it's pretty clear that we're supposed to do it."

I remember one of the real trigger points for me. Someone gave me some books from John G. Lake. Now you can get his books all together in one big volume that Roberts Liardon put together. But these were little booklets, and they messed me up huge because I read them and realized, "This is extreme." And it put such an appetite in me that I just couldn't stand it. So I actually started taking time in services and trying words of knowledge. I didn't do it well, but I did the best I could, calling out whatever seemed to come to mind. Then we'd pray for people, and still nothing seemed to happen.

In 1987, I went to a couple of John Wimber conferences. One was specifically about healing, and the other was about something else. Something happened to me at those. I never received prayer; nobody ever prophesied "you'll have a healing anointing" over me or anything. I never had an experience like that. I just got dissatisfied that I was living a gospel that didn't include healing, but Jesus modeled a different kind. And that just messed me up inside. I pastored for a while, pursuing healings in meetings and stuff, and still never saw anything happen. But we still went after healing because we believed it was right.

The healing conference was both wonderful and frustrating. It was wonderful because of what I saw happen. It was frustrating because it was the only time I'd ever been to a conference in my life where every single teaching I heard was something I had taught before. It was weird—they even used some of the same illustrations that I thought were mine! That has to be divinely orchestrated. It was frustrating because I had no

evidence for what I believed. I had no fruit. I believed in healing, so I'd teach on it, but still nothing happened. Obviously it wasn't doctrine itself that was the problem. I came home from that conference with a conviction that I was obligated to seek fruit for what I believed.

It was not enough for me just to have good theology and even go through the motions of praying. I'd read something, I'd get really encouraged, we'd faithfully pray for people for a while, then, when nothing happened, we'd back off. Pretty soon I wasn't praying for anybody unless they asked. And then I'd read something else or I'd get stirred up out of the gospels, and I'd go after it again, but still nothing happened.

When I came back from that Wimber conference, I knew it was not an option—I couldn't back off ever again. Healing had to become a part of who we were. There were still seasons of ups and downs, but I realized that I was obligated to require fruit for what I believed. It's a hard thing to teach anybody about, because it's hard to describe what goes on inside of you. But there's almost this idea, "Wait a minute, I don't have to settle for fruitlessness." And so you cry out to God in private, and you take risks in public, and that was it.

*The preceding interview is adapted from an excerpt from *Healing Unplugged* by Bill Johnson and Randy Clark.

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