

Holistic Healing Ministry

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Abstract

This paper is about developing a Holistic Healing Ministry (HHM) to reach the lost in Taiwan - a country not only where my dear wife comes from, but also a place where I feel God is leading me to serve him after seminary. The current Christian population in Taiwan is but 3.9% out of 23 million people. There are various reasons that Christianity has not been widely accepted in Taiwan; one of them is the Gospel not being presented holistically. Especially the message of healing, which is so essential to a segment of the wounded population for it's the only hope for restoration. The local church has yet to find a well-balanced and biblical ministry model with which to act upon so far. Thus, the HHM is a great addition to support the local church in Taiwan to reach the wounded loss, who are especially broken, spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. In order to do that, before launching a HHM, the church must be grounded with sound biblical principles on healing and must conclude why the Gospel of healing matters, as it is the only way of God's providence to heal and restore. This paper will attempt to provide the biblical answers to the theological questions on healing as well as the practical applications in launching the HHM in Taiwan.

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "health is a dynamic state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"¹ Thus, **holistic healing** is defined as the practice of healing to address the whole person who is a triune being consisting of a body, mind, and spirit according to the biblical notion.²

The Goal of the HHM Is therefore to:

- Minister to people who are hurting physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
- Help people recover from past hurts and wounds and find freedom through the Gospel.
- Support people in experiencing Jesus as the Healer and practice, making healing choices that will honor God and become more Christ-like in characters.
- Create a community where people can support each other in the journey of healing.
- Ultimately, help the local church in Taiwan to reach the lost who after experiencing God's healing and restoration and are able to engage holistically in society again.

Biblical Theology on Healing

There are many reasons why churches are not practicing Holistic Healing. A lack of biblical understanding in healing theology is probably one of the biggest reasons. Most churches believe

¹ Bernard J. Healey, Robert S. Zimmerman Jr., *The New World of Health Promotion* (Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2010)

² 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

in intercessory prayers for the sick, and that is about as far as the teaching on healing goes. The primary focus for most pastors and church leaders in Taiwan for evangelism is about winning souls through preaching the message of salvation. While this is important, nevertheless, it is not the entire Gospel, as seen in Luke 4:18 and Isaiah 61:1. Jesus didn't only preach the Gospel to the poor, and he also came to heal the brokenhearted. For the ones who are hurting, the message of repentance from sin **alone** stops short meeting the needs of healing. The Gospel, when not presented holistically, confuses people of God's power, love, and compassion. Many will look for hope in other religions for inner conflicts and physical illnesses. And, this is not how early church had operated.

Healing as A Command:

Jesus always moved with compassion for people who were suffering from spiritual oppression and diseases, and he healed every disease and sickness. (Matt. 8:16, 9:35). Through the atonement, he took upon himself all the diseases and infirmities of the world, broke the curses of sin and restored our relationship with God. (Isaiah 53: 4-5). He then gave his disciples power and authority to heal the sick and preach the Kingdom (Luke 9:1-6). And he entrusted the healing ministry to the church and ordered them to pray for the sick. (James 5: 14- 15). If we were to be faithful to follow Jesus, we found no excuses not to be actively involved in healing for the sick. Our Lord healed the sick and cast out demons by the Holy Spirit as a sign that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and stated that "whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters" (Matthew 12:30). We are either to follow Jesus and do what he commanded us to do, or we are held responsible in disobeying him. There is nothing in between in the Kingdom of God. The Lord taught us to pray for the Kingdom of God on earth as it's in heaven. The sign of the Kingdom is embodied in "healing of the whole person—forgiveness for

the guilt-laden, health for the diseased, hope for the despairing, restored relations for the alienated - which is the sign of the kingdom's arrival."³ Therefore, the HHM is not optional but essential for any church who truly understands healing as an integral part of the Gospel.

Challenges Facing Local Church in Taiwan

The church often oversimplifies all problems - physical, emotional, and social as spiritual issues and attempt to fix them with confession and repentance of sin. When that doesn't work, people who are hurting either to doubt whether Christianity is of any practical value or to conclude that God doesn't really care about their suffering. David Seamands recognized the problem of those suffering from emotional wounds and states:

*We preachers have often given people the mistaken idea that the new birth and being "filled with the Spirit" are going to automatically take care of emotional hang-ups. A great crisis experience of Jesus Christ, as important and eternally valuable as this is, is not a shortcut to emotional health. It is not a quickie cure for personality problems.*⁴

The church is the body of Christ. Instead of focusing on membership growth, which will come when every member of the body is healthy, it's time for the church to consider the core value of having church. Apostle Paul teaches us, "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it" (Corinthian 12:26). Again, He said, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). Rick Warren insists that "the key issue for churches in the twenty-first century should be church health, not church growth."⁵ Once the church captures the vision and begins to realize that the healing ministry is a must-have to reach the lost, the next step is to address some

³ World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Your Kingdom Come (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980)

⁴ David Seamands, Wounds That Heal (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003)

⁵ Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995)

somewhat controversial issues that often arise from errors of biblical understanding and false teaching before launching the HHM.

Divine Healing Myths

1) Prayer and Medicine

Is it alright to use medicine and seek God's healing at the same time?

I believe the answer is yes. Medicine is part of God's grace given to humankind for healing.

Wayne Grudem who believes in miracle and healing put it this way:

*"Certainly we should use medicine if it is available, because God has also created substances in the earth that can be made into medicine with healing properties. Medicines thus should be considered part of the whole creation that God considered 'very good' (Gen. 1:31). We should willingly use medicine with thankfulness to the Lord, for 'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof' (Ps. 24:1)."*⁶

He further states that refusing to use medicine when it's available, it is likened to Satan tempting Jesus to jump from the temple, "forcing a test" on God and demanding that he perform a miracle at that exact moment when the natural means of steps are available. "To refuse the use of effective medicine, insisting that God perform a miracle of healing instead of healing through the medicine, is very similar to this"⁷ However, we must remember God can certainly heal where medicine and doctors cannot heal, and that is why every church should have a healing ministry readily available to people (both believers and seekers) who are afflicted with various diseases.

2) God's Sovereignty about Healing

⁶ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, page 1064.

⁷ Ibid., 1064-1065.

We must understand that not all who are prayed for will receive healing. Sometimes active faith is not present, or may not have been given in the situation where healing needs to occur. Sometimes healing is progressive and does not manifest immediately. Sometimes other roadblocks such as forgiveness must be removed first before healing to take place. At times when all means are exhausted, and healing does not happen, we must remember that God promises to "work all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. (Rom. 8:28). This includes enduring suffering and illness and giving him thanks in all circumstances when we don't have the immediate answers. (1 Thess. 5:18; cf. Jas. 1:2-4).

3) God's love and mercy is evidenced in the incarnation of His Son

God is not just the creator of the universe, as some claim, "after the original act, God virtually withdrew and refrained from interfering in the processes of nature and the ways of man."⁸ Instead, God enters the scene through the incarnation of his Son Jesus, sharing and bearing the suffering of mankind, including every disease and every sorrow and every consequence of every sin. Jesus cares for every dimension of God's people - physical, emotional, and spiritual, and social. And all dimensions are interconnected, affecting one another when one part is not well.

Methods of Implementation

⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Deism>

1) Education

Since Holistic healing is an unfamiliar subject that often leads to arguments that cause divisions, church leadership in Taiwan must make special efforts to teach healing to the congregation with correct theology, including the practical matters such as the laying on of hands, four basic types of prayers as outlined in *Healing* written by Francis MacNutt,⁹ exercising of spiritual gifts and the waiting for the leading of the Holy Spirit for the time of ministry. Since most Christians are very limited in their understanding of the church's role in Holistic healing, let alone knowing how to do it, people are recommended to read and study books written on the topic of healing in the process.¹⁰ Many Christians hold the belief that miracles are for the early church only, and they have never experienced the supernatural work of the holy spirit; therefore, patient in the study and in waiting must be necessary, without imposing any school of doctrines prematurely. ***HHM does not advocate instant healing from God on demand, although He can heal instantly.*** We are called to minister to the sick faithfully, trusting that God will do it according to His schedule, sometimes quietly, and sometimes quite miraculously in the display. The key is education for the door to be opened in due time, for it is in the heart of God to heal. The senior pastor plays a critical role in launching the HHM. He must first embrace the core value of the HHM in the church he leads and must be willing to support the effort with resources and commitment so HHM will be fruitful and sustainable in the long run.

2) Team Approach

⁹ Francis MacNutt, *Healing*. Page 129.

¹⁰ A list of text on healing are listed at the resource pages.

As mentioned, HHM does not exclude God from using the medicine and medical professionals to facilitate nature's healing process. In fact, a balanced diet, regular exercise, proper rest, stress management, and a healthy attitude towards work and relationships all contribute to one's well-being. "Medicine and prayers are not opposed, but the doctor, the nurse, the pharmacist, and the person with the gift of healing all together form God's healing team." ¹¹ As a matter of fact, appropriately conducted, HHM will bring heightened awareness to the community the church serves and beyond, teaching people to make good healing choices as a way of life for the glory of Creator God.

3) Support Groups

HHM believes healing often takes place in a small/support group setting during teaching, sharing, bible study, and ministry time when the presence of the Holy Spirit brings healing to the soul and body in a marvelous way. The personal experience of God's healing touch often stirs up zeal and strengthens the faith of believers, knowing God can do the same for their unsaved loved ones and friends. On the other hand, a small group is a wonderful way for evangelism, inviting seekers, especially those who have lost hope for healing in the community, to experience God's love and restoration in a friendly environment as opposed to the church which could be overwhelming and threatening for some folks.

Conclusion

¹¹ Francis MacNutt, Healing. Page 206.

Healing is not the whole Gospel but is an integral part of the Gospel. The biggest miracle is the new birth in which man comes to understand his depravity in sin and accepts Jesus as his Lord and savior. Behind all sicknesses and diseases is sin. Man lives in the bondage of sin and is under the curse of the law. He has no power to overcome this condition. But here is the good news. The bible says, "But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship" (Galatians 4:5). And that is why Jesus came in the flesh: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). We become a new creation in Christ when we are born again in the spirit. Our relationship is restored with God, and we call him Abba father. (Romans 8:15). In the meanwhile, we still live in this fallen world where Satan is the God of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).

We are looking forward to the resurrection of our bodies and the day when "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54). But until then, we must take responsibility to care for our health holistically, and to equip the local church to practice holistic living so it can touch the society with the full Gospel. Jesus has already fulfilled the messianic prophecy regarding his ministry: to preach the good news, to heal the brokenhearted and to set the captive free (Isaiah 61:1). The baton has been handed over to the church to do the same, to do everything that the Lord has taught us to do. That is why HHM is such an essential ministry that every local church in Taiwan should embrace. Paul exhorts the believers in the Thessalonian church to have their "whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Likewise, we should teach healing - body, soul, and spirit - for every believer and seeker.

I have been a Christian since college but always struggled with anxiety and panic attacks, which finds their roots in past traumas and hurts. It got worse over the years, and I had tried everything I'd known how to relieve the pains. I came to the end of my road a few years ago and had to stop working because the symptoms were just unbearable. But when all hope was gone, I had a supernatural encounter with the Lord one day during a trip to Taiwan two years ago. He had restored my sanity through one supernatural experience of him more than the professional counseling and medical aids combined in the past 25 years. The only reason why I am studying at Nyack now is because I have tasted the love of God in healing and deliverance and wanted to get fully trained and equipped to help those who are hurting like I once was but with the road less traveled. I believe the path to healing is through the HHM the Lord has shown me. While I don't have the empirical data pertaining to the local ministry dynamics and the statistics facing the society in Taiwan (research I am planning to do in the future), chances are there is always a segment of the population in **any society** who are hurting silently and without hope. Not only can I relate to them, but I can also bring hope where there is no hope with the Gospel of healing for, I am a living testimony of God's grace.

At last, although my thesis has been interwoven through the essay, I must make a clear theological vision for how the Church in Taiwan to engage the HHM as an integral effort to proclaim the good news to the lost. *It's in the heart of our Lord Jesus to save the lost, heal the sick, and set the captives free, spiritually, emotionally, and socially. I believe it's time for the local church to present the full Gospel to the body of Christ and the lost in the world, embracing the HHM as an essential service so the Kingdom of God can be experienced as a present reality rather than a promise in the eschatological future.*

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