

How to Become a Healing Community

Scripture: James 5:13-18

We live in a fallen world where the curse of sin can be seen everywhere.

This is a sick world, full of tears and pain:

- Thirty-five thousand children die every day from hunger and malnutrition;
- Every second, one acre of rainforest is destroyed forever;
- Every year, the United Nations Human Rights Committee receives about 20,000 complaints about human rights violations, and many people are tortured without anyone's concern;
- 800 million people in the world live in absolute poverty and lack food and clothing for a long time;
- The world spends an average of \$550 billion on arms each year. According to the United Nations, only \$5 billion a year is needed to save all the children who die of hunger and malnutrition, and \$5 billion is only equivalent to the cost of ten American stealth fighters...

This is a ridiculous world, full of hatred and hostility between nations:

- The Rwandan genocide in Africa;
- The civil war in Bosnia;
- Tensions between South and North Korea;
- The confrontation between Taiwan and the mainland;
- The hatred between Israel and the Arab world...

This is a suffocating world:

- People living in advanced countries are not necessarily happier than people in backward countries. People in big cities live very busy lives and are under long-term mental stress. Many people have to take sleeping pills to fall asleep.
- In Hong Kong, one in three people suffers from mental illness;
- In big cities, young people have a higher tendency to self-destruct. Many Hong Kong teenagers are so depressed that they use knives to hurt their bodies to get pleasure. A study conducted by the Breakthrough Institute found that 35% of secondary school students have thought about suicide, and about 10% have actually attempted suicide...

This world is experiencing a great curse. The pain in this world is a signal telling you to face your

own problems. You need Jesus because Jesus is the answer to all of life's problems. Not only did Jesus sacrifice for the world, He also established the Church in this world full of pain and trauma. The purpose of the church is to bring healing and hope to this world full of sin and suffering.

The church is a healing community. God wants to raise up the church and make it a healing community.

How can the church become a healing community? To bring healing and hope to a hurting world, the church needs to do three things:

1. Pray for the sick in faith

What is your first reaction when you are sick? Do you see a doctor, take medicine, or ask someone to pray for you?

The brothers and sisters in the early church believed very much in the healing power of prayer. James taught this in 5:14-15: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up."

In the early church, when a believer was sick, he would seek out the elders of the church and asked them to anoint him with oil and pray in the name of the Lord. The early church was a healing community, and many miracles of healing often occurred in the church.

When Jesus was on earth, he often healed the sick and cast out demons. Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than I do will he do." After Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, lived in the believers, and the disciples spread the gospel everywhere with the power of God. Miracles followed them, such as the sick were healed and evil spirits were cast out. In some early church documents, we find that those who had the healing anointing, the power and character of the Holy Spirit would be ordained as elders of the church, which is equivalent to today's pastors. Prayer for healing has always been a way of life in the early church. In fact, the explosive growth of the early church was inseparable from the power of prayer and healing to testify to God's power. God confirmed the teachings of the disciples through miracles.

There are still many people in the church today who experience healing through prayer, and I believe there are many such testimonies around you and me. But many times we dare not pray for the healing of the sick. Why? Is it because we are afraid that after praying, the patient will not be healed and we will lose face? If you think so, do you care too much about your face?

The patient's healing has nothing to do with us; it is God who heals him, not us! Therefore, whether the patient recovers or not has nothing to do with us; our responsibility is only to pray for the patient. Unless you are sure that God will not heal him, you should do as the Bible instructs and let God be responsible for the consequences. Ultimately, illness and pain come from sin, not from God. Jesus came to eliminate the works of Satan and to remove the damage brought about by sin. God's will is for people to be healed. But whether to heal or not is God's sovereignty, and we just need to pray for healing for the sick based on our faith. When we do this, God's love will manifest its power through our love.

The power of prayer is great. Verse 16b says, "The effective prayer of a righteous person avails much." We need to be a loving healing community, taking every opportunity to pray for the sick. There are many opportunities to do this: in worship, in a small group, at home, at school or at work, in any setting, pray for the sick when needed and practice the ability to operate in love.

2. Face up to the hidden sin and suffering in human life

Physical illness is actually relatively easy to identify and treat, but spiritual illness, which is the pain and sin hidden in people's lives, is much more difficult and needs to be healed!

Most Christians have a wrong idea that since Christians are new creations, the old things are past and they should no longer have sin or pain. But real experience tells us that Christians also have many sins and a lot of suffering. If we do not know how to face the hidden sins and pain in our lives, and are not equipped to face the darkness in our own and others' lives, and pretend that nothing has happened, we cannot live an abundant life, nor can we help others to receive spiritual healing.

The church can be full of laughter and joy, but joy does not mean the absence of sin and pain. The Bible teaches us to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Sharing joy without sharing sorrow is not true fellowship. Have you ever seen such a situation? : Some people shared some personal inner thoughts in the group meeting. Suddenly, the atmosphere became very tense. No one knew how to respond. Everyone looked at the floor and was silent for a while. Then the group leader asked the next person to share. In this case, won't the group members who share their experiences feel not cared for and feel hurt? Or if other team members rush to give him solutions to the problem, will this team member really feel listened to and understood? If people are not listened to, they will never share their feelings deeply again!

Do we know how to listen carefully with a compassionate heart, then serve and pray for him, bring his pain to God, declare God's word to him, and bring God to him? If the Holy Spirit allows us to see that this person's heart is bound by sin, do we have the courage to admonish and remind him with love? We need to learn to face the hidden pain and sin in ourselves and others and provide healing and bandages. If people can experience healing and comfort in a group, it will be easier for them to open their hearts, which will bring more healing and comfort.

3. Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another

The United Kingdom has passed a law that if an owner allows someone else to live on the land he owns for 12 years without filing a lawsuit, the occupier has the right to own the land.

There is a similar law in the spiritual world! If we allow Satan to operate in our spirit for a long time and allow him to continue to possess a part of our life without driving him out in the name of the Lord, after a period of time, this area will seem to belong to Satan, and he will have his dominion over our lives. This is the "stronghold" mentioned in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, meaning that this area belongs to Satan and he is controlling us. In this area, even if we are willing to give the sovereignty of our lives to the Lord, we will still feel a special bondage within us, and we will feel particularly weak and unable to be released or break through.

When we accept the Lord, there are still many hidden areas in our hearts. If we want to be victorious in the Lord, we need to invite the Holy Spirit into our hearts to cleanse away these

hidden pollutants. Perhaps Satan has been occupying these filthy closets in our lives for some time, and even though we are willing to give them to the Lord, Satan will not let go.

If you have some hidden sins that are holding you back from being set free, you need to expose your darkness before others and share these hidden sins or pains in a small group. If you feel that these things are too personal and you are embarrassed to talk about them in front of a group of people, please find your watchman or anyone you can trust and open up to him. Remember: confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.

You are a priest of God, and priests are His representatives, with the authority to declare forgiveness on God's behalf. God's forgiveness may seem abstract, so many times it needs to be expressed and experienced in terms of human forgiveness. People need to experience the forgiveness and acceptance of the invisible God through the forgiveness and acceptance of their visible brothers and sisters. In the pursuit of holiness, you and I need brothers and sisters, and we need a community.

The church needs to be a healing community. When we pray for the sick with faith, when we face the pain and sin in our lives, when we confess our sins to one another and pray for one another, the miracle of healing happens in the church community! Let us bring healing and hope to this hurting world, okay?