

## What Does It Mean To Have Faith For Healing?

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Mark 5:21-43

There was a tragic story that appeared a few years ago in *Christianity Today* which is one of the major Christian magazines in America. It was reported by a Christian physician named Dr. Paul Brand. In the story, the father named David Gilmore, told about his 15-month old son's illness. The little boy named Dustin came down with a sickness that was like a flu. The Gilmore's took the little boy to the church and the pastor prayed for him. The particular church they went to believed that faith alone heals any disease and if you look elsewhere for help – for example to medical doctors or mental health specialists or physical therapists – that shows that you lack faith in God.

So David Gilmore and his wife followed the church's advice and they simply prayed for their son. Over the next few weeks as they faithfully prayed for their son, Dustin's temperature kept climbing. So his parents fasted and they noticed that after a few weeks Dustin was no longer responding to sound. And then a few days later little Dustin went blind.

One morning, the day after their pastor preached a particularly rousing sermon about faith, the Gilmore's went into their son's room and found that their little boy's body was blue and that he was still. Little Dustin Gilmore, age 16 months, had died. And again, they prayed and the church believed that little Dustin was going to be raised from the dead. But Dustin Gilmore stayed dead. The autopsy revealed that little Dustin died from a form of meningitis that could have been treated very easily.

Now it definitely troubles me to criticize any particular Christian teaching especially one that exhorts people to believe in God for healing and to trust God's Word. And yet, we often hear about tragedies like that of the Gilmore's in which someone follows a church-recommendation to get rid of their medicine and to have faith that God would directly heal them or their children simply by the power of faith. And certainly the Bible has a huge amount to say about the importance of faith. We read passages like this in Matthew 6:30:

Matthew 6:30

that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

And in a very often quoted text in Mark, we read:

Mark 11:22-24

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. 23 "Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and do not doubt in your heart but

believe that what you say will happen, it will be done for you. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Of course, that's not the only thing the Bible says about prayer. If it were, God would be turning the running of the universe over to us (we selfish, petty people). We would turn into monsters if we could literally get anything we asked for. We are commanded to pray according to God's will.

1 John 5:14-15

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

And in the text that we're going to read today Jesus commends people saying, "Your faith has healed you."

So here's the problem. On the one hand we have people on TV and in churches in this city essentially saying to people, "If you have enough faith you will always be healed. You will always be prosperous." This is a teaching that has led to disastrous consequences physically and financially as people have neglected medical treatment that could have helped them and have run up bills believing God will enable them to pay for their new Mercedes or expensive clothes instead of using wisdom and careful budgeting regarding their spending. It has also resulted in spiritual devastation as many people have walked away from God after discovering that in their life or in the life of a loved one, the healing did not happen as promised. And yet, on the other hand, there seems to be in scripture a very significant role for faith particularly in receiving a healing from God.

How can we make sense of the role of faith in our lives? How do you pray for healing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century without becoming flat-out weird and denying the accumulated experience and expertise of hundreds of years of medical advances? I'm going to try to tackle this particularly difficult issue today in a talk that I've titled "What Does It Mean To Have Faith For Healing?"

Let's pray.

Mark 5:21-29

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. 22 Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23 He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." 24 So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. 25 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead

of getting better she grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." 29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

Now in this text we have two people who are absolutely a study in contrasts. Mark, the gospel writer, masterfully weaves together a story of two people who have an encounter with Jesus.

#### A study in contrasts

And these two stories tell us much about what it means to have faith for healing. The two people who come to Jesus in this story represent the absolute polar opposite ends of the social, economic, and religious spectrum. On the one hand we have Jairus, v. 22-23:

##### Mark 5:22-23

Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23 He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."

Jairus was a man of distinction. He was a leader in the synagogue. He was male; he named; he feels comfortable in openly and directly requesting something from Jesus. He was respected in the Jewish community. The problem he brings to Jesus is not his own problem, he is not sick. Rather, he is bringing a request on behalf of a loved one; his daughter is ill, in fact, she is dying. So he asked Jesus to come to his house, lay hands on his daughter, and heal her.

Now, in radical contrast to Jairus, we have the story of the woman, vv. 25-29:

##### Mark 5:25-29

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. 27 When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." 29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

She is the very opposite of Jairus. She is a woman in a male-dominated society. She is nameless. She is really of no particular distinction. She has been in every way imaginable, bled dry. It says in vv. 25-26:

##### Mark 5:25-26

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. 26 She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.

She has been physically bled dry for 12 years. We don't know exactly what the condition was. It appears, perhaps, to be something from the womb or uterine bleeding, but that is unclear. She has also been bled dry financially by many physicians. And in this sense, she is not too dissimilar from folks today who have one of these strange maladies that physicians can't put their finger on; the kind of illness where the diagnostic criteria are not super-sharp: chronic fatigue syndrome, or an auto-immune disease. You go from doctor to another getting a variety of opinions; going through dozens of tests – you know something is wrong but no one can tell you exactly what is wrong.

We see that in the treatment of emotional disorders, particularly among adolescents. One therapist will say, "The problem is ADD." Another will say, "Well, no, your child has bi-polar disorder." Someone else might say, "Well, it is really depression." Try this medication; try that medication. Try a combination of three medications for your son or daughter. But they don't get better or the medicine has terrible side effects.

This woman is a picture of so many folks even today who are ground down through their encounters with the medical community. She is getting sicker and sicker and she is financially exhausted. She is also socially isolated. Her particular problem renders her ritually unclean. In the book of Leviticus, in chapter 15, when a man or woman has a discharge from their sexual organs, they are rendered unclean for a period of time. To be unclean meant that you were prevented from entering any sacred space. You could not enter the Temple or synagogue, if you were unclean. And anyone who had contact with you or anything that you sat on or laid down on became ritually unclean and couldn't go into the Temple or synagogue either. So her particular illness separated from Jewish religious life.

Jairus is the synagogue ruler; this woman is cut off from the synagogue. He is the consummate insider. She is the ultimate outsider. She is utterly cut off from other people. In many ways this woman is a picture of an unrespectable disease. All disease is bad, but some disease is unrespectable. It is not something that you advertise. That you have high blood pressure, or a heart valve problem, or diabetes, well, who cares if anyone knows? But on the other hand, if you have AIDS or a venereal disease, well that is something else entirely.

#### A study in similarities

And while these two are a study in contrasts, they are also a study in similarities because we discover holding a high religious office, and being a man, and honored by the community doesn't give you any special "in" with Jesus. And having an unrespectable disease, being a woman, being poor and unnamed doesn't put you on the "outs" with Jesus. The similarities between this unnamed woman and Jairus far out

way their dissimilarities. Jesus doesn't care who you are or what you have or what you've done. He loves you as much as he loves anyone on earth. Do you believe that? What do they have in common?

What they have in common is what every human being has in common. We all have needs.

#### Both had needs

Insider, outsider, suburban, urban – we all have needs. Some needs are more obvious like a flow of blood. Other needs are more hidden like a sick child. But what we have in common is that there are some needs – it doesn't matter how much money you have, we still have to go to Jesus. Jesus is not just for the obviously broken; and Jesus is not just for the lucky few. The kingdom of God doesn't have the distinctions that we human beings draw. The ground at the foot of the cross is level. We all approach God the same way – through simple trust in his Son Jesus. Our race, our class, our education, and our achievements mean nothing in the kingdom of God. Both of these people had to humble themselves in order to receive from Jesus.

#### Both had humility

Jesus had already become a controversial figure in the synagogue. There was a dispute about what his agenda was. He was threatening to the establishment. But this man, Jairus, doesn't care about the controversy. He doesn't care that he is going to alienate certain people. He very publicly humbles himself by falling on his knees and begs Jesus' help in vv. 22-23:

#### Mark 5:22-23

Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23 He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."

It's tough for a wealthy, popular person to publicly kneel down before Jesus. "What are my friends going to think? If the people in my department knew that I was a Christian...If my friends at the company or the country club or the university, saw me kneeling at an altar weeping - this is not something we respectable people do. Jairus came to Jesus the way that everyone must come to Jesus, on his knees and in humility.

See, you can't be consumed with protecting your image and still come to Christ. You can't let your spiritual life be determined by everyone else and still come to Christ. Christ is still a controversial figure today. And there are people in your life – your parents, your spouse, your friends, your boyfriend or girlfriend, who may not understand why it is that you've decided to throw your lot in with Jesus. As a Jewish teenager, there certainly were people in my life who didn't think understand why Jesus.

Jairus doesn't care. He knows that he needs Christ. The woman also had to come in humility. She had to push through years of isolation and years of rejection; years in which people said, "Get away! Don't touch me!" in order to come to Christ.

Both had faith

Mark 5:30-36

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" 31 "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?' " 32 But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. 33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. 34 He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." 35 While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" 36 Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

Why did Jesus publicly call this woman out? It certainly wasn't to shame her. Jesus' motive was to heal this woman entirely. See, Jesus cares about holistic salvation. He doesn't just want to save your soul for heaven. He wants to heal you of past hurts and guilt and rejection and despair. He was interested not only in restoring the woman's body, but restoring her emotionally and spiritually and relationally. And to do that he needs to break down the shame barrier in her life in which she thought she had to sneak up on Jesus and then sneak away and restore her to the community she is a part of proving to everyone that she is now ritually clean. I love v. 33:

Mark 5:33

Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

He has her tell the whole truth. Jesus is inviting her out of the shadows. She's in the light with Jesus. She's standing before him expecting rejection. And I can see Jesus smiling and saying, "It's OK. I'm safe, you can tell me anything. You can't tell me everything. I don't condemn you. I'm not like everyone else. Jesus says the same thing to us today – homosexuality, pornography use, substance abuse, divorce, addiction, tell Jesus – he doesn't condemn you. He wants something better for you.

Healing has come to her; the kingdom of God has come to her in every way it could come – physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, she could return to the synagogue. "Woman, your faith has healed you."

And Jairus? Don't be afraid, just believe.

What does it mean to have faith for healing? I want to offer you four different faith perspectives that have existed in the Christian church for the last 2000 years and certainly exists in different churches in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first perspective is:

Divine healing no longer happens

This has been a very common view throughout the history of the Christian church certainly from the 4<sup>th</sup> century on. The idea is that maybe God 2000 years ago used to heal, but he no longer does – at least not in answers to prayer. This can be understood in a variety of ways. Healing was designed to validate the gospel. Now that we have the Bible we no longer need healing. Or the Bible stories aren't meant to be read literally. Or we've now advanced to a scientific age and we understand that the things in scripture are mythological. These are all opinions held by people who attend church. Divine healing no longer happens; if you are going to be healed, the only way is through medical science – period.

That particular view is very hard to square with a plain reading of scripture unless you impose some other kind of framework on the Bible. It is hard to come to Jesus and not believe that he could heal. There is no suggestion that the things we read about in scripture could not take place today.

Well, here is a second position:

Divine healing can occur in extraordinary circumstances

This is a very common view in the church. Yes, I believe that God could heal. After all, he created the universe. Of course, God can do anything. But mainly what God wants to do is to use sickness to improve our character. And only in the rarest circumstance he would allow the world to know that perhaps there still is a God, he might extraordinarily heal someone. But it is so uncommon that the church hardly needs to take account of these extraordinarily rare events. Sure someone somewhere might hit the lottery, but you would be terribly unwise to plan on hitting the lottery as a foundation of your future retirement plan. And I really think that the issue for people who adopt this second position – God could heal, but he almost never does; healing only occurs in extraordinarily rare circumstances – is the product of our reading of our non-experience back into the Bible. No one reading the Bible would imagine that Jesus healing people was an extraordinarily rare occurrence, or that the Jesus we encounter in the Bible could heal, but he probably would turn down almost everyone.

I do believe the reason people take this extraordinarily rare view is that we read our non-experience of healing back into the scriptures. You say, "Well, I've never seen it" and that becomes the lenses through which you read the Bible. We constantly need to be aware of the experiences that shape our reading of the text so that we might take the spectacles off and try to read scriptures for all their worth.

A third position, which is the position we adopt here at the Vineyard and the one I personally adopt is that:

Divine healing is the ordinary way that God works, but is not guaranteed

It is ordinary, not highly unusual to the point of being irrelevant. Ordinary, but not always. You ask, "Rich, why not always? The TV preachers say so long as you have faith you always get healing and prosperity. But you say healing and prosperity are not guaranteed. Where do you get that from?"

We have numerous examples in the Bible of people who were unhealed despite someone's great faith. For example, we read these words of the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4:20:

2 Timothy 4:20  
...and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.

Do you think there was some lack of faith in the apostle Paul or that you have greater faith than the apostle who wrote much of the New Testament and who saw the Risen Christ? Do you think you are greater than the apostle Paul? Yet, Paul doesn't say, "Well, I guaranteed him a healing." Paul left him sick. And to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:23:

1 Timothy 5:23  
Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

The apostle Paul doesn't say, "Timothy, forget the use of alcohol, and just claim your healing." We'll talk about this third position more. But the fact is, the kingdom of this world has not yet become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. We are not yet living in the kingdom of God. We have a foretaste now. We can experience some now, but only in part. When Jesus returns only then will there be no more death, or mourning, or crying, or pain. But then there is a fourth position that has become very common especially among TV evangelists and popular faith teachers:

Divine healing always happens if there is faith

What's the problem with this perspective? Well, as I mentioned in the Bible there are people who were clearly not healed. This age is the age of death, mourning, crying, and pain. And all of human history testifies to one irrefutable fact that we all die. We have only two people in the Bible that escape death and who were taken directly up to heaven – Enoch and Elijah. Everyone else died of something. So either the notion that God always heals in response to faith is false, or no one in human history has had enough faith to keep them from dying. But in either case, we know that God does not heal 100% of the time. He does not.



And the results of teaching guaranteed healing has been disastrous. I opened with a story of a tragedy that befell a family who withheld medication from their 15-month old and he died.

I have a dear friend who became alienated from God at some levels of her life for more than two decades because her mother subscribed to this teaching that God absolutely healed all the time in response to faith. Tragically, her mother had cancer. As the cancer began killing mom, mom would not allow anyone to suggest that mom might be dying because that was considered a negative confession. So even when it seemed apparent that God was not healing mom after many times of prayer and fasts, the daughter was not even allowed to say “goodbye.” She never had the chance to say the things she wanted to say to her mom. Mom never said the things she needed to say to her daughter before she went home to be with the Lord.

Divine healing is ordinary. It is common. But it is not yet guaranteed. This, in turn, leads us into the mystery of faith. What does it mean, then, to have faith for healing? What is faith? Let me share with you what faith is not.

Faith in Jesus is not faith in my faith

In v. 22 it says:

Mark 5:22

Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet.

And in vv. 27-29 we read this:

Mark 5:27-29

When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, 28 because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” 29 Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

Our faith is in Jesus and in his power, in his tenderness. She touched Jesus and felt power to go into her body. Faith in Jesus is faith in his kindness. There is a kindness in the approach of Jesus. Here is what we read in vv. 37-43:

Mark 5:37-43

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. 38 When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39 He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” 40 But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha kum!” (which means “Little girl,

I say to you, get up!"). 42 Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. 43 He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

I love that little phrase, "Talitha Koum." Jesus spoke Aramaic which is a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew. The Bible occasionally will mention a phrase of Jesus in the original language. It seems to me that this is one of those little indirect instances of eyewitnesses actually hearing something that Jesus said. Something that Jesus said left such an indelible impression that the only way that the gospel writers could record them was to put them in the original language.

There is a fascinating study of the Aramaic words in the Bible. Jesus used the word "Abba." Hearing Jesus use the Hebrew word, Abba, which is also Aramaic calling God his Father left such an impression on the disciples that a generation later, the apostle Paul writing to a church a thousand miles away in Rome, still retained the word "Abba" when writing a largely non-Jewish audience in Rome.

Jesus' words on the cross:

Matthew 27:46

About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

...left such an indelible impression that the eyewitnesses had to share them in the original Aramaic. So here in Mark 5:41, when Jesus raises the little girl, he uses the words "Talitha Koum"

Mark 5:41

He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!").

The words mean "little girl" – some commentaries say that it means "little lamb." When you are approaching Jesus in prayer for healing, or in prayer for anything, you are approaching someone who has infinite power, for whom nothing is impossible, and for someone who has infinite tenderness. The problem of some of the faith teaching is that instead of focusing on Jesus, this powerful, tender person, the faith teaching gets people to focus on their faith. And the more we talk about the need for faith, the more we're tempted to look inside of ourselves and through what I would call morbid introspection, naval gaze, and I begin to ask, "Do I really have enough faith? Or do I feel full of faith?"

Let me share with you one of the keys for living successfully as a Christian: Keep your eyes on Jesus. Cast a sideways glance at yourself every once in a while, but keep your eyes on Jesus. Don't stare at your problems. Don't stare at your sin. Don't stare at your faith. Fix your gaze on Jesus.

Like the apostle Peter who asked Jesus if he could step out of the boat and walk on water with him, Peter did amazingly well when he was looking at the Lord. When he began staring at the waves, he sank like a stone.

Faith is not my knowledge of God's timing

Jairus had to wait because Jesus was interrupted by this woman with the flow of blood. Jairus believed that Jesus could heal his daughter, that's why he went to him. But even if you have complete faith that Jesus wants to heal, that doesn't necessarily mean that you've heard from Christ when he will heal. Occasionally, God will give what the Bible calls a gift of faith, a supernatural endowment of faith in the moment to believe not only that it is God's ordinary will to heal, not only that God is good, powerful and tender, but that God wants to heal right now. But I've prayed for hundreds of people and I can tell you in my own experience that it is unusual (at least in my experience) to have the Lord say, "I'm going to heal right now!" I've heard that and it has happened.

Francis McNutt wrote a marvelous book titled "Healing." We are ordering it for our bookstore, if you want to follow up with more on this subject. Francis McNutt, who has been used in divine healing for 40 years and who has really gone after this whole area of divine healing, said that in his experience at his meetings perhaps as few as 5% immediately receive complete healing of a condition. That's a lot. But 95% do not. He said then there is a significant percentage of folks who said they've received some help; but many are not aware of any change at all. Francis McNutt advised that we continue to pray for people because if someone gets 10% better after one prayer, he's discovered that they'll continue to improve after the second prayer session and after the third and fourth.

We've taken that idea very seriously here in the Vineyard. So we say to people who, for example, have cancer, go in for your chemo; go in for your radiation; but we want to treat you with the progressive radiation treatment of the Holy Spirit. We want to pray repeatedly for you for your arthritis, or your depression, or whatever it is that chronically afflicts you. We have prayer ministry teams that we call soaking prayer teams that set up appointments with folks who have chronic problems. Faith in Jesus is not my faith in the knowledge of Jesus' timing. I don't have to approach someone and say, "I know for certain that Jesus wants to heal you right now" and I can still have faith.

Faith in Jesus is not a technique

The woman was healed by grabbing hold of Jesus' garment. Jairus' daughter was healed when Jesus leaned over the little girl and took her by the hand and said, "Talitha kum". On one occasion Jesus told a blind man to put mud on his eyes and then go wash. On another occasion, Jesus took some of his saliva and put it on a mute man's mouth and he began to speak. Does this mean that every time we encounter someone who is mute that we spit in their mouth? That every blind person we should put mud on

their eyes? Every dead child we take by the hand and say, “talitha kum?” Every person who is hemorrhaging we ought to send them a prayer cloth?

We human beings are so locked into technique. It is Jesus who heals, not a technique. This is not magic. Often, if God uses you to pray for a sick person and they get well, we immediately want to camp upon a certain form of words that we used the last time, or a discovery we made concerning demonic involvement. We take a particular situation, or a particular insight that we gained on one occasion and we turn it into a universal rule. We take our eyes off Jesus. We stop listening to Jesus in the new situation, relying on Jesus’ power, and on Jesus’ tenderness. Faith in Jesus is not a technique.

Faith in Jesus is not necessarily found in the sick person

In this story, the little girl was dead. She exercised no faith. Often in some of the faith teachers, especially those who are on TV, or in some churches, it can almost seem like the sick person who doesn’t get well is blamed for their lack of faith. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that faith to be healed must be resident in the sick person. Often a person who is chronically ill struggles to believe that it is God’s ordinary will to heal them, particularly if they’ve prayed or have been prayed for on numerous occasions and have not been healed.

We see there is a connection between faith and healing, but that connection is mysterious. John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard movement, said, “I used to look around a room and see who seemed to have faith for this healing.” Sometimes you see that open-faced, bright-eyed look in a child, or a new Christian. Let me share with you a story:

Pat was diagnosed with testicular cancer in July 1994. He immediately had surgery and then went into a chemo therapy regime that had him in hospital one week; out one week; back in hospital for a week – this continued for several months. Unfortunately, as is often the case with testicular cancer, it metastasized resulting in a large tumor in Pat’s lung. Surgery was scheduled for November to remove the tumor.

During that time frame, we came to church as was our usual custom every week. Pat was “Uncle Pat” to our nieces’ friends, who all knew he was sick with cancer. These little girls were very young at the time, maybe 11-12 years old, and had just returned from a kids’ camp that weekend and were on fire for the Lord. When they saw Pat at church about 15 of them came to pray for him during the ministry time.

It was such a sweet experience to see all these little girls praying for “Uncle Pat.” Everyone around us was in tears. God gave one of the little girls, Gretchen Pierce, a vision of God reaching down and putting a “golden ball” in Pat’s chest. Once inside of Pat’s chest, the ball burst and she saw the gold coursing through

Pat's entire body. Pat clearly felt something happening in his body at that same time.

He went to his routine weekly appointment with his oncologist, Mel Davis – a believer, the next day. Pat told Mel what had happened in church that past Sunday. Mel ran the usual blood tests and discovered that Pat's tumor markers had dropped drastically. Both Pat and Mel felt that the Lord had healed Pat. But to be safe, Mel encouraged Pat to go through the surgery and to finish his chemo treatments.

Pat agreed with Mel and went in for lung surgery. The surgeon thought he was going to be removing a large tumor and 1/3 of Pat's lung. When he got inside Pat's lung, he discovered scar tissue the size of a quarter where the tumor once was. The surgeon, not a Christian, had no explanation for why the tumor disappeared.

Pat has been cancer free for the last 14 years. God miraculously healed him through the prayers of many, but especially the prayers of little girls.

Here at the Vineyard, we never blame someone who has not gotten well. We never say, "Well, you just don't have enough faith" because their appropriate response should be, "Well, why do I have to be the one who has faith? Why don't you, the one who is praying, don't have faith for me to be healed?"

Faith in Jesus is not me understanding every situation

When I approach an individual to pray for healing, I approach them as a limited fallen individual who doesn't see all of God's plan, in the apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13:

...Knows in part and prophesies in part...

I don't know all that God is doing in a person's life. I don't know all that God plans to do in a person's life. Unless the Lord in the moment gives me supernatural insight regarding what he's doing, I don't know if the Lord is going to heal in this moment. I know the Lord is powerful and I know the Lord is tender and I know according to scripture that it is God's ordinary approach to heal people.

I also know that the Lord is purposeful. Whatever he allows is allowed for a purpose, but I may not and the person may not know what that greater purpose is. That may not unfold for a year, five years, or decades. One of my favorite verses that has given me great comfort in times of trial is 2 Corinthians 4:7-8:

2 Corinthians 4:7-8

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;

So many people think that because they are perplexed they have no faith. I don't get what God is doing. Well, who said you had to get what God is doing? That is not a requirement. The requirement is that you have faith in Jesus. That you believe that he is powerful; that you believe he is tender and that he cares for you; that he has not abandoned you; and, you believe that he has purpose. It is not a requirement that you understand all that the Lord is doing. It is not a requirement that you understand the Lord's timing. It is not a requirement that you see how all the pieces fit together. You are as a limited fallen creature permitted to be perplexed. Indeed, most of our life is lived that way.

I told you what faith isn't. It is not faith in faith. It is not a technique. It is not my knowledge of God's timing or my understanding of all that God is doing. So...what is faith? I love Francis McNutt's statement:

Faith is chutzpah!

Chutzpah is a Yiddish word; it means brassiness, it means audacity; it means someone who goes for it; who won't take no for an answer. What's chutzpah? Chutzpah is the old Yiddish joke about the man who killed his father and mother and then pleaded with the judge for mercy saying, "After all, Judge, I'm an orphan." That's Chutzpah.

Chutzpah is the lawyer's response to the question: what do you charge for your services? The lawyer says, "\$10,000 to answer three questions." The client says, "Doesn't that seem like a lot of money?" The lawyer said, "What's your third question?"

Chutzpah. Chutzpah is seen in this woman with the flow of blood. She had to fight through so many obstacles of disappointment over 12 years of spending everything that she had, or chronic illness, of shame, of social isolation, or ritual uncleanness. But she pushes through the crowd and she gets to Jesus. Do you have chutzpah – chutzpah to go for it in ministry; chutzpah to start something that God wants you to do for the poor or single moms or kids.

Chutzpah. And I see chutzpah in Jairus, who had to fight through the devastating news that his daughter had died. Jairus had to push through; he needed chutzpah to push through the mocking of the crowd who laughed when Jesus said, "Don't worry, she's just sleeping."

We get devastating news. Someone has cancer, or we face opinions from everyone else who say, "Forget about praying. The Lord doesn't heal. God doesn't hear your prayers." It is chutzpah to push through and to say "no, I may be perplexed; I may not understand everything, but I've got the brassiness to go after Jesus."

What is faith? Faith is chutzpah; faith is humble. As I said before both the woman and Jairus needed to come to Jesus in humility. Faith is always the open expectancy of a child. As Jesus said in Matthew 18:2-4:

Matthew 18:2-4

He called a little child, whom he placed among them. 3 And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes a humble place—becoming like this child—is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Faith is the open-hearted receptive bright-eyed expectant approach of a child who hasn't been trained by decades of cynicism. Yes, I believe my Jesus is powerful; yes, I believe that my Jesus is tender and kind; yes, I believe that in this moment, Jesus can heal me, and I want to receive all that Christ has and I want to be used in any way that Christ intends. Heal me, Lord; use me, Lord. I welcome you. That's faith. Let's pray.

## What Does It Mean To Have Faith For Healing?

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Rich Nathan

May 24-25, 2008

Healing: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Healing Series

Mark 5:21-43

### 1. The sick woman and Jairus (Mark 5:21-36)

- A. A study in contrasts
- B. A study in similarities
  - 1. Both had needs
  - 2. Both had humility
  - 3. Both had faith

### 2. The spectrum of views on faith and healing

- A. Divine healing no longer happens
- B. Divine healing can occur in extraordinary circumstances
- C. Divine healing is ordinary but not guaranteed
- D. Divine healing always happens if there is faith

### 3. What is faith?

- A. What faith is not:
  - 1. Faith in Jesus is not faith in my own faith
  - 2. Faith in Jesus is not my knowledge of God's timing
  - 3. Faith in Jesus is not a technique
  - 4. Faith in Jesus is not necessarily found in the sick person
  - 5. Faith in Jesus is not my understanding
- B. What faith is:
  - 1. Faith is chutzpah (Mark 5:27, 28, 36)