

God's Healing' series

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- Does God Heal Today?
- Why God heals sometimes and not other times?
- How to pray for healing?

Does God Heal Today?

Ref: John chapter 9 verses 1 to 16, 24 and 25

Today, I want to consider this passage in which Jesus heals a man who was blind from birth. It focuses on the issue of Healing: does God heal the sick?

This passage opens with a fundamental human question. When the disciples saw this man who had been born blind they asked Jesus, "Whose sin caused him to be born blind? Was it his own or his parents sin?"

When people suffer serious illness or misfortune today, they are still inclined to ask, 'What have I (or what has that person) done to deserve this?' or 'Why has God done this to me?' wondering if God is punishing them in some way.

The Jews connected suffering with sin. If someone suffered, they believed that s/he had sinned and couldn't be healed until his/her sin was forgiven. There were times in the Old Testament when God clearly punished the sinfulness and disobedience of his people through sickness, defeat in war, and death. This was during the period of the Old Covenant relationship when God related to the Jews as a whole nation, as a people-group. God was their god and they would be God's people. God would bless them when they obeyed his ways and God would discipline them when they were disobedient and did their own thing.

But even within the Old Testament, especially in the Book of Job and the Psalms, we see the Jewish people struggling with the issue of the suffering of the innocent and of the faithful servants of God. 'Why do the innocent suffer?' they asked?

The disciples must have known of this blind man because they knew he had been blind from birth. So they asked Jesus whose sin was responsible for his blindness, his own or that of his parents. It seems strange to us that they would even ask about his own sin as he was blind from birth. But some Jews believed in pre-natal sin, that it was possible to sin in the womb. (Now many mothers may agree with that after being kicked around by their unborn baby during pregnancy!) But for some Jews, sinfulness was related to the question of when life begins: at conception or birth?

Some Jews had also accepted the Greek idea of the pre-existence of the soul; that souls existed from before the creation of the world and resided in a special place, waiting to enter a body. Some believed that these souls were already good or bad. (From the Jewish Book of Wisdom chapter 8 v 19, "Now I was a child good by nature, and a good soul fell to my lot.") So some Jews believed in pre-natal sin.

The alternative option was that the man's blindness was due to his parents' sin. The idea that children inherit the consequences of their parents' sin was woven into Jewish thought. We don't have any trouble accepting this view today with our understanding of genetic and personality influences and the influences and consequences of a family environment.

The second commandment says, "I am the Lord your God and I am a jealous God (I tolerate no rivals). I bring punishment on those who hate me and on their descendants down to the third and fourth generation. But I show my love to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my laws". (Exodus 20 v 5 & 6) It is a profound truth that no person is an island. When a person sins, he or she can set in motion a train of consequences which affect future generations. And if we understand the power of evil, we know that curses can affect families for generations.

But in verse 3, Jesus says, 'No!' to any of this. The man's blindness is not due to his own sin nor his parents' sin. Jesus rejects this direct link between an individual's suffering or illness and their personal sin. He does so in other incidents also (see Luke 13 v 1 to 5, when some Galileans were killed by Pilate). Jesus mentions a person's sin in connection with any of his healings only twice: the paralysed man lowered through the roof on a stretcher in Luke chapter 5 and the sick man beside the Sheepgate of the Temple in John chapter 5.

In the first of these passages I think that Jesus was making a teaching point to the Pharisees and theological teachers to whom he was speaking at the time (see Luke 5 v 17 to 26). Jesus does not try to explain any

connection between sin and sickness. The second passage is more direct as Jesus says "so stop sinning or something worse may happen to you". (John 5 v 14)

Under the New Covenant relationship individuals from all nations can enter God's Kingdom through personally turning from sin and putting their faith in Jesus. Under the New Covenant there is **NO** consistent indication in Jesus' ministry or teaching that God causes sickness in a person's life as a direct punishment for some sin they have committed. That is not to say God does not discipline us at times when we are disobedient. The story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 is a challenging one.

God does allow sickness and can use them for his purposes. God also leave us at times to suffer the consequences of our sins and mistakes.

However, we do live in a fallen sin-infected world as a result of human beings mis-using and abusing the freedom of choice that God has given. Human sin has, in a mysterious way, even affected the natural world. So all people whether Christians or not, are subject to natural disaster, unexplained illness and human evil, as well as to evil spiritual forces and the natural consequences of our own mistakes and wrong choices in daily living. Generally speaking, we can say that God **allows** sickness and suffering but God does not **cause** it.

This brings us back to Jesus' reply to the disciple's question. Jesus says, "This man is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in him." This may sound as though Jesus is saying that God **caused** the man to be blind so that God could show his power. What Jesus means, is that the **fact** of the man's blindness gives an opportunity for God's power to be seen at work in him.

Jesus does not dwell on blaming and looking for causes. **Jesus moves on from the disciples' question of past causes to the matter of future possibilities.** Jesus accepts people as they are, whatever the causes and whoever is to blame, and is willing and able to transform their lives by his presence. And Jesus can do this **even when the mess in our lives is entirely our own fault!** So Jesus moves on to display God's life-changing power by healing the blind man.

WHY DOES GOD HEAL? Some reasons are clearly seen in the life and ministry of Jesus, who claimed to be, and whom the New Testament claims to be, God become a human person.

1. God heals because of his compassion and mercy. Time and again we read in the gospels that Jesus had compassion on a sick person ('pity' is the old word) or responded to their cries for mercy and healed them.

Jesus never saw the sick, the disabled or the demon-possessed as offensive, disgusting or unimportant. Jesus was moved with compassion, literally, "was moved in his bowels", to feel their pain and even to reach out and touch them, to get involved and heal them. The compassion of Jesus finally took him to death on a cross, so that we might be healed from both the penalty and the consequences of our sins.

Do you know why God still heals TODAY? Because God has not changed. God has not given up being compassionate and merciful towards people. God still wants people to be well and whole and healthy as He created us to be.

If we wish to be used by God in healing ministry today, we need to ask God to give us His sense of compassion for the hurting.

2. God heals to bring glory and honour to Himself and to his Son. Verse 3 says, "He is blind so that God's power can be seen at work..." Constantly we read that the people praised and glorified God when they saw Jesus heal someone: the paralysed man, the women bent over by an evil spirit, the blind man, and when raising the widow's son to life (read Matthew 15 v 30 & 31). In fact all Jesus' miracles had the same double aim, to express God's compassion and to draw people's attention to God so that they would praise him. They also pointed to Jesus being God's Messiah and Son.

Still today, the purpose of God's healing work, or of any miracle, is to draw people to himself that they may come to worship and honour him in their lives. God heals people for His glory not for the reputation of the healer.

This is a good test of the genuineness of a healing ministry. Does the person with the healing gift glorify themselves or God when people are healed?

3. God heals in response to faith. Consistently, throughout the gospels, Jesus said to those whom he healed, "Your faith has made you well". He said this to the woman with the haemorrhage who secretly touched his cloak. When a Roman Officer asked him to heal his servant who was at home and unable to move, Jesus offered to come to his home. 'No' said the officer, 'I don't deserve to have you come into my house. Just give the order and he will get well.' Jesus answered, "I have never found anyone in Israel with faith like this... Go home and what you believe will be done for you." (Luke 7)

When Jesus saw the efforts to which four friends went to demolish some of the roof of a house in which he was teaching, to lower their paralysed friend on a stretcher to meet Jesus, the passage says "when Jesus saw their faith (the faith of the friends) he healed the man." (Luke 5)

God heals in response to faith. Having faith in God for healing, means not only believing that God has the ability to heal but that God is willing to heal and does so today. We are unlikely to ask God for anything that we do not believe God can do today.

This is not to say that God must heal in response to our faith. Why God does not heal is the great mystery of the healing ministry. And while God does heal in response to faith, it is very wrong and very distressing to blame a person for a lack of faith if they are not healed. It is also important to remember that there are no magic formulae or special techniques which guarantee God's healing. When Jesus healed, he didn't use just one standard approach. (Some say this healing of the blind man led the first denomination – "the mudites" – those who insisted that healings must follow this formula!)

4. Finally, God heals in response to his own promise. In the New Testament, God commissioned the whole church to be involved in the healing ministry. Paul speaks of a gift of healing which some individuals in the church are given and which need to be identified, encouraged and used in the church.

Then in James chapter 5 we read this, "Are any among you sick? They should call the elders of the church who will pray over them and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up". Now why would God give this direction to the church to pray for the sick, and promise healing if they prayed in faith, unless God intended it to be a normal part of church life?

And why would God give gifts of healing to the church unless he intended that people be healed? This prayer for healing is not as an alternative to seeking medical help. James states clearly in chapter 1 that every good and perfect gift comes from God and this surely applies to medical gifts. We are to seek medical help and also to pray.

The elders are called not just to visit the sick, not just to pray for comfort and strength for the sick, but to pray with faith that they be healed. This is a practice which we follow and encourage here at St Albans, both for elders to pray and for the sick to request their prayers. And of course we can each pray for God's healing for those who are sick. One major reason that people do not believe in or expect healing today, is that they have not experienced people being healed. I want to consider this question next week and the wider question, 'Why does God not always heal?'

Why God heals sometimes and not other times

John chapter 5 verses 1 to 18

Last week I spoke on the issue of Healing, considering two particular questions: Why do people get sick and suffer? and Why does God heal?

Today I want to consider the issue of 'Why God does NOT heal'? or perhaps more fairly 'Why God heals sometimes and not other times'?

Today's reading from John chapter 5 describes a man who has been disabled for 38 years. He was lying beside a pool in Jerusalem along with a large crowd of sick people, the blind, the lame and the paralysed, who occupied the porches surrounding the pool. It must have been a disturbing sight, rather like a hospital for the disabled. Why were they there?

This pool was fed by an underground stream that occasionally bubbled causing ripples on the surface. The people of Jerusalem believed this disturbed water was caused by the presence of an angel and the first person to enter the water after the ripples would be healed of all their illness. Then along came Jesus and asked this one particular man if he wanted to get well. The man explained that he was too slow to be first into the water and then Jesus simply ordered him to get up, pick up his mat and walk. And the man did so. It is an amazing story! But in our amazement we miss a staggering point. Why did Jesus heal only one person in that whole crowd of sick people? WHY did he, how could he, walk on by and leave the rest?

Then after the resurrection of Jesus, when he had gone to heaven, His disciples (now called Apostles) did many wonderful and miraculous things in Jesus' name (Acts 2 v 43). Peter and John also healed a lame man in Jerusalem. The number of Christians grew rapidly but so did their persecution by the Jewish leadership. In Acts chapter 12 we read that two Apostles, Peter and James (the brother of John), were both arrested by King Herod. James was beheaded and yet God sent an angel to help Peter escape from prison unharmed. WHY?

And here is a similar modern situation from a book by Jack Deere called, '**Surprised by the Power of the Spirit**', p.157.

"I once went to pray for a little baby who had been born without a brain. Only a small portion of the brain stem had developed. This baby was born to a Christian family who had already lost two sons to tragic deaths. When I was asked to go into the intensive care unit and pray for the little child, I thought I experienced faith rising in my heart. I remembered a famous, medically documented healing of a baby boy born in Vancouver, British Columbia, with almost an identical condition. The boy's father, Paddy Duclow, had described the healing to me which mystified the doctors in Vancouver and made his son a medical phenomenon in that city. I was thinking of this healing when I went into the intensive care unit to pray for the baby.

I was amazed when I saw the baby boy. He was beautiful! He looked so healthy and normal. The family's pastors and I prayed for the child, and even though we had no sense of God's special divine presence, we thought there was a good chance that the little boy would be healed. Instead, the next day the little boy died. When I returned home to my own city, I found that the Lord had healed a woman in our church of a venereal disease, a woman who had not been particularly repentant. I felt anger rising within me. I asked God why he would heal a woman who did not deserve healing and let an innocent little baby die?"

God doesn't always heal or rescue us from suffering. Jesus did not heal everyone in need. Neither did the Apostles, nor Paul, despite the miracles which God performed thru them.

I believe that we can identify some reasons why we do not experience God's healing power in the church today. Two are negative and two are positive.

1. UNBELIEF IN THE CHURCH:

I said last week that God heals in response to the faith of the sick person and/or the people praying for healing. We see this in the ministry of Jesus. But I also said that faith does not guarantee healing. God does not have to

heal in response to faith. It is also very wrong and very hurtful to blame people for their lack of faith if they are not healed.

Having said all that, it is also true that in an atmosphere of unbelief, scepticism or resistance to the healing ministry, it is less likely, although not impossible, for healing to occur. This was the experience of Jesus in his home town: "And so they rejected him. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is respected everywhere except in his home town and by his own family." Because they did not have faith, he did not perform many miracles there." (Matthew chapter 13 v 57, 58)

Why is there UNBELIEF in the church today about miracles and healing?

(i) Wrong modern theology: In the liberal-minded churches, influenced by some modern theology, they have rejected any idea of the supernatural, evil spirits and healing miracles as belonging to a primitive and superstitious culture, a pre-scientific world-view. All this ancient superstition has been replaced by a modern, educated and scientific understanding of the world. So church leadership rejects evil spirits and spiritual gifts like healing.

(ii) Wrong Biblical theology: In some conservative Bible-believing churches there are those who believe that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit died out with the Apostles; that God did miraculous things through Jesus and the Apostles to get the Kingdom established and the church going, but then God stopped. This is called 'dispensationalism'. So these church leaders reject the miraculous as works of the devil or human trickery. They claim that the Bible teaches this, although I believe their reasoning is more read into the Bible than taken from it.

(iii) No experience of New Testament-type miracles in our modern western church's life. This can be seen as a direct result of points i and ii above, but it is also a direct cause of points i and ii. If we are not taught about the healing ministry and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, then we won't expect to see them or to pray for them. But on the other hand, if we don't experience healing and miracles, we often look for some way of explaining why the New Testament miracles do not continue to occur.

(iv) Negative experiences of the abuse and misuse of spiritual gifts by other Christians and churches can cause a rejection of spiritual gifts. This is understandable and it is important to guard against such misuse; but we must not throw the baby out with the bath water! These factors create a climate of unbelief and unwillingness to seek God's healing. They tend to put God in a box. God usually respects our choices and does not force himself upon us, against our wills. "We have not, because we ask not, because we believe not." We need to be open, learning and seeking after all that God wants to do among us.

2. ISSUES IN THE PERSON

Unforgiveness and bitterness towards others, fear and anxiety about getting ill, ongoing/ unconfessed sin, unhealthy lifestyle (abuse or addictions), occult involvement, demonic influence or oppression, generational curses (unhealthy or demonic activities in ancestors), enjoying your sickness ("God will only deliver you from your enemies"), rejection of medical help.

These are then two negative reasons why we don't experience God's healing in the church today. Now the two positive reasons.

3. THE REFINING/CHARACTER-BUILDING VALUE OF SUFFERING:

We all know that hard times and tough experiences can help to make us better people, **sometimes**. Most of the New Testament references to the positive value of enduring suffering are about Christians enduring persecution because they are followers of Christ. 1 Peter 1 v 6 and 7 say, "Be glad about this, even though it may now be necessary for you to be sad for a while because of the many kinds of trials you suffer. Their purpose is to prove that your faith is genuine. Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure. Then you will receive praise and glory and honour on the Day when Jesus Christ is revealed."

"My brothers, consider yourselves fortunate when all kinds of trials come your way, for you know that when your faith succeeds in facing such trials, the result is the ability to endure." (James 1 v 2 & 3)

Certainly **some** suffering can build character and aid maturity, more readily than if God always rescued us from troubles. That would only cause us to become spoiled, slack and complacent.

Sometimes God may be teaching us, or discipling us, by allowing or causing some temporary suffering.

And sometimes God allows suffering to continue unrelieved or illness to continue without healing, but gives us the grace to endure it and blesses us with a special experience of his presence.

Paul's 'thorn in the flesh' is one example "But to keep me from being puffed up with pride because of the many wonderful things I saw, I was given a painful physical ailment, which acts as Satan's messenger to beat me and keep me from being proud. Three times I prayed to the Lord about this and asked him to take it away. But his answer was: "My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak." I am most happy, then, to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ's power over me. I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and difficulties for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12 v 7-10)

David Watson, a famous English Anglican and international evangelist with a significant healing ministry, wrote of his deeper experience of God through a year of terminal illness when aged 50.

"Drastic changes had to be made. Virtually all speaking engagements for the future were cancelled immediately, including major events in California, Norway, Sweden and Vancouver - which had been carefully planned for anything up to two years previously. My team would have to be disbanded by the end of April at the latest. I was now literally fighting for my life. 'God hasn't done anything for David,' people are now beginning to say. 'We've prayed and prayed, and nothing has happened at all.' Medically speaking, that seems to be true.

However God has been far from inactive in my life. At about one am on Advent Sunday morning, I had a bad asthmatic attack. In my helplessness, I cried out to God to speak to me. I'm not very good at listening to God, but between one and three a.m. God spoke to me so powerfully and painfully that I have never felt so broken before him (and still do). He showed me all my preaching, writing and other ministry was absolutely nothing compared to my love-relationship with him. In fact, my sheer busyness had squeezed out the close intimacy I had known with him during the first few months of the year after my (cancer) operation." (from 'Fear no evil', p170)

A person who is suffering or sick may experience God's blessing in a special way and God may use that situation to reach out to other people.

But this 'refining value of suffering' can also be used as an excuse for not seeking healing; to claim that this sickness is 'my cross to bear'.

It seems to me that the best approach is to pray for healing and relief from suffering unless you or the sick person clearly believe that God has indicated that he will not remove it; or unless you have prayed consistently without any sign of healing. Then we need to try to trust God's loving purposes, and to ask God for his grace to cope and to use our situation for his glory.

The fourth and primary reason why God heals sometimes and not at others is...

4. THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY:

Remember the story involving Dr Jack Deere that I started with?

"I asked God why he would heal a woman who did not deserve healing and let an innocent little baby die. It was as though the Lord said to me, "So who does deserve healing? Are you going to be the one who decides how to dispense my mercy?" That rebuke was enough for me. God didn't explain to me why the baby died and why he healed the woman, but he did remind me that he truly is sovereign and he does not have to explain himself to anyone." (p156)

God is sovereign; God is the Lord; God is in charge. And as Isaiah chapter 55 v8 reminds us: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts & neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.

God acts according to his purposes which we often cannot see or understand. God's timing may not be what we would choose; and there are three possible answers to our prayers: "Yes", "Wait" and "No". We tend to think of 'Yes' as the only real answer.

Then there are different forms of healing: physical emotional, spiritual, relational. The final stage of healing, for those who trust in Christ, comes through death itself as the door into God's heavenly Kingdom, where there is no more death or grief or crying or pain. (Revelation ch 21 v4)

We cannot see and understand the eternal purposes of God. But we have seen and can understand the eternal love of God. "The things that I have seen, teach me to trust the Creator for the things that I have not seen."

Its easy to ask the question 'WHY':

- Why some people suffer while others don't?
- Why some people are healed & others are not?
- Why some people are healed at one time in their lives and not at another?

But in the end we will never discover a satisfactory answer to that question on this side of heaven. Instead, David Watson suggests that we need to ask the question: **'WHAT?'**

What are you saying to me/them, God? What are you doing in my/their life? What response do you want them/me to make? What is the best way to approach our lives and the future from now on?

With the 'WHAT' question, we **can** expect an answer.

How to pray for healing

James chapter 5 verses 13 to 18

This is the final of three sermons on the issue of God's healing. At St Albans we affirm the healing ministry of the Holy Spirit and want to encourage the development of healing gifts. We have a team of people, as well as the elders, who are willing to pray with those who request prayer for healing. Today I want to conclude this series with some practical guidelines about how to pray with those who are sick or injured.

The Pray-ers

Any Christian can pray for healing for themselves and others, and some Christians are given a special healing gift for ministry to others. God can also give healing gifts in a specific situation where the pray-er may not usually have such a gift.

In a church context we seek to identify those with both a gift or passion for healing, and a compassion for people. Each pray-er needs to be accountable to some respected leader with a healing ministry or to the local church leaders. The pray-ers need to be humble people, open to receiving prayer themselves, and able to recognise when they are out of their depth, when the person needs ministry from more experienced people.

Generally those who pray within a church context need to be recognised, trained and "authorised" by the leadership. Having appropriate people as pray-ers is vitally important.

When we offer prayer for healing in a church service or public meeting, it is important to seek any words of knowledge about illness or injuries that God may wish to identify and heal. Those who receive a word of knowledge can also be involved in the praying.

Be aware of safe practice both for yourself and the other, not giving cause for gossip and misunderstanding, avoiding pressuring the other, respecting their decision-making and recognising when the situation is beyond your expertise. Praying in twos or threes is preferable, and avoid praying alone for the opposite gender unless briefly and in view of others.

Be confidential about the prayer matter. You may think someone else's experience could be helpful but first ask if they would like to talk about it; and if you think it may be important to share their situation with another, also ask them if they are agreeable.

Preparation

Prayerfully seek to be a channel of the Holy Spirit, having put our own lives in order with God (confessing any known sin, offering ourselves afresh to Jesus), being aware of what quenches the Holy Spirit, being prayerful about the other person if known or generally about those who will seek prayer at church service. Distinguish between prayer and counselling. Some situations need more time and discussion about the person's background, lifestyle and ongoing support.

Place

We can of course pray anywhere, anytime, but sometimes we need to take time to prepare and to spend with the person. Ensure privacy (especially with the volume of your voices) and "comfort" for the person, including involving support people if they wish.

Praying: Be expect-ful and respectful.

1. Being expectant: God wants to meet/heal/help us even more than we want it ourselves. Believe that God is a Good God who wants to heal in his mercy and compassion. We are ministering in the place of Jesus. We act on his authority which he has passed on to us.

Pray in faith as in James chapter 5. Encourage faith & build expectation. Encourage the person to lift their heads and hands and be expectant and receptive.

2. Be respectful, sensitive, appropriate in language (avoid Christian jargon) and appropriate in touch.

3. Laying on of hands is biblical and compassionate (touch can convey love). See Mark 16 v18, and Jesus touched the leper (Mark 1 v41), in Nazareth laid hands on a few sick people (Mark 6 v 5 & 6), and on a crippled woman (Luke 13). Be respectful about where to place your hands on people, avoid the head unless you have some “authority” to do so; it can be distracting and can be offensive to Maori & other indigenous people. Sometimes the authority of ordained leaders or those with the healing gift/ministry, needs to be invoked in healing. For example, calling for the elders in James 5. Ask first if you can place hands on or ask them to place their hand on the area of concern. Pray-ers can also raise our hands towards the person.

4. Anointing with oil is only mentioned in Mark 6 v13 & James 5. It isn't necessary every time you pray, so do so occasionally, as the Holy Spirit leads.

5. You might begin by asking why the person has come for prayer. Then begin praying by inviting the HS to come, then wait and listen. You may want to say, “Holy Spirit we invite you to speak to us about this situation; you know it better than us...” Admit our inadequacy and seek God's help. Or say to the person, “I cant help you but Jesus Christ can, so lets focus on him and ask him to give us some insight about you...” We find it hard to wait and listen. We pray too quickly from our minds rather than listening with our hearts. **DON'T BE AFRAID OF SILENCE.**

You may receive a some indication from God: a thought in your mind, a Bible verse, a picture, a “sympathy” pain in some specific location in your own body... What you get may be nothing to do with the presenting issue. Discern the appropriateness of what you receive and share it gently with the person in an opened ended rather than dogmatic way – “I sense this...does that mean anything to you?”

If as the pray-er you don't get any indication from God, ask the person if they sense anything.

Beware of knowing the person too well, and assuming you know their needs.

Beware of using a formula or fixed pattern to pray for healing, there isn't one.

However, it is clear that Jesus and the apostles, including Paul, prayed **specifically** and commanded the sickness, disease or evil spirits to go: “Be healed!” And the apostles prayed/commanded **in the name of Jesus**, invoking the authority and power of Jesus. See Acts 3 v16.

Keep your eyes open and watch for signs (manifestations) of the Holy Spirit which indicate some work of the Spirit; ask the person how they are feeling/whats going on/is God saying something to them? Maybe ask them to do something physically that they couldn't do before.

When finished praying, give thanks to God for the healing process having begun. All prayer is good and has positive effects, even if the outcome we seek doesn't occur immediately. The desired outcome is for the person to experience the love of God for them in a personal way.

Follow up on people after praying for them, encouraging them to keep trusting and thanking; the Evil One will sow doubts and seek to rob their healing.

Praying for the terminally ill:

We need to be especially sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and the thoughts of the dying person.

We may pray for relief from pain, a clear sense of God's peace, freedom from worry, fear, loneliness; for right/restored relationships with family and friends (I always ask if there are any matters that are troubling them; how are your relationships with family & friends); confession of sins and assurance of forgiveness; and sometimes to pray to release them into God's care as remaining family members give them permission to go.

Remember to pray for family members too.