

The
ESSENTIAL
GUIDE
to
HEALING

EQUIPPING ALL CHRISTIANS
to PRAY for the SICK

BILL JOHNSON
RANDY CLARK



© 2011 by Bill Johnson and Randy Clark

Published by Chosen Books
11400 Hampshire Avenue South
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438
www.chosenbooks.com

Chosen Books is a division of
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Johnson, Bill.

The essential guide to healing: equipping all christians to pray for the sick /
Bill Johnson, Randy Clark.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8007-9519-1 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Spiritual healing—Christianity. I. Clark, Randy, 1952– II. Title.

BT732.5.J59 2011

234'.131—dc23

2011025241

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in Bill's chapters are from the New American Standard Bible®, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in Randy's chapters are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 Biblica. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations identified AMP are from the Amplified® Bible, copyright © 1954, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations identified HCSB are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible, copyright 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations identified NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations identified KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

The Internet addresses, email addresses and phone numbers in this book are accurate at the time of publication. They are provided as a resource. Baker Publishing Group does not endorse them or vouch for their content or permanence.

Cover design by Kirk DouPonce, DogEared Design

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In keeping with biblical principles of creation stewardship, Baker Publishing Group advocates the responsible use of our natural resources. As a member of the Green Press Initiative, our company uses recycled paper when possible. The text paper of this book is composed in part of post-consumer waste.



DEDICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I dedicate this book to the staff and students of Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry. The price that they have paid to carry this culture, to carry this anointing to the nations of the world is beyond inspiring. Their willingness to follow Jesus at any cost has brought me great courage. Thanks.

I write with great indebtedness to John Wimber and Randy Clark. When I heard John Wimber speak in 1987, I realized that a supernatural lifestyle was possible even for a normal person. That gave me the courage to try to minister to the sick outside the context of a church service or crusade, so public places became the setting in which I learned about the miracle power of Jesus. But I never met John. All I learned was from a distance, until I met Randy Clark. Randy has been the largest contributor to my understanding and experience of the miracle lifestyle. Before he came to Redding, we saw miracles weekly. After a few days with Randy, we saw the miracles multiply until they became daily happenings. John and Randy deserve much honor for lovingly sharing their lives with the rest of us.

Finally, I would like to thank and honor James Goll for his prophetic ministry to the Church at large. He was the one who prophesied to me about co-authoring a book with my dear friend Randy Clark. This book is in response to that word.

Much thanks also to Mary Berck for helping me gather my materials and to Pam Spinosi for her editing skills.

Bill Johnson

I dedicate this book to my wonderful wife, DeAnne. I would not be able to do what I am doing without her allowing me to be away for over 225 days a year. She shares in all the fruit of my ministry, and her reward in heaven will be great.

I also dedicate this book to John Wimber and Blaine Cook, who taught me so many of the concepts and so much of the language that I use in the healing ministry today. I will be forever grateful to them for introducing me to words of knowledge for healing the sick. A good portion of the models that I use come from John Wimber, and I received an impartation from both John and Blaine.

I want to thank my best friend and partner in ministry, Bill Johnson. He has been a continual source of encouragement and has challenged me to press in for greater levels of healing.

Finally, I have been blessed with a dedicated and talented editor, Trish Konieczny. She has kept me on track throughout this project and has been a great asset to Bill and me. This book probably would have been six hundred pages without her editing. I also want to thank editorial director Jane Campbell at Chosen for her many efforts in working on an outline, making suggestions and editing the text. Without her, this project might never have happened. It has been a great pleasure to work with Jane, as well as with marketing director Tim Peterson and the rest of the Chosen team.

Randy Clark

CONTENTS

Introduction 9

Part 1: Our Personal Journeys in Regard to Healing 11

1. Randy's Journey (Randy) 13
2. Bill's Journey (Bill) 35

Part 2: A Theology of Healing 53

3. The Gifts of the Spirit Today (Randy) 55
4. Unbelieving Believers and Believing Unbelievers (Randy) 87
5. Healing and the Kingdom (Bill) 111
6. Healing and the Authority of the Believer (Bill) 129

Part 3: The Practice of Healing 143

7. Creating a Faith Culture (Bill) 145
8. The Power of the Testimony (Bill) 161
9. Healing and a Prosperous Soul (Bill) 173
10. Words of Knowledge for Healing (Randy) 191
11. The Relational Five-Step Prayer Model (Randy) 213

Index 241

INTRODUCTION

Randy

It is only fair that I let you know I am not writing from an impartial, neutral, dispassionate position. No, I am passionate about healing. I believe in healing. I have experienced physical healing personally, as well as emotional healing. And I have been used to bring healing to thousands of others.

Furthermore, I am not apologetic for being partial in my opinions on the subject of healing. This subject cannot be understood or experienced from the detached, unbiased position of a reporter. To properly understand healing, one must experience it. When it comes to healing, knowledge without experience is an inferior level of knowledge.

This book has dual authorship. I am Randy Clark, and my co-author is Bill Johnson. We come from quite different backgrounds and experiences, but our lives have been connected by the Holy Spirit. We love and honor each other, and we have greatly encouraged each other in the ministry

of healing. We each have contributed chapters that connect together into the book you now hold.

The main purpose of this book is to encourage you to believe that God could use you to pray for the sick and work through you to heal them. These pages will also inspire you with people's stories about healing and educate you about not only how to pray for healing, but how to receive words of knowledge related to healing.

It is our hope that each of you will begin to pray for others to be healed after reading this book. It is our hope that some of you will discover that God has given you a gift of healing.

It is our belief that "more people get healed when more people pray for healing."

It is our promise to lay a biblical foundation within these pages for the practice of healing and for the belief that all Christians should be equipped to pray for the sick. We ask you to study the Scripture with us and do what the Bereans did in the book of Acts: "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11).

Examine with us the biblical truths and the theological basis for believing that the practice of healing is part of the good news that the Kingdom of God is near. And because of this truth that the Kingdom of God is near, we must change the way we think about what is possible.

Part 1

OUR PERSONAL JOURNEYS IN REGARD TO HEALING

We tell our individual stories of how we grew in our faith for healing and were called into ministry. We also relate how we came to see that the gifts of the Holy Spirit in operation today are a demonstration of the Kingdom of God on the earth.



1

RANDY'S JOURNEY

Randy

I regained consciousness to find myself looking out of a dark place, seeing light. I was inside an ambulance, looking out the back door that had not been closed yet. A high school friend was beside me.

I asked, "What happened?"

He responded, "You've been in a terrible accident."

I asked, "Is everyone okay?"

He responded, "It was a terrible accident. George is not badly hurt, but you have been, and so have Marge and Joe."

I was taken to our county hospital, where they X-rayed me and sewed up my forehead, eyebrow, cheekbone and under my jawbone. It took sixty stitches. My left eyebrow bone and cheekbone had been badly broken, my fractured jaw needed to be set and three places in my forehead hairline had been crushed. (Later I found out that doctors had debated about whether or not I should have a plate put in my head.

Thankfully, they did not do it.) I was in excruciating pain. It felt like someone had stabbed me in the back with a three-inch knife blade.

The doctors shortly transferred me by ambulance to a larger hospital in another county. During the ride, I slipped in and out of consciousness. My Grandmother Clark and my mother were in the ambulance with me. I remember coming to. My grandmother told me I was lucky to be alive. I responded by pointing my finger up toward heaven. I was in too much pain to talk. I remember thinking, *I'm sure glad I gave my life back to God four days ago. I have no fear of death because I know spiritually I'm ready to meet God.* I also remember thinking, *How different this would all be if I were still backslidden. To come so close to death and not be right with God would be a scary thing.*

The next few days were a blur. I drifted in and out of consciousness. Doctors inserted a tube through my nose to pump my stomach because my intestinal tract was paralyzed. They put in a catheter because my kidneys were not working properly. For days there was blood in my urine. I was sedated almost round the clock due to the intensity of the pain. I received 50 milligrams of Demerol every three hours, yet I would wake up from the effects of the medicine and ask for another shot to deaden the pain. My face was badly swollen, and my eyes were swollen shut for several days.

During this time, the doctors told my parents I would need hospitalization for seven to eleven weeks. In addition to my other injuries, I had a broken rib and thoracic disc and vertebrae damage. The impact of the accident had caused a 10–15 percent compression in my spine. Three specialists were treating me: an internist, an orthopedist and a neurologist. (In 2008 I would undergo an MRI for a different spinal problem. The doctor at that time asked me what I had done

to my spine because the MRI revealed old fractures of almost every vertebrae. I told him it was from a car wreck thirty-eight years prior.)

I was told not to move because for several days after a spinal injury, the swelling can cause permanent damage. I could become paraplegic or suffer charley horse-like cramps for the rest of my life. If I needed to move, three nurses would logroll me, one at my shoulders, one at my waist and one near my knees. I could not even use a pillow.

In spite of all my injuries, I was optimistic. I told people I would be out of the hospital in time for an evangelistic crusade in four weeks at my home church, the First General Baptist Church in McLeansboro, Illinois. I actually was unaware of some of my injuries at the time.

Several days went by before I was finally told that my second-best friend, Joe Barker, had died from a broken neck in the accident. When my parents told me about Joe's death, they also showed me pictures of the car we were in. Hit by another car that had just come out of a banked S curve, it had flipped end over end, hit a telephone pole and landed upside down in a ditch. When I saw what the car looked like after all that, I thought, *It's a miracle that I lived! God spared my life—He must have a purpose for it.* I remember praying, "God, You spared my life. I give it back to You. I will do whatever You want with the rest of my life."

Not knowing how serious my injuries were, I was certain I would be out of the hospital in time to attend the upcoming evangelistic meetings, called a revival in Baptist churches. And God healed me—I left the hospital in twenty days.

How was I healed? In stages. First God healed the paralysis of my digestive system. I was scheduled for transfer to the largest hospital in St. Louis because of the paralysis.

But the night before the transfer, my friends at the church prayed for me at midnight. They felt a great peace and sensed I would be okay. When doctors examined me the next morning, my digestive system was working and the tube was removed.

Next, one of my specialists came to set my jaw. He said, "Put your teeth together. Do it again—again—*again!*" Then he said, "I don't understand! The X ray indicated that your jaw needed setting, but it's already set."

These words made me realize that God was indeed healing me. Two of my three major problems were healed already, though I was still in excruciating pain and still taking 50 milligrams of Demerol every three hours. Ministers visited to pray for my healing. My great-uncle, a Pentecostal preacher, came to pray. My pastor and his wife visited me to pray. After one extremely painful night, I woke up to discover that I felt no more pain. I remember thinking that morning, *God healed my jaw by setting it, and now I believe He has healed me of the severe pain!*

Then another thought came: *Get up and walk.*

I thought to myself, *The doctors emphasized that I am not to move my back. I am not to lift my head off the bed. I haven't even been allowed to use a pillow. I've been told that if I move, I could become paraplegic or have charley horses in my legs for life . . .*

Then the thought came again: *God has healed me. I should trust Him and try to walk.*

I believed God was encouraging me to get up and walk. I believed it so much that I slowly rose up in bed, let down the guardrail, slipped my feet over the side and then stepped out onto the floor. I grabbed the back of my air-conditioned hospital gown and held the two sides together, and I began to walk.

I walked out into the hallway. That was not smart! The nurses were very upset. They yelled at me and made me go back to bed. But I kept getting out of bed. I believed God had healed me. Finally, the head sister of St. Joseph Catholic Hospital came to talk with me. She told me how foolish I was being to risk permanent paralysis.

I told her, "I will not be paralyzed. God has healed me and has a purpose for my life."

She continued to appeal to my common sense. We went back and forth for a while, and finally I asked her, "You believe in God, don't you?"

"Yes, of course," she responded.

"So do I," I said, "and I believe in healing. God has healed me."

The doctor released me on the twentieth day and told me to go home and go to bed.

I told him, "I'm not going to bed. God has healed me, and I'm going to my church to testify about what God has done."

That night, a Wednesday, I went to church and shared with my youth group what God had done. I was eighteen. The following Sunday evening, the combined impact of my healing and Joe's death were instrumental in causing a true revival to break out in my church. It came a week ahead of the evangelistic meetings. The presence of God was so strong that the pastor called the evangelist and asked if he could come the very next night to continue what seemed like a revival outbreak among the high school youth.

The evangelist came, and our meetings lasted forty-two straight nights. It was in the middle of the Jesus Movement, and hundreds of high school youth attended from four surrounding counties. A high percentage of the students in my high school also came to this little Baptist church in true revival. Eleven young men from sixteen to twenty-three years

old were called into the ministry during these meetings. I was one of them—but I am getting ahead of myself. I want to go further back in time and talk about a few other events that built my faith for healing.

Why I Came to Believe in Healing

Three things happened that raised my interest in healing, and one thing caused me some doubt. First, when I was four or five, my maternal grandmother told me a story about her healing. I loved and respected my grandmother and thought of her as very spiritual. She was always singing hymns as she worked, and she loved to go to church, where she was a “shouter.” She would sit on the left of the pulpit with other women “shouters,” and I would sit with my grandpa on the right, in the “Amen corner” with other men. I found out later in life that the reason she always listened to Christian radio was that she was illiterate.

Grandma told me that one time in the bedroom of her little four-room, cement block house, she heard the audible voice of God tell her to go into the other bedroom and pray, then He would heal her. She had a large goiter in her throat at a time before doctors discovered how to treat them with iodine. She changed rooms, began to pray in obedience and felt something like a hot hand go down her throat. Her goiter disappeared. This healing made a huge impression on my little heart and mind.

The second thing that caused me to believe strongly in Jesus, heaven and the supernatural took place when I was six. It borders a little on the “out there” kind of experience some readers may find unnerving, but I believe my mother genuinely had a powerful experience with God through it. She had attended a home meeting where there had been worship

and sharing. The meeting had not been overly emotional, and she left calmly to return home. On the way to the car, all of a sudden she felt as though she were caught in a whirlwind. She passed out and felt her spirit leaving her body. It went through a rough place followed by peace several times, and then she was in heaven. Jesus came and indicated to her that everything in her life was going to be okay. The experience repeated itself until she was back in her body. Then she came to.

I heard my mother tell this story many times. I did not think it was a psychological occurrence, but a very true, real experience. For over forty years Mom could not talk about it without losing it emotionally, overwhelmed with just the thought of her visit to heaven. When I was in college, I wrote a paper about Mom's experience. I interviewed the two men who had found her on the sidewalk while she was out of her body. They were both ministers by the time I interviewed them, though at the time of the incident they were not. They both told me that they could not find a pulse and that my mom was cold and clammy. They thought she had died.

Mom's experience, unusual though it may seem to some, made heaven more real to me. Jesus had talked to my mom in heaven! This was evidence to me that He had been raised from the dead, that He was still alive and that He still healed people.

The third thing that increased my faith in healing was the experience of my Sunday school teacher. She had been diagnosed with a tumor the size of a watermelon in her abdomen. Our church prayed for her the night before her surgery. When the surgery took place, the tumor had already shrunk to the size of an orange. Further, its roots were not attached to any organ and it was easily removed. This happened when I was about thirteen, and she lived another forty-plus years.

At sixteen, something happened that set back my faith in healing for a time. My maternal grandfather died of cancer at sixty-two. I had sat in the “Amen corner” with him at church, and I could not understand why he had not been healed. The same church that had prayed for my Sunday school teacher had prayed for him. Many churches were praying for him, yet he died. This caused me some doubt. I had just become a Christian the Sunday before my sixteenth birthday, and I lost Grandpa to cancer that same year. That was hard, and it was already a hard time for me. Along with some personal issues I struggled with, we were approaching the height of the Vietnam War. My high school’s former heroes were coming home without legs. A young man who had been one year ahead of me in grade school came home in a body bag. It was a bad time to be approaching manhood. Angry over the war and depressed about a personal relationship gone wrong, I got involved with smoking marijuana on an almost daily basis for ten months. I wanted to experiment and started slipping into the drug culture, music and all. I wanted to visit the far country—but only visit it. I never wanted to stay there, so I stayed in church, too, though I knew I was a big hypocrite. Yet I was afraid to stop going to church, lest I become so deeply trapped in sin that I could not escape my self-made pigsty to return home.

A girlfriend’s older brother was a Methodist preacher. He was the first person I ever saw hold a healing meeting in a church, and I liked and respected him. God used him to bring me under conviction. After not seeing me for a while, he commented to my mother that I did not seem like the Randy he remembered. I thought about that comment a lot. Four days before the accident that happened when I was eighteen, I got over my doubts and gave my heart back to God.

A Call into Ministry

I mentioned briefly that I was called into ministry at eighteen, during the revival that followed my car accident. I want to share a little more about that. A healing was the culminating factor in my announcing my call to become a preacher. I had asked God to give me some signs confirming my call to preach, and immediately He answered two “fleeces” I placed before Him. The third sign He gave me was the healing.

My youth pastor, Fred, who was also the church's worship leader, suffered a stroke in the middle of the revival. He was thirty-three. This made no sense to me. Why would he suffer a stroke when he played such a pivotal role in a revival that involved so many youth? When he got out of the hospital and was recuperating at home, I stopped by after church to talk with him. I asked him if he could move his left hand. The stroke had affected his left side. He could move that hand, but with difficulty. I went home and prayed, “God, if you will let Fred play the piano tomorrow night in church, without pain, I will stand up and immediately announce my call to preach.” (I wanted to make sure the previous two signs had not been coincidences.)

The next day I saw Fred again. He still could not move his hand normally, but he attended church that night. The church filled up with young people until no seats were left, and people were standing everywhere. I heard the piano begin to play and turned around. There was Fred playing the piano. I thought, *He's playing with one hand somehow*. But the music seemed too good for that.

After worship there was a spot left for one person to squeeze into, right in front of me. That was weird considering how full the church was. Fred sat down there, and I pecked him on the shoulder and said, “Fred, let me see you move your hand.”

Fred lifted his hand up and moved it freely, not like he had shown me just half an hour earlier, before worship started.

I asked, “Fred, why did you decide to play the piano?”

He responded, “When I was sitting in the pew, I had a strong impression of hearing the Lord say to me, ‘If you will try to play the piano, I will heal you.’ So I went to the piano, and when I touched the keys, I was instantly healed.”

My final question was, “Fred, did you have any pain?”

He responded, “No, none. All the pain left the moment I touched the keys.”

I immediately stood up. When the pastor recognized me, I made good on my promise and announced my calling to become a preacher. It was November 22, 1970. Since the seventh grade, my plan had been to become a history teacher, but those plans were given up to fulfill God’s call on my life. When I went to Oakland City College two months later, I majored in Religious Studies. I wanted to burn all bridges to anything but preaching.

My first day on campus, while I was buying textbooks, I also received a strong impression from God—one I have never forgotten, even now, forty-one years later. It was, “The issue of your lifetime will be the Holy Spirit.”

That was a strange word for a Baptist student at a Baptist college. In response, the first book I bought after my required textbooks was *The Holy Spirit*. That impression would prove to be truly from God. Probably no other graduate of that college has seen more controversy over the Holy Spirit and His actions than I have.

I graduated from college in 1974 and from seminary in 1977. In 1982 I not only preached a series of sermons on healing, I prayed for the sick. Something happened at that point that almost derailed me from the healing ministry. A woman who pretended to be healed deceived me. She had fabricated

her condition, and I did not discover it until after I let her testify in church to her healing. Then when she pretended another healing, I became suspicious. I found out the first healing was a fake. I was very hard on myself and backed away from healing, not preaching on it again for a year and a half. I was so disappointed in my own discernment, so embarrassed by being deceived, that I did not want to pray for anyone. But God had another plan.

Two things happened next that turned things around, culminating in a series of meetings that would forever change my life. That is not an overstatement—these things actually set the course for the rest of my life. First, I was in my office praying, “God, thank You that I’m not a liberal. I believe Jesus did what the Bible says He did. And thank You that I’m not a cessationist. I believe He still does what He did then.”

I was expecting a “Well done, thou good and faithful servant with whom I am well pleased.” But instead I heard from the Lord, “So what?”

“What do you mean, so what?” I quickly asked Him.

I heard, “You might as well be a liberal or a cessationist. It isn’t enough to say you believe I still do what I did—if you don’t know how to move in My gifts, you won’t be able to do any more than a liberal or cessationist does.”

This communication from the Spirit shook me. I determined right then that I would learn how to move in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Not long after this, the second life-changing event occurred. I invited a young man from my college to come preach for me. He did a fair enough job preaching on the woman with the issue of blood, but instead of preaching on healing, he spiritualized the text, giving it a nonhealing application. I had done the same many times. While listening, I began to

have an experience with God that had nothing to do with the preacher or sermon. Hot tears rolled down my face, and I remember thinking, *What's going on? Why am I crying? This has nothing to do with the sermon.* (I later realized it was because of the visitation of the Holy Spirit.) I then heard the Lord strongly impress on me, “I want you to teach that I still heal today. I want you to have a conference on healing in this church. I want you to preach differently. No more three points and a poem. I want you to include more of My words in your sermon, and less of your own. I want you to preach a series of sermons on My works and My words—My ministry and My message.”

The next day I spoke with Dr. Larry Hart of Oral Roberts University. I asked him if he would come hold a conference for me on healing. He told me that the best person he had ever heard at ORU for equipping people for healing was John Wimber. I had never heard of John Wimber, and I was not excited about inviting someone I had never heard to do the conference. The next morning, though, I saw John Wimber on TV and loved what I heard. Impressed, I called him. He told me he could not come, but could send a team in three months. I agreed, but asked him to make it six months so I could conclude my series on “The Words and Works of Jesus.”

I began planning how to carry out the Lord's assignment to preach differently. I determined to look at all four gospels, try to reconstruct the chronology and include everything in the gospels in one series. I figured it would take about six months to preach through the material, and I also asked the church's deacons to come to an extra meeting with me each month to discuss the gifts of the Spirit and the baptism with the Spirit. My plan worked beautifully. I concluded those special meetings with the deacons and then taught my position—which

all the deacons now understood and agreed with—to the church's home groups six weeks prior to our conference with the team from John's church.

In that preparation time, two more things happened of major importance in my experience of healing. First I went to Dallas and heard John Wimber in January 1984. For the first time in my life, I saw firsthand the power of God affecting people physically and causing them to tremble and/or fall. I was so excited. All I had seen prior to this was God's power touching someone emotionally. I had seen people cry under conviction for their sins or cry when touched by God's love after conversion. And as a child, I had once seen people laughing for joy in the Baptist church I grew up in. This was different.

During the meeting in Dallas, I had the opportunity to have John Wimber pray for me. I was afraid he might tell me everything wrong with my life through the gift of prophecy, but instead, he told me many highly encouraging things. What I remember most was when he said, "God says you are a Prince in the Kingdom of God."

Sometime later, John's vice president of Vineyard Ministries International told me that the first two times John and I had met, John had heard God tell him audibly that I would one day go around the world laying hands on pastors and leaders to impart and stir up spiritual gifts in them. John did not tell me this himself until shortly before he died. A few days after the outpouring began in Toronto, though, John did tell me that I was now starting on what God had shown him about me ten years earlier.

Second, a few weeks before the team from the Anaheim Vineyard Christian Fellowship arrived for our conference, I called ahead and spoke with Lance Pittluck. He had recently left the Presbyterian denomination and was being mentored

as an intern there. I asked him if he could tell me anything that might increase our anointing for healing the sick. He asked if I believed in words of knowledge. That is a story in itself that I will tell you more about in chapter 10. Our whole phone conversation opened me up to a new realm of ministry I had never experienced before.

The Healing Conference

When the conference began at my Baptist church, I was shocked by how many pastors and leaders came. We were packed out. I had written a letter to all the American Baptist pastors in Illinois, Wisconsin and Missouri; as well as all the Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran and other Evangelical pastors in southern Illinois, and some pastors in Missouri. The letter began, “If you, like me, are tired of going to the hospital and praying ‘God, guide the surgeon’s hand,’ then I invite you to a conference on healing. I have invited people from the Anaheim Vineyard, who are seeing more healings and who can help us learn how to more effectively pray for the sick.”

I will never forget my first impressions of that conference. The leader, Blaine Cook, was tremendously gifted with words of knowledge. He must have given about twenty the first morning. People came forward for prayer, and many were healed. The pastor of the First Baptist Church of Chilli-cothe, Illinois, fell at my wife’s feet. He got up healed of a serious back injury from a car accident, removed the half-inch lift from his shoe and threw it away. The deaf heard, sight was greatly improved and many people were healed of pain.

Not only did healing occur, but impartation as well. Many people in my church were activated in gifts of healing, tongues

and words of knowledge. Many received a baptism with the Spirit, some became drunk in the Spirit and had to be driven home, many were seized with laughter, others fell into a state of peace, some had demons manifest and others received miraculous healings. I personally received an impartation that caused a major increase in words of knowledge and in healings. Several members of my congregation received an even stronger anointing than I did.

During my impartation, I felt electricity so strong that it caused me to shake. My wife received emotional healing, a physical healing and activation in words of knowledge. She fell to the floor under the power of God. This was something she had a great aversion to. If someone on Christian television happened to fall under the power, she would say, "If you believe that's real, you're the biggest fool I've ever met!" She did not believe it was real—that is, until it happened to her.

The next night, a young lady named Tammy Ferguson approached me and another man, John Gordon, for prayer. He had prayed for her in a previous service, but she needed more healing. She was born with spina bifida that caused her to lose control over her bladder, so she wore diapers at night. She also was hydrocephalic and had undergone twelve surgeries to put shunts into her head to drain fluid. We prayed, and Tammy was healed! She never had to wear diapers again. Neither did she ever need another shunt because now the fluid was flowing down into her spine normally. She was also healed of seizures, which she did not even tell us she was having. We did not pray about that, but she was healed of them anyway. She would not need to take eleven kinds of medicine for seizures anymore.

By September after the conference, I had resigned the pastorate at the Baptist church. I thought God had called

me to go to a different city and plant a new church. Since I did not know where yet, I told some of the people who wanted a different kind of church that I would pastor them until I knew where to go. In about four months, I knew where I was called—St. Louis—but it took a whole year before I would begin work there. That year was like a sabbatical. With those people who were looking for something different, I started the first Vineyard in Illinois. We saw many healings, and I do not know if I have ever had a higher percentage of people who moved as powerfully in the gifts as the group who left the Baptist church to start the Vineyard with me.

One of the most memorable healings occurred on a Sunday night. My former associate pastor of the Baptist church, Tom Simpson, had come with me to start the Vineyard. He and his wife, Sandy, had both been activated in words of knowledge, had received the gift of tongues and were seeing people healed when they prayed. They were also activated in the gift of prophecy. On this particular Sunday, Tom had seen an open vision. (An open vision is different from seeing a mental picture. In an open vision, your field of vision is lost and you see the vision as if you are watching it on a large-screen TV.) In this open vision he saw a young boy, probably eleven or twelve, who was naked. The boy's muscles were withered on the left side. As Tom watched, the boy's right side began to wither as well.

Tom did not know what to do with this vision. He was confused about its interpretation. He did not know if it was a sign that the new church would wither and die, or if it should be interpreted literally rather than symbolically. Due to his confusion, he did not share the vision during our morning service. That afternoon, he and his siblings met at their parents' home with all the grandchildren. During

this family day, the vision came to him again as an open vision. Again, he was confused by it. Then at the evening service, the vision came a third time. This time Tom came and told me the vision. He told me this was the third time it had come, and that he did not know how to interpret it. I related the vision to the church and asked if it made sense to anyone.

A woman who was visiting from the local Church of God (Anderson) said, "I know who that's for! It's for a boy who has a rare disease that is causing his muscles on the left side of his body to wither. He's supposed to go to the Shriners Hospital tomorrow for more testing. The prognosis is that the disease will gradually move to the right side and cause those muscles to wither also."

This woman called the boy's mother and asked her to put her hands on her son. We then prayed as a church for his healing. When he was examined the next day, the doctor said, "I don't know how to explain this, but the disease is gone. Not only is it not affecting the right side, but the left side muscles are being healed!"

That was just one of numerous healings we saw that year. From March 1984 until January 1986, the key leaders who helped me start that first Vineyard in Illinois drove to Texas four times to see either John Wimber or Blaine Cook. We also drove to Michigan, Ohio, northern Illinois and Nashville to learn more about how to move in the gifts of the Spirit and how to pray for the sick from the Vineyard leaders.

The Grand Experiment

In January 1986 I resigned from the Vineyard church and took a job frying donuts in St. Louis so I would be in a position to start a new church there. From January until November,

I worked in 80 Kroger stores, training people in the bakery. I would drive to the St. Louis area and stay in a hotel on Sunday, then return home on Friday evenings. I made this 260-mile round trip every weekend. My wife, DeAnne, and our son, Josh, soon joined me and stayed in the hotel where I was staying. DeAnne was pregnant with Johannah, our second child, who would be born in July. We could not buy a house until our house in southern Illinois sold. In November, we finally bought a condo in the St. Louis area.

During those early days, I had to get up at 3:00 A.M. to fry donuts. I did not enjoy it. I was a night person and had often gone to bed at that time in the past—I did not like starting my day then! Because the job was so boring, and because I had been teaching that the lay people in my church should pray for people outside of church meetings, I looked for opportunities to pray for people at work.

I told God, “Lord, I am not going to preach anymore that people should pray for people at work if it doesn’t work. I don’t want to put a burden on them. This is going to be my grand experiment. I’m not going to tell anyone I’m a preacher. Instead, if You give me a word of knowledge, or if anyone says they’re sick or I notice they’re sick, I’m going to say to them, ‘I’m a Christian. I’ve seen some people healed when I’ve prayed, but not everyone. I don’t promise you anything, but if you’ll let me, I’d like to pray for you.’”

The grand experiment worked! That year I saw more people healed in the Kroger grocery stores than I did in our church or house group meetings. Let me share with you one of the more memorable stories. I was working in the Kroger store in Centralia, Illinois. I noticed the head bakery clerk was quite nervous. After training her team, I was cleaning up my mess and washing the pans. When she came over, I said, “Don’t be nervous. I don’t work for Kroger, but for another

company. I'm here as a technical representative to help you and your employees do a better job. So there's no need to be nervous."

She responded, "I'm nervous because I have a terrible ear infection, and my ear is so stopped up that I can only understand about half of what you're saying."

I said, "I'm a Christian. I've seen people healed when I prayed, though not always. I'd be glad to pray for you if you wish."

"I'd like that," she said. I asked her when she would like prayer, and she replied, "Right now would be good."

We went back into the "holy of holies" where the cloud of smoke filled the room (which interpreted means the break room full of cigarette smoke). We sat down, and I said, "No one will even know we're praying. I'll pray with my eyes open, and you don't have to close yours. People will think we're talking. If you feel anything happen, I want you to tell me."

When I began to pray, she closed her eyes anyway. I prayed, "Lord, I bless Jane's ear (not her real name) and command it to open."

Immediately she opened her eyes and looked at me, startled.

I said, "Your ear just opened, didn't it?"

Jane had tears in her eyes. I could tell she was shocked. She replied, "The moment you commanded my ear to open, it did, and I can now hear very clearly."

I was actually surprised by how quickly she had been healed. I asked her how this made her feel. I also asked her if she was a Christian.

She replied, "I used to go to church and was even in leadership. But I was hurt in church years ago, and since then I haven't gone."

I asked, "But now that God has healed your ear, how do you feel about Him?" Then I told her she should find a good

church to attend. She told me she would do that. This head bakery clerk had been apprehended by the power of God.

We returned to the bakery. I was finishing washing the pans when my ear clogged up. This was sudden and very strange. I feel words of knowledge, so I turned to Jane and asked, “Did your ear just clog up again?”

She answered, “Yes! How did you know?”

I told her sometimes I know what God wants to do by feeling the problem someone else has. This time I knew the problem was not a natural infection of the ear, but was caused by an afflicting spirit. I asked her if we could pray again. She said yes. I asked, “Where can we pray?”

“In the walk-in freezer,” she said.

We went into the freezer and I prayed, commanding the afflicting spirit to leave her ear. She began to tremble. I was not sure if it was the Spirit of God or the coldness of the freezer. However, her pain left. And soon I was finished and left the store.

A few months later, I returned to the store to train again. When I saw Jane, she told me she had rededicated her life to God and had found a church to join. Also, she added, her ear infection had never come back.

I could tell many more stories of people healed in the Kroger stores. No one ever refused my offer to pray for healing, and almost every person I prayed for was not attending church. Most were not Christians, yet I was amazed by how receptive they were to prayer.

It was a different situation in the home meetings and Sunday celebration meetings of the church. Some people were healed, but many were not. I struggled with this odd situation. I felt as though something was wrong with this picture. Why was it easier to see healing among the “believing unbelievers” than among the “unbelieving believers”?

The answer to that question is the basis of chapter 4 ahead, “Unbelieving Believers and Believing Unbelievers,” in which I identify the source of the problem and suggest some factors that have contributed to the demise of people’s faith in healing. Before we move on, though, let’s hear from Bill about how God led him into the ministry of revival and healing.