

A Window on Wimber and Healing

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John Wimber (1934-1997) was the major figure in the Signs and Wonders movement¹ and had a great influence on healing ministries in the UK.² It is appropriate that an analysis of his teaching be undertaken, especially given his belief that Jesus acted as a healing model for believers.³ It is accepted that the church has benefited from his ministry of healing and worship and that it warmed to his transparency and readiness to learn. It is also apparent that his desire to see people being healed and his certainty that he was called to emulate the healing ministry of Jesus, along with all other believers, was so fundamental that inexplicable issues were passed over. Thus, a theology of suffering was lacking and for a long period in his ministry the expectation of healing was so prominent that an absence of healing was assumed to be failure, though Wimber himself was careful to guard against this. Nevertheless, the implication of his teaching was that it could not be viewed as anything other than failure. In this regard he offered potential reasons, his presupposition being that all could be healed.

- 1 K L Sarles 'An Appraisal of the Signs and Wonders Movement' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 145 Jan 1988 p 82; T Stafford 'Fruit of the Vineyard' *Christianity Today* Nov 17, 1989 pp 35f; M S Horton (ed) *Power Religion: The Selling out of the Evangelical Church* (Chicago: Moody 1992)
- 2 E England 'Wimber in Westminster' *Renewal* 114 Feb/Mar 1985 pp 28-30; 'Do we need John Wimber?' *Renewal* Oct-Nov 1985 p 3; E Gibbs 'John Wimber – A friend who causes me to wonder' *Renewal* June 1986 pp 15-18; D Pytches *Fully Anglican, Fully Renewed. Riding the Third Wave* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering 1987) p 164; P Jennings 'Cured of a killer disease' *Renewal* 129 Feb 1987 pp 10-12; W Unger 'Signs and Wonders – Wesley, White and Wimber' *MBH* June 12 1987 pp 26f; D Huggett 'A Ministry to be encouraged', in J Goldingay (ed) *Signs, Wonders and Healing* (Leicester: IVP 1989) p 149; J A Baker, A Graham *We believe in the Holy Spirit* (The Doctrinal Commission of the Church of England, London: Church House 1991) pp 45ff; S Hunt 'The Anglican Wimberites' *Pneuma* 17.1 Spring 1995 pp 105-18; J Gunstone (ed) *Meeting John Wimber* (Crowborough: Monarch 1996); W Boulton 'John Wimber remembered' *Renewal* 261 Feb 1998 pp 14-17; T Stafford 'Wimber's last words' *Christianity* Feb 1998 pp 20f; C Price 'The Wonder of Wimber' *Christianity* Jan 1998 p 7; C Whitehead 'Obituary: John Wimber 1934-1997' *Good News* 133 Jan/Feb 1998 p 15; W Mather and M Wiltshire 'John Wimber Remembered' *Healing and Wholeness* 34 March/April 1998 pp 9-11
- 3 This has been offered to a lesser extent elsewhere; for example, D G Lundy ('A Pastoral Perspective on the Vineyard Movement' *Baptist Review of Theology* 3.2 1993 pp 28-45) notes the corrective provided by Wimber to a barren orthodoxy whilst offering three corrective comments on his views concerning healing, namely (i) that God's work is not normally done through extraordinary manifestations of power, (ii) suffering is central to discipleship and (iii) God's plan for the believer is conformity to Jesus, a person, not a plan.

Thus, in response to the question ‘Does everyone get healed?’ he notes that ‘Jesus healed *all* who came to Him (Matt 4:24, 8:16; Mark 1:32; Luke 6:18,19)’.⁴ The following are representative of the reasons he offers for an absence of healing.

He views a lack of desire as a valid reason for an absence of healing. Although this is a possibility, it ceases to be so in situations where that person comes for prayer. It is inappropriate to question the depth of desire; Jesus healed people who simply came for help. They did not need to articulate the quality of their desire. His description of the lame man referred to in John 5 as one who had ‘made a friend of his sickness and was robbed for 38 years’⁵ is thus unhelpful.

He notes: ‘there were obviously special times of anointing ... Luke 5:17. Note also Peter’s shadow and Paul’s handkerchiefs where *all* were healed (Acts 5:15, 16; 19:11, 12).’⁶ However, the implication of this is that the healing depends on special undefined occasions during which healing may be anticipated more than others. This does not appear to be reflected in the New Testament. Unless he anticipates that the ‘anointing’ is symptomatic of the sovereign will of God being achieved in certain scenarios, it is difficult to know how to understand such occasions. It is to be anticipated that on alternative occasions, healings are less likely. This appears to provide for an arbitrary God who operates more powerfully on some occasions than others. Although this is true and has biblical precedent, it creates difficulties, especially in determining when and how such occasions occur and whether they may be encouraged.

He recommends, on the basis of Isaiah 20:1, when praying, to ‘ask God whether the illness is unto death or not’⁷ concluding, ‘if it is a person’s time to die, we should release him or her to God’.⁸ This, he advises also helps the individual to ‘talk about it and work through their relationship with God’.⁹ In this, he offers wise advice, though he does not incorporate it into his overall healing grid.

He also writes: ‘the reason why people sometimes “lose” their healing is because the real cause (spiritual, emotional, demonic etc) has not been dealt with’.¹⁰ He thus recommends that in praying for physical healing, ‘it is important that we listen in order to determine the root cause and the need for prayer. We should listen a: to the person (ask questions) b: to what

4 J Wimber *Healing Seminar* (London: Vineyard Ministries International n.d.) p 11

5 *Healing Seminar* p 13

6 *Healing Seminar* p 11

7 *Healing Seminar* p 30

8 J Wimber and K Springer *Power Healing* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1986) p 173

9 *Power Healing* p 175

10 *Healing Seminar* p 32

God is saying (revelation gifts).'¹¹

He therefore presents the view that sickness can often be caused by one's emotions¹² and advocates a process of inner healing¹³ 'in which the Holy Spirit brings forgiveness of sins and emotional renewal to people suffering from damaged minds, wills and emotions'.¹⁴ Similarly, he encourages people to be 'freed from the grip of painful memories' as a result of which, 'their hurt recedes into the background as the knowledge and assurance of our identity in Christ comes forward'.¹⁵ The awareness that non-physical aspects of life impact the body is valid, as is his readiness to advocate counselling for such emotional complexities.

Whilst offering the above possible reasons for an absence of healing, some of which have a measure of validity, he is also aware of the significance of the sovereignty of God in healing. However, this does cause an unresolved tension in his teaching. While he is convinced that healings should be the norm for believers and that Jesus, his mentor, healed all who came to him for healing, he acknowledges that only a minority of people prayed for are healed. He further acknowledges that on many occasions, no reason may be offered for an absence of healing other than that it is God's will. Though he is content to rest in that fact, he is not able to accommodate it into his healing framework. Neither is he able to explain why this is the case when he strongly argues that Christians should follow the example of Jesus and emulate his healing ministry. It is not his enthusiasm or honesty that is to be questioned but his paradigm. If it is recognized that Jesus is not a paradigm but a unique healer whose healings were intended to affirm him and confirm his messianic ministry, it is clearly inappropriate and a forlorn hope to expect to emulate them. Rather, one should turn to the teachings of Paul with his emphasis on the charismatic gifts of healing, and James with his more institutionalized guidelines for healing, for guidance for the believer in potential healing scenarios. In the latter is to be found the integral element of the will of God. For Jesus, the healing ministry was always successful when people came for healing because he was presenting himself as Saviour; thereafter, the church operates with compassion to sick people following the recommendations and with the expectations of Paul and particularly, James. Wimber is aware of these features. He thus states: 'God is selective concerning whom he heals',¹⁶ recommending that sometimes when healing does not occur, one has 'to just leave it to God'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, although he is aware that not all are healed, 'our desire is for

11 *Healing Seminar* p 32; cf *Power Healing* p 164

12 *Power Healing* pp 93, 98f

13 *Power Healing* pp 95-106

14 *Power Healing* pp 18, 95

15 *Power Healing* p 102

16 *Power Healing* p 164

17 *Healing Seminar* p 13

all to be healed'.¹⁸

He notes how some people with illnesses have prayed for people suffering from identical illnesses and have seen them restored, though they themselves have remained ill.¹⁹ He states: 'we lose credibility when we only share the stories about complete recovery or those miraculous in nature'.²⁰ He accepts that not all healings occur immediately,²¹ reading two letters describing partial healings, though he expresses ignorance as to why this should be.²²

He states: 'the prayer of agreement has been improperly interpreted as meaning we may agree on anything and it will be done. Instead, it is agreement and belief with other Christians about what the Father has already determined his will to be ... it is watching for what the Father is doing, then believing him to fulfil it'.²³ At times he believes God overcomes sickness, and thereby evil, 'not by removing it directly but by accomplishing his purposes through it'.²⁴ Indeed, he claims that 'sometimes, it's a blessing to go through a little suffering' describing times of suffering as greater opportunities for growth than times of prosperity.²⁵ In a prayer, he articulates his beliefs thus: 'We understand that you may not thoroughly, completely, 100% heal somebody; on the other hand that you may. It's all within your counsel ... we know further you're good, just, gracious, merciful and whatever you decide for us is right and defensible and in that day, we'll understand fully why things went the way they went'.²⁶ In the context of referring to a letter received from a lady who received healing for her ankles but not the restoration of her sight, he rejects the view that expects God to heal all her ailments necessarily, believing that such a belief is not scriptural.²⁷

However, he also writes: 'Christians have power over disease';²⁸ this further demonstrates the tension within his teaching, for while he anticipates that healing is available to the believer, this forms a significant contradiction to his recognition that the will of God is determinative in all circumstances. Whilst acknowledging the integral element of the sovereignty of God, he is unable to incorporate its implications in his

18 *Healing Seminar* p 11

19 J Wimber *Healing '95 Session 10* (Brighton Conference, London: VMI 1995)

20 *Healing '95 Session 8*

21 *Healing Seminar* p 12

22 *Healing '95 Session 8*

23 *Power Healing* p 219

24 *Power Healing* p 36; J Wimber 'Why must Christians Suffer?' *Frontline* April 1988 p 6

25 *Healing '95 Session 1*

26 *Healing '95 Session 1*

27 *Healing '95 Session 8*

28 J Wimber and K Springer *Power Evangelism: Signs and Wonders Today* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1985) p 101

healing framework in which he anticipates that believers may emulate the healing ministry of Jesus and receive healing as did those who were healed by Jesus in his incarnate life.

This article attempts to analyse some of the above issues while proposing solutions so that a ministry of healing may still be anticipated in the church today, while a more biblically prescribed framework is offered in which the healing ministry of Jesus is viewed as being unique. Major characteristics of the healing praxis of John Wimber will be considered, noting his analyses of their roles and a biblical response.

Faith

As will be demonstrated, faith was of major importance in the context of the healing ministry of Jesus, though Wimber perceives it as having a function that is not evidenced in the ministry of Jesus. He describes it as, 'the medium through which God releases his healing power' but offers no further clarification.²⁹ He further writes that, 'an assertive attitude of faith appropriates the benefits of the kingdom',³⁰ such a faith being described as 'a confidence without need of proof or regard for evidence, a conviction of truth and willingness to stand by it'.³¹ Such faith, he ascertains, 'must be present in ... some other person or persons ... the one being prayed for ... [or] the one doing the healing'.³² So important is the presence of faith that he equates prayer devoid of faith with the statement: 'God, I don't know if you want to heal me.'³³ Such statements imply that faith is to be equated with a certainty that one will be healed.

He attempts a definition of the faith that is needed to effect healing by examining Bartimaeus (Mark 10:47-50) whom he concludes evidenced 'determination, shamelessness and persistence' including a recognition of Jesus 'for who he really was, "the Son of David"' and a belief in God's mercy.³⁴ The faith of the woman with a haemorrhage (Matt 9:18-22) is characterized by her persistent belief that Jesus could heal her.

Faith is then to be understood in terms associated with persistency, as a result of which, having proved one's determination to believe that healing will occur, healing is to be expected. Conversely, a lack of such 'faith' results in an absence of healing,³⁵ even for Jesus. Thus, he writes: 'when

29 *Power Healing* p 153

30 *Healing Seminar* p 9

31 *Healing Seminar* p 25; cf *Power Evangelism: Signs* p 200

32 *Healing Seminar* p 33; cf *Power Healing* p 154

33 *Power Healing* p 217

34 *Healing Seminar* p 32

35 *Power Healing* p 164

Jesus went home to Nazareth the first time, he basically struck out because of the prevailing unbelief. Even he couldn't overcome it.³⁶ He also writes: 'Jesus seemed to be more able to heal in the presence of faith in Him and in His power to heal ... Jesus sometimes healed when He alone believed, but He was clearly limited by an unbelieving (negative faith) atmosphere.'³⁷ He chooses not to examine the occasions when Jesus healed people despite the absence of faith on their part nor to clarify why apparently despite an absence of faith, some did get healed at Nazareth.

Consequently, quoting Mark 5:35-42, he writes: 'I look for an atmosphere full of faith and hope' commenting that, 'I have asked those who are struggling with unbelief, fear or anxiety to leave, while I ask others who I know have faith for healing to join us. I have also observed that frequently one healing is a springboard to many others.'³⁸ This description of faith appears to be based on a misunderstanding of the significance and meaning of the unbelief present among the people of Nazareth and on an assumption that faith is to be equated with a belief that one will be healed, anything less than this certainty being regarded as a lack of faith, harmful and an obstacle to potential restoration. His description of faith is excessively egocentric; it appears to have the capacity to achieve healing of its own accord.

Furthermore, he believes that 'one of the ploys of the enemy is to send some of the symptoms back to make you doubt God's word ... when it comes, rebuke it and stand on what Jesus has done for you'.³⁹ He does not clarify or support this belief, neither is it reflected in the ministry of his apparent model, Jesus.

As will be explored, these definitions and descriptions of faith are distanced from the faith commended by Jesus in healing scenarios. However, despite his emphasis on the crucial importance of faith, he writes of the inappropriateness of blaming the sick person of a lack of faith if the sickness is not removed after prayer.⁴⁰ Wimber's views represented here need to be read in the context of later statements in which he notes that despite an absence of faith on the part of those being prayed for, healing may still be secured.⁴¹ Nevertheless, he did not articulate a clear definition of the meaning of faith that accommodated such a development. As they stand, these views contradict his belief that believers may emulate the healing ministry of Jesus, for faith was not always evidenced by those healed by him. They also

36 J Wimber 'The Church: Healing's Natural Home?' *Leadership* 6.2 Spring 1985 p 119

37 *Healing Seminar* p 17

38 *Power Healing* p 186

39 *Healing '95 Session 10*

40 *Power Healing* p 186

41 J Wimber 'When cancer strikes the healer' *Christianity* Nov 1996 p 40

contradict previously noted statements in which he is less dogmatic in his expectation of healing and those in which he is dismissive of unconditional guarantees of healing. The faith commended by Jesus is to be equated with a willingness to ask him for help. Jesus did not encourage faith to be developed nor did his response reflect a gradational requirement in faith.

Sin

In response to the question of why some people do not improve after prayer, he writes, 'some areas could be checked ... such as sin, unforgiveness',⁴² elsewhere noting that 'unbelief or faithlessness'⁴³ are other reasons for an absence of healing. He claims: 'there are at least 50 categories I know which have to be examined when dealing with people and their lack of healing'.⁴⁴ Furthermore, he writes: 'the principle of dedicating parts of the body to the Lord' is important, arguing, 'sometimes, a residue of the effects of a person's wrongdoing remains in the parts of his or her body that were used in the service of evil'.⁴⁵ He also assumes that believers become ill because they are part of a church that by its sin has 'invited the enemy in. With the enemy has come sickness'.⁴⁶ Even though the sufferer may accurately state: 'I'm walking close to the Lord at this point, I've confessed all sin that I've any knowledge of. I'd say, yes, but you are an individual connected to a body that is sick.' Through no fault of his/her own, the healing is impeded by others. This militates against his view that believers may function as did Jesus, who was not obstructed from healing those who came for healing by unbelieving onlookers. He offers no biblical evidence for these perspectives.

Contradictions arise in this context. He writes that sickness is caused by sin, ultimately because of the Fall of man, but not because of personal sins.⁴⁷ Elsewhere, he records that, 'there are many reasons why people are not healed when prayed for. Most of the reasons involve some form of sin and unbelief'.⁴⁸ At the same time, he notes that, 'the minority of all illnesses in the New Testament are the direct result of habitual sin in the individual'.⁴⁹ More importantly, for the purposes of the thesis, he does not reflect the practice or belief of Jesus concerning sin in relation to sickness, the latter never clearly linking them.

42 *Power Healing* pp 105f; *Power Evangelism* pp 176f

43 *Healing Seminar...* p 13; *Power Healing* p 164

44 D Hall 'John Wimber on the message, the miracles – and the critics' *Renewal* 121 Feb/March 1986 p 21. N Wright (in *Meeting John Wimber* J Gunstone (ed) (Crowborough: Monarch 1996) pp 52f) rejects this approach believing that 'it leads to despair and treats an act of healing as though it were a human accomplishment, achieved by our providing the right conditions for it to happen'.

45 *Power Healing* p 238

46 Hall p 20

47 *Healing Seminar* pp 12ff

48 *Power Healing* p 164

49 *Power Healing* p 57

He concludes that much sickness is caused by Satan⁵⁰ or demons.⁵¹ However, the biblical evidence for such a premise is very limited. Again, he presents features that are of crucial importance to his healing ministry but which are not reflected in the ministry of Jesus, suggestive of the fact that a different model is in view. Sin is not regarded as a hindrance to the desire and will of Jesus to provide healing and neither is personal sin viewed by Jesus as a reason for the occurrence of sickness in one's life. Furthermore, it is not recorded that Jesus demanded repentance before effecting any healings.

Prayer

His philosophy regarding prayer for healing, which he views as central,⁵² is based on the belief that 'since He's [God] going to heal everybody in the eschaton, why not ask for it now',⁵³ though he acknowledges that, 'whether they get well or not is God's part'.⁵⁴ This however contradicts his previously mentioned fundamental beliefs concerning the importance of healing as a reflection of God's nature.

His opinion is that persistency in prayer is most important.⁵⁵ Thus, he states: 'if we had them [people for whom prayer was being offered] five times, we could possibly see all of them healed. We have learned that by praying again and again for people the percentage of those unhealed individuals dwindles.'⁵⁶ However, he states that one should stop praying for a person 'when the Holy Spirit indicates that it is over, usually by withdrawing his power' or when the person is not responding 'and I notice the sensations associated with healing prayer ... are withdrawn'.⁵⁷

His comments concerning prayer suggest that cumulative prayer, or persistency in prayer, act as powerful keys in receiving healing.⁵⁸ This

50 *Power Healing* p 57

51 *Power Evangelism* p 174

52 'The Church...?' pp 117f

53 *Healing '95 Session 4*

54 'The Church...?' p 119

55 *Power Healing* pp 164, 170f

56 Hall p 20; cf *Power Healing* p 15

57 *Power Healing* p 244; cf J Wimber 'The Prayer that is intimacy with God' *Renewal* April 1988 pp 15f

58 F MacNutt (*The Prayer that heals* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1991) p 61), who conducted healing seminars with Wimber in England in 1996, advocates extended periods of prayer, described as 'soaking prayer', beneficial 'because the longer the sick area is held in the healing light of God, the more the germs or tumours have to wither up and die' (he supports this view by reference to Luke 9:8, 18:7f (*The Power to Heal* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1977) p 40, see also pp 39f, 70)). He also emphasizes the importance of corporate prayer, writing, 'the corporate presence of God in many believers can bring a greater power' (in E England 'Anointed with the power to heal' *Renewal* 150 Nov 1988 p 7; MacNutt *Healing* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1974) p 305)

implies that they are more effective than single prayers and assumes that God is more responsive to such prayer. The above features are not reflected in the ministry of Jesus. Also, he contradicts previous comments regarding the unlimited power available to believers, to be accessed simply by faith.

Methodology

It is in this area that Wimber's approach becomes most novel, in that he introduces to the concept of healing the practice of developing one's skills in 'clinics'. The purpose of *Practical Healing* is that the participant may 'learn how to pray for the sick',⁵⁹ during a ten-week study, progressing from being a spectator to a participant and finally to becoming a trainer.⁶⁰ Although he rejects the suggestion that healing can be guaranteed if a particular methodology is used,⁶¹ his goal is that 'equippers' will be trained who can heal and train others.⁶²

The people who participate in his healing teams are chosen on the basis of 'good character, full of the Holy Spirit – the 1 Timothy 3/Titus 1/Acts 6 type ... people who are maturing'.⁶³ No reasons are offered for this selection grid, though the implication is that those who can minister in healing are assumed to be of exemplary character; such a feature is not specified in the New Testament. Before training them 'with a show-and-tell, on-the-job training model', he ascertains 'what kind of healing situations suit this person' noting that, 'some ... excel in inner healing, others in deliverance from Satanic oppression or possession, others in physical disease'.⁶⁴ Evidence for such diversity of gifting is not provided and distances his praxis from that of Jesus, his apparent mentor, who left no such methodological guidelines for his followers.⁶⁵ Such a format of teaching, however sincere, results in an over-technical approach to healing that is not reflected in the ministry of Jesus; this results in attendees assuming that such techniques may be learnt and applied in a causative fashion, effecting healing when correct procedures have been applied.⁶⁶

59 J Wimber and K Springer *Practical Healing* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 1987) p 85; cf *Power Healing* pp 189f

60 *Practical Healing* pp 11f; cf C P Wagner *Signs and Wonders Today: The Story of Fuller Theological Seminary's Remarkable Course on Spiritual Power* (Altamonte Springs: Creation House 1987); *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders* (Ann Arbor: Servant Books 1988) pp 25f.

61 *Healing '95 Session 8*

62 *Healing '95 Session 1*; K Springer (ed) *Riding the Third Wave: What comes after Renewal* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering 1981) p 251

63 'The Church?' p 123

64 'The Church?' p 123

65 C Hart 'St Mark and John Wimber – Allies or Opponents?' *Anvil* 10.1 1993 p 62

66 Cf D Bridge *Power Evangelism and the Word of God* (Eastbourne: Kingsway 1987) p 230

Thus, Kammer⁶⁷ describes him as the ‘best known ... pragmatic evangelist of healing methodology’.

Ministry Time

Another important element, anticipated by Wimber in healing scenarios, is described as being a ‘ministry time’ during which, ‘spiritual power is multiplied ... greater insights’ are received and ‘protection for the person praying’ is achieved.⁶⁸ He describes it as a learning experience, best developed in group situations. During this period, he identifies five stages, the first being the interview where he establishes the request of the sufferer.⁶⁹

This is followed by a diagnostic decision which is the procedure of ‘identifying and clarifying the root of the person’s problem’ which may result in inner healing before any physical healing occurs.⁷⁰

Thirdly, he selects the kind of prayer to be offered which he identifies as determining ‘what God wants me to do at this particular time for this person’, noting that ‘the key to answered prayer is praying according to God’s will’.⁷¹ These developed stages of ministry bear little relationship to Jesus’ healing ministry and reflect more the teaching of James 5:14ff, a passage that Wimber rarely refers to.⁷² He notes that accompanying phenomena occur during his meetings and concludes that, ‘they often accompany what the Holy Spirit is doing’.⁷³ He describes shaking and trembling as occurring, providing scriptural support.⁷⁴ He writes: ‘commonly it is a gentle trembling’ though also it could be ‘a shaking of extreme violence ... for several hours’.⁷⁵ Such features are not recorded in the ministry of Jesus. Nevertheless, he is to be commended for the care, caution and sensitivity that he anticipates should accompany any form of ministry to the sick.

67 D Kammer ‘The Perplexing Power of John Wimber’s Power Encounters’ *Churchman* 106.1 1992 p 55

68 *Power Healing* p 188

69 *Power Healing* p 209

70 *Power Healing* pp 210-13

71 *Power Healing* pp 214ff

72 P Masters (*The Healing Epidemic* (London: Wakeman Trust 1988) pp 42, 139) describes it as ‘charismatic experimentation’; B Patterson (‘Cause for Concern’ *CT* Aug 8 1986 p 20) as a form of ‘Christian magic’.

73 *Power Healing* pp 227ff

74 *Power Healing* pp 225. Gen 42:28; Exod 19:16; Ezra 9:4; Ps 2:11; Isa 66:5; Jer 5:22; Dan 10:10f; Matt 28:4; Mark 5:33; Luke 8:47; Acts 7:32; 1 Cor 2:3; 2 Cor 7:15; Phil 2:12; Heb 12:21

75 *Power Healing* p 225

Medicine

Wimber accepts the value of medicine, quoting Mark 6:13, 7:33, 8:23; John 9:6 and 1 Timothy 5:23 as evidence for its biblical support, writing: 'I encourage most of the people I pray for to seek medicinal help, especially if they have a life threatening disease'.⁷⁶ He also provides strong personal support for medicine and doctors, noting that if it was not for them, neither he nor his wife would be alive.⁷⁷ He writes, after discovering he was suffering from nasal cancer in 1993, that God had warned him it would come and that 'he was going to heal me but that he was going to use medicinal means'.⁷⁸ He advises people on medication to visit their doctor if they believe they have been healed.⁷⁹ In these areas, he shows commendable wisdom.⁸⁰ Of pertinence to this thesis however, is that he differs from Jesus who, though not denigrating medical practitioners, chose not to refer people to them for healing. This dissimilarity to the model of Jesus further indicates that his ministry is distinctive.

Conclusion

Wimber's belief in divine healing is based on his belief in a paradigmatic healing model of Jesus to be emulated by believers as a result of authority delegated to them. However, his praxis indicates significant dissimilarities to that of Jesus which he chooses not to support from the Bible, even though some are reflected therein; similarly, the healing ministry of Jesus is contrasted to his own and contemporary believers on a number of levels, so calling into question his actual premise. A recognition of the importance of the teaching of Paul (with his emphasis on charismatic gifts) and James (5:13-18) is of crucial importance in determining the role and ministry of healing in the church today.

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76 *Power Healing* p 151; cf *Healing Seminar* p 12

77 *Healing '95 Session 8*

78 J Wimber 'Tending the Vineyard' *Alpha* June 1996 p 25

79 *Healing '95 Session 8*

80 C P Wagner *How to have a healing ministry without making your church sick* (Ventura: Regal 1988) p 267; cf J Richards (ed) *The Church's Healing Ministry* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering 1986) p 21. B Heron *Praying for Healing: The Challenge* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd 1989) p 7), representing the majority view of Christians, views medicine as 'one of the means the Lord uses to minister healing to those in need' and thus follows the Pauline model in practice whilst claiming to follow Jesus' model (C P Wagner 'The Power of God and Your Power', *Christian Life* July 1983 p 46)