

## **Study 4 Healing and hope**

Healing people is one of the ways Jesus showed that people, all people, had a place at the Lord's table. So what is it to be healed? Is it cure, inclusion, the touch of Jesus? Is it possible to be part of the community if we are not fully healed? As imitators of Christ Paul challenged us to be Christ like in our daily lives. One aspect of this means that we can participate in 'healing' of people who are on the margins. This may be by inclusion, or touch or courageously changing the conditions that has left them on the margins. By showing God's grace.

There are current stories of people who have a disability and their view on healing. I also have met many people over the years who have been hurt and say "if one more person lays hands on me to heal me I will not be able to control myself and what I say". This is not to deny that such healings do occur.

Some people who have been ordained have also expressed their pain about not being shown a true welcome into the Body of Christ with the gifts they have to offer. Following are quotes from a book: *Human Disability and the Service of God: Reassessing religious Practice*. Editors Nancy Eiesland and Done E. Saliers.<sup>1</sup>

"Healing is expected to change the person who has a disability into one who does not. The burden of healing is placed totally on the person who is disabled, causing further suffering and continued alienation from the church."

"Why is such a premium placed on able-bodiedness? Why is the 'good' news not expressed as a world made accessible to and accepting of persons of all physical, mental, psychological circumstances, rather than as persons changed to conform to the world's norm."

"In doing their renovation, they had stumbled into the realization that the body of Christ is not complete unless everyone can be present and participate fully."

These are offered as voices of people who journey with a disability or with those who have a disability and continue to discover barriers and seek pathways to enabling environments. They are not people of insufficient faith if they are not physically healed. I know I have not given the full story of healing, however, I this view is in solidarity with people who have not always had their voices heard and responded to with love, care and grace.

What about engagement with people as introduced in study 2. There are many ways carers and people with different abilities have enriched our lives. This happens when we engage with them. It is more than a ramp. It is more than our words of welcome, more than the newsletter offering welcome, it is sharing the journey with others in community – engaging with them. It is about being in solidarity with them, by giving them a voice, by acknowledging their gifts and being open to learning from them and

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<sup>1</sup> Human Disability and the Service of God editors Nancy L. Eiesland and Done E. Saliers Published by Abbingdon Press, Nashville 1988 Page 77,78, 148

being transformed as we enter into mutual relationships. It seems though that many people are still 'outside' and that we can do more. If approximately 20% of the population has a disability of some kind, how well do we mirror that in our church membership and leadership?

**DVD** Matthew, staff, Chaplains

We will hear a little more from Matthew on healing and what that means for him. And there are stories of hope about how people in different contexts find courage to be part of life in the community. Show DVD

**Questions:** *Allow 20 minutes for the discussion*

1. How do we show grace to others and receive grace from others in journeying with them as they seek to be part of community?
2. Healing. Share your experiences of healing?
3. How can/are people with disabilities encouraged into church membership/leadership?
4. What biblical stories do you find helpful in considering inclusion of people who are on the margins, people different from us?

*Closing prayer*

*Gracious God,*

*Thank you for journeying with us in our study. Give us ears to listen to You. To Listen to the world around us, eyes to see and courage to venture into new territory as you call us. Give us grace in full measure to be present with people as we journey together. (a time of silence may be helpful here) Help us come to know and receive the gifts of all people. May you prompt us and guide us where we may be your healing presence in this world of contrasts. In Jesus name,*

*Amen*