

# *A Fresh Start...*

## *Lord*

### *Make me anew*

**THE FIVE STUDIES IN THIS BOOK ARE**

**The Church and Health**  
*My neighbour as myself*

**The Church and Healing**  
*The Saviour's apprentices*

**The Church and Wholeness**  
*Renew all of me*

**The Church and Holiness**  
*Homesick for God*

**The Church and Hope**  
*Prisoners of hope*

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# A group that cares

One of the special ways a group values each other is when special events are recognised.

One way to show the group you care for them is to take a little time at the first meeting to note each other's special days.

This could take the form of an icebreaker and if this was the case then you could include some fun things. eg: your first kiss, graduation, first car, first date etc.

More general would be birthdays (you don't need the year although the inquisitive will try) and wedding anniversary.

If any of these events happen during the time the group meets, why not have a special cake to commemorate this.

It is also a good idea for someone to be appointed as the 'pastoral co-ordinator' to see that these events are not forgotten. It is this care that makes a small group like the one you are in special and valued.

Group member's name	Special events and dates

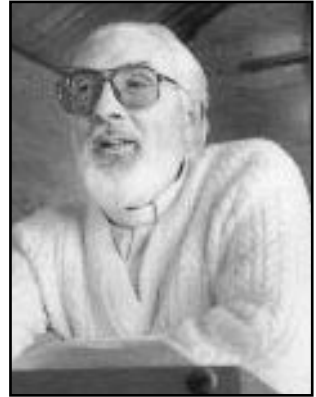
# OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES

## Introduction

I was brought up on the River Thames in England and was always fascinated by the locks set along the waterways to allow boats to enter and come out on a higher level.

The real purpose of the lock is not just to change our level but to enable us to continue our journey. That is how I would like us to use Lent this year.

Not so much a looking back at the trials and tribulations of Jesus, important though that is.



*Canon Frank Watts*

Not just as a short term discipline that ends at Easter, but as a preparation for an Easter celebration that finds us further on in our journey towards our own final resurrection. The journey that is taking us from *self* to *Christ*. From self centeredness to Christ centeredness.

Let us keep Lent as a forward looking experience. As the stem that leads to the glorious bloom of Easter - a bloom that is not yet in full flower. Let us concentrate on making Lent a positive experience rather than a negative one. Let us not say 'I will give up chocolate or sugar,' but rather I will eat healthily. Not, 'I will go to church more', but rather 'the time I am in church I will pay more attention'

Remember that going to church no more makes us *good* Christians than having athlete's foot makes us athletes !

No one today questions that for a sportsperson or an athlete to improve their performance they need to give a special time for training and discipline.

In a part of the Russian Orthodox Church at the beginning of Lent, when the church is in darkness and all its symbols covered in black, suddenly, in this quiet penitential atmosphere the choir softly begins to sing the Easter hymn.

Let us make our Lenten observance an overture to our own Easter hymn.

"Hope is a bird that senses the dawn  
And begins to sing while it is still dark"

## *Lenten steps to health*

I will fast from fear of illness,  
I will feast on the healing power of Christ.

I will fast from negatives,  
I will feast on the multitude of alternatives.

I will fast from worry,  
I will feast on faith.

## **Optimal Health: a Balance of Five Health Areas**





# The Church and Health

## *My neighbour as myself*

Romans 1: 16. **I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the gentile.**

Wycliffe, in his 14<sup>th</sup> century translation of the bible translates *sozo*, the Greek word for Salvation, as *health*. All translators found this word difficult. They wanted to keep it 'spiritual' but found it also referring to physical healing. Therefore, in some places it becomes *saved* and in others *made whole*. In the Syrian New Testament, which would seem to be nearer to the Aramaic spoken by Jesus, it is translated as *life*. Thus, Jesus' commendation of Zaccheus becomes "This day life has come to this house." (Luke 19: 9). And Romans 13:11. would read 'Now is our *health* nearer than when we believed'. 2 Tim 3:15. 'how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for *health* through faith in Christ Jesus'. Look at some of the following scriptures where we have *salvation* and replace them with health or life. Luke 2:30 - Luke 3:6; Acts 4:12; Acts 13:47; Rev 7:20.

We live in age when humanity is more concerned with issues of health than ever before. Yet William Standish Reed, an eminent American surgeon, has written: 'Our medical practice is wonderful! But we are living in a nation that is sick unto death. We have tremendous hospitals everywhere, and yet they are full to overflowing. Our mental institutions are running over. There is a waiting list practically everywhere to get psychiatric help. We are taking tranquillizers by the 'bushel basketful' and the solution is to be found in the word of God: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever", and yet I don't see too many people going out and preaching this word.'

### **Health yesterday and today.**

In Jesus' commands to the 12 and to the 70 (Luke 9:1-6 and Luke 10:1-12) the command to preach the Gospel is linked to the command to heal the sick. One of the most potent ways the early Christians were distinguished from the societies in which they lived was 'the way they treat the poor and the sick.' St Basil, who became Bishop of Caesarea in 370, built some of the first public institutions devoted to the care of the sick and the poor. This great link between the faith and healing suffered a tremendous setback with the closure of the monasteries at the time of the Reformation. Since those far off days, our view of life has undergone a complete change. Science no longer thinks of matter as hard, permanent and solid. Today science thinks in new ways that sees matter as much closer to the gates of the spiritual than once seemed possible. 'Dead' matter has vanished. We are challenged to look at the atom as a thing vibrant with ceaseless motion, 'its protons and electrons riding in space their ordered orbits'.

We can begin to see the strange kinship between matter and the unseen and the basic unity of all created things, animate and inanimate - and the mystery of the 'word made flesh'.

### **Health and community.**

What our society shows us is the immense search that is going on for health and wholeness outside the Christian Church because of the failure of its members to proclaim the Gospel in salvation fullness. So often church history shows us heresies and cults rising up where the church has left gaps in its proclamation. When we fail to give positive teaching on death and the Communion of Saints, the spiritualists move in. When the church neglects health we leave the field to new age practitioners and witchcraft, and all kinds of alternative therapies some of which are good and some dangerous.

In recent years, over 200 scientific studies have shown spirituality is good for your health. In 1995 the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Centre found that a major predictor of survival for heart surgery patients was religious faith. A National Institute for the Aging study found that geriatric patients were physically healthier and less depressed when they attended regular spiritual services (*Dr Judith Orloff*) By the way, did you know that the word 'geriatric' was not found in a dictionary until after 1936!

### **Health and the parish.**

What is your Church doing to foster Health Awareness in your community?

A growing number of parishes and congregations are developing courses to train and equip congregations to be places of wellness and health promotion. What resources have your congregation to strengthen and support those facing the accidental crises of life? Do you have supports to encourage people to move from guilt to reconciliation - is sacramental confession and spiritual direction advertised and available? Do you have any programmes to promote personal growth and social change? Many parishes are learning that certain laypersons are natural therapeutic people and a growing number of groups are employing a Parish Nurse. A number of academic institutions are offering accreditation for health professionals in this area.

Every Church should find ways to encourage members to:-

- increase the quality and years of life.
- eliminate health disparities.

Good health is a part of God's intention for all people. Health is a concern of the whole community and healing and health care are valid ways of proclaiming the Gospel and making all things new in and through the Risen Jesus.

# Sharing with others

**Focus:** The Church and Health (My neighbour as myself)



## Welcome and introductions

Get each member of the group to introduce themselves and say what they hope to gain from these studies.



## Opening prayer and a quiet time (5 minutes)

*The leader suggests a quiet time for members to give thanks for the positive signs of health in their lives. (Allow 3 minutes and then the Leader says "Let us pray together".)*

Lord God of Truth, whose Son our Saviour required honesty in those who came to him, and saw fullest healing in those who gave him thanks: in this time of worship and study open our hearts to yourself, our ears to your words, our wills to your ruling and our lives to your service. Amen.



## Getting started (10 minutes)

Complete the simple time line below putting a (+) sign above the line for special times of joy and health and (-) sign below the line for special times of ill health or depression. (Each segment represents roughly 10 years)

L \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_  
Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Now

When everyone has done this share the results as far as you are comfortable.



## Read the scripture passage (10 minutes) Luke 19: 1-9

- Is this a story of healing ?  
If so, how was Zaccheus healed ?
- Prayer may not always change my circumstances but it always changes me. Is this true or false in your experience?  
Comment.
- What link can you see between Lent and health?



## **Questions for reflection** (40 minutes) *(select from the following suggested questions)*

1. In what ways is your church a museum for saints or a hospital for sinners?
2. Bishop Howell wit used to say “ We were called to be ‘fishers of men‘ but have become ‘keepers of aquariums‘ “ In what sense is that true ?
3. A theologian has said “Medicine arises from God’s work in creation” - the ministry of the church arises from God’s work in salvation. Try and explain what you think he means by this.
4. ‘Religion is on the increase everywhere except in the church.’ Is that true of false? Explain your reasons.
5. ‘The laws of God have been replaced by community standards, which are constantly slipping lower.’ If this is true, how does it affect the health of your community?
6. Which is the most ‘therapeutic’ (health enhancing) group you belong to? Explain why.
7. The World Health Organisation defines health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.’ How would you change this definition?



Record any special thoughts and insights that the group would like to share with your local church community.



### **Closing prayer** (5 minutes)

*The leader should suggest that a time of silence be kept and then invite members to contribute short prayers as they feel moved by the study theme. A good way to proceed is to go round the circle asking each person to say AMEN at the end of their prayer and assuring any one who does not wish to offer a specific prayer just to say AMEN so that the next person will continue. The prayer time may conclude by all joining in this closing prayer:*

Lord Jesus Christ

As you welcomed Zaccheus as a friend,

And freed him from the bondage of materialism

to experience the joy of your kingdom,

And a home transformed by your salvation:

Call us, confront us, free us and transform us:

That through your Spirit working in us

We may work in society for your Father's kingdom,

Till all enjoy that abundant life you came to share with us.

AMEN.



### **Hospitality**

Enjoy a break, have a drink and a biscuit.

*NEXT WEEK!*

During the week collect advertisements and articles on alternative healing and therapies to share from newspapers, magazines and journals.

All members are also asked to bring something they believe is a healthy food to share.



### **Web Material:**

If you have purchased 10+ copies of this book, you will find additional material on our web site [www.grassroots.com.au](http://www.grassroots.com.au) You will be given a password to access the site.

This additional material includes:-

- **Pewsheet snippets**
- **Helpful references**
- **Material to go a little deeper on each section.**

# Notes

## Discussion Highlights

Week One - The Church and Health  
*My neighbour as myself*

