

Sickness Health and Healing



WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

Serving the Health of our Community

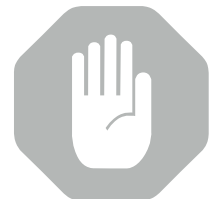
Enhancing our understanding, to provide care and support for those who need it.

an initiative of the SCWA Coalition

Edition 2021-01b

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One-Day Workshop

SICKNESS, HEALTH, AND HEALING

Overall aim of the series: All training resources in *the Heart of the Matter* series aim to provide a meaningful response to the phenomenon of accusations of witchcraft made against children with a view to bringing about changes in culture and behaviour in local communities.

Objective of this workshop: By the end of this workshop the participants will recognise that sickness and death are not attributable to witchcraft and that seeking harmful so-called 'cures' is to be avoided.

Before the Workshop

Gather and prepare the following:

- Materials — flipchart, marker pens, paper, scotch tape.
- Copies of Bible extracts, printed on sheets of paper.
- Copies of questions for group discussions (to be given to each group before the relevant activity).

You should also ensure you identify two couples (perhaps pastors and their spouses) who can talk with and pray for any participants who have suffered personal losses which are brought to the surface again by the workshop. This is particularly relevant for Activity 6.

Note to facilitator: in the activities, it is assumed that the facilitator will read the story as it unfolds. However, if preferred, others could read or assistants could role play the stories (reading the dialogues, with a narrator reading the rest of each section). It is probably easiest to do this with assistants who have prepared in advance, although it may work with participants if they are keen to be involved in that way and are happy to read from the notes.

And Finally...

For participants as a record of their attendance at the workshop, you will need:

- Participant Certificates — these will need to be printed off, have names of attendees added, and be signed by the facilitator. A sample certificate template is provided with the resources for this course.
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Opening (no more than 30 minutes)

Prayer and worship

Invite a participant to lead a song of worship.

Ask another participant to pray and commit the day to God, and to ask God to speak to everyone through the teaching.

Introductions

If this *Sickness, Health, and Healing* training is used as stand-alone course, rather than as part of *The Heart of the Matter* training, then introduce yourself and ask the participants to briefly introduce themselves.

Activity 1: Introduction (15 minutes)

Aim – To get the participants to recall a personal experience of sickness; to realise that sickness happens to us all; and to recall how someone showed loving care and support that helped them to get better.

Setting the context

Introduce the theme as follows:

Sickness and death are everyday realities in our communities. Today, we are going to look at how our communities respond to questions of sickness, health, and healing, and at what the Bible teaches us about them. Then we will consider how we can strengthen positive responses and avoid bringing even more pain and suffering into our communities through any negative or harmful responses.

Ask the participants to put up their hands if they have been sick in the past year. Then ask if there are three people who are happy to share what was wrong with them. **Allow them to share** briefly.

Then ask all the participants to think of a time in their lives when they were very sick. Ask them to think about a person who cared for them and gave them loving support, and how this helped them to get better.

Invite two participants who are willing to share about who helped them to get better.

- What was it about that person that helped them to feel better?
- What did they do to help them to feel cared for and supported?

Explain the following:

Loving care and support can help to make someone who is sick to feel better. As followers of Christ, we are called to give that kind of support to those in our families and communities who are sick and vulnerable, no matter what their condition.

As Luke 6:31 says...

⋮ *Do to others as you would like them to do to you.*

Activity 2: Scenarios and Discussion (40 minutes)

Aim — To introduce the topic more broadly and to begin to look at community responses to sickness, injury, and death.

Organise the participants into small groups, and ask each group to choose a 'scribe' to record the group discussions and responses. Give the scribes a sheet of paper and a marker pen. The scribe will also share these responses with the rest of the participants after the discussion.

Give one scenario to each group to discuss and ask them to consider the following questions:

- What do you think is happening?
- What do you think caused the situation that is being described?
- What do you think the family or friends should do next?
- What do you think is most likely to happen to the injured or sick person?

Allow 10 minutes for the groups to discuss their given scenario.

Scenario 1

Ernest is a man in his fifties. He was hurrying across the road to a meeting when a motorbike taxi raced around the corner and hit him. Ernest was thrown into the air and landed hard on the road. He is unconscious because he hit his head. His head, arms, and legs are bruised and bleeding.

Scenario 2

Josiah is sixty and is usually fit and healthy. For the last week he has felt increasingly unwell. He has a fever and his body aches. He has pain in his joints and his head and his stomach hurt. He says he does not want to eat because he feels nauseous, but he is very thirsty.

Scenario 3

Sylvia is four years old but looks much younger. She is underweight, malnourished, and very weak. She can no longer stand or sit up but lies quietly on her mat with her

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eyes closed. Her breathing is very shallow, and she does not respond when her mother speaks.

After 10 minutes, **ask the scribes to share** their group responses with everyone.

Then ask the groups to discuss the following questions:

- What are the beliefs in our community about health, sickness and healing?
- What are the beliefs about what causes sickness?
- How do we protect ourselves from sickness?
- How do we respond to sickness? What happens when someone falls ill in our community?
- Where do we look for healing? Who do we consult?

After 20 minutes, ask a spokesperson from each group to report the group's answers back to everyone.

Note the responses on a flipchart, and then **put up** the sheet on the wall. Explain that we will come back to these answers later.

Activity 3: Story and Discussion (20 minutes)

Aim – To introduce a story through which to explore the themes of sickness and healing.

Our story begins...

Read out loud, slowly and clearly, the following story to the participants:

Samuel and his wife Esther live with her elderly mother, Eunice, and their children Paul (10 years old) and Rachel (8 years). Also living with them is Gideon (12 years old), who is Samuel's son from an earlier relationship. Samuel has casual work as a labourer, and Esther sells tomatoes by the roadside. One morning, Esther awoke feeling sick. She had a bad headache, fever, diarrhoea, and nausea. She felt so unwell that she could not eat, and she got weaker and weaker over the next few days.

Pause the story here.

Ask the participants to suggest what happens next. Allow four or five ideas to be suggested and note them down on the flipchart.

Then **organise the participants into groups** of 6 to 8 people.

Ask them to discuss in their groups the the following questions:

- Which of these suggested outcomes to Esther's illness is most likely in our community?
- What would the impact of each of the suggested outcomes be for:

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- the individual family members?
- the family as a whole?
- the wider community?
- What would be the most positive or least damaging outcome? Is it one of the suggested ideas or a different one?

Note to facilitator: These questions can be written in advance on a piece of flipchart paper and stuck up on a wall at the start of the activity. Alternatively, they can be written on small pieces of paper which are handed to each group.

Ask each group to nominate a spokesperson to feed back the group's answers to the questions after the discussion.

After 10 minutes, ask the spokesperson from each group to feed back their group's ideas to everyone.

Invite responses from everyone and guide the discussion to identify:

- Which next steps would mean that all the individuals in the family were protected and cared for?
- Which next steps would ensure that the family remained intact?
- Which next steps would promote mutual trust and care in the community?

Activity 4: Bible Reflection (45 minutes)

Aim — To look at what the Bible tells us about sickness, health, and healing.

Place on the walls the five sheets of flipchart paper, each having one of the following statements at the top, with space beneath to add Bible references.

Note to facilitator: these should be prepared in advance.

1. God created human beings. God designed the human body, so God thoroughly understands it.
2. Sickness and human death came into the world when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden (in Genesis 3). Human sickness and death were not part of the 'very good' creation that God made, but happened because of Adam and Eve's disobedience and rebellion, and are now part of the human experience.
3. The Bible treats health and sickness holistically. It addresses the health of the whole person and not just their physical health. It refers to emotional, spiritual, relational, and mental health, as well as physical health.
4. God is Sovereign. No sickness, not even death, is beyond His ability to overcome. God can and does heal. But he does not always choose to heal, and at present death is still a reality. Sometimes God allows sickness and other forms of suffering

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to accomplish his good purposes in our lives, to help us to grow in character, to teach dependence on him, or for other reasons that we may never fully understand.

5. Jesus came to bring hope and healing. Because of him, the consequences of human rebellion will one day be reversed, and there will be no more suffering and no more death.

Explain that we will listen to some verses from the Bible and match them with the statements on the flipchart. Some statements are supported by more than one extract from the Bible.

Ask for volunteers who are happy to read out verses from the Bible. Hand out to the volunteers the slips of paper with the Bible verses on. If there are no volunteers, or not enough, then the facilitator or an assistant can read some or all of the verses.

Note to facilitator: these should be prepared in advance.

Bible verses

Isaiah 65:17–20

“See, I will create a new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years.”

This goes with statement 5. When the participants have identified this, then you (the facilitator or your assistant) should write ‘Isaiah 65:17–20’ next to statement 5, which is on the sheet of paper on the wall.

Romans 5:12

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one person, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.”

This goes with statement 2. When the participants have identified this, write ‘Romans 5:12’ next to statement 2, which is on the wall.

Psalms 119:71

“It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.”

This goes with statement 4. When the participants have identified this, then write ‘Psalm 119:71’ next to statement 4, which is on the wall.

Psalms 139:13–16

: “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s
 : womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your
 : works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from
 : you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in
 : the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body.”

This goes with statement 1. When the participants have identified this, write ‘Psalm 139:13–16’ next to statement 1, which is on the wall.

Hosea 11:3

: “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has
 : turned away from them.”

This goes with statement 3. When the participants have identified this, write ‘Hosea 11:3’ next to statement 3, which is on the wall.

Exodus 15:26

: “I am the Lord, who heals you.”

This goes with statement 4. When the participants have identified this, then write ‘Exodus 15:26’ next to statement 4, which is on the wall.

Psalms 103:2–4

: “Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits — who forgives all
 : your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit
 : and crowns you with love and compassion.”

This goes with statement 4. When the participants have identified this, write ‘Psalm 103:2–4’ next to statement 4, which is on the wall.

2 Kings 4: 32–35

: When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his
 : couch. He went in, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the
 : Lord. Then he got on the bed and lay on the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to
 : eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out on him, the boy’s body
 : grew warm. Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room
 : and then got on the bed and stretched out on him once more. The boy
 : sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

This goes with statement 4. When the participants have identified this, write ‘2 Kings 4:32–35’ next to statement 4, which is on the wall.

Psalms 147:3

: God heals the broken–hearted and binds up their wounds.

This goes with statement 3. When the participants have identified this, write 'Psalm 147:3' next to statement 3, which is on the wall.

Isaiah 57:1-2

Good people pass away; the godly often die before their time. But no one seems to care or wonder why. No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come. For those who follow godly paths will rest in peace when they die.

This goes with statement 4. When the participants have identified this, then write 'Isaiah 57:1-2' next to statement 4, which is on the wall.

Explain that these verses show us that although we may not understand why someone has died young or before their time, God sees the bigger picture.

Deuteronomy 32:39

"There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand."

This goes with statement 3. When the participants have identified this, the Facilitator or his assistant writes 'Deuteronomy 32:39' next to statement 3, which is on the wall.

Revelation 21:4

"God will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

This goes with statement 5. When the participants have identified this, then write 'Revelation 21:4' next to statement 5, which is on the wall.

John 9:3

"Neither this (blind) man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him."

This goes with statement 4. When the participants have identified this, then write 'John 9:3' next to statement 4, which is on the wall.

Psalms 69:20

Scorn (broken relationships) has broken my heart and has left me helpless; I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none.

This goes with statement 3. When the participants have identified this, write 'Psalm 69:20' next to statement 3, which is on the wall.

Jeremiah 32:27

I am the Lord, the God of all humankind. Is anything too hard for me?

This goes with statement 4. When the participants have identified this, write 'Jeremiah 32:27' next to statement 4, which is on the wall.

Genesis 1:27

So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

This goes with statement 1. When the participants have identified this, write 'Genesis 1:27' next to statement 1, which is on the wall.

James 1:2–4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything (that is, like Jesus).

This goes with statement 4. When the participants have identified this, then write 'James 1:2-4' next to statement 4, which is on the wall.

2 Timothy 4:20 and 1 Timothy 5:23

*"I (the apostle Paul) left Trophimus ill in Miletus."
"Stop drinking only water and use a little wine because of your stomach and your (Timothy's) frequent illnesses."*

This goes with statement 4. When the participants have identified this, the Facilitator or his assistant writes '2 Timothy 4:20 and 1 Timothy 5:23' next to statement 4, which is on the wall.

Highlight the point that we know from the book of Acts that God did do miracles of healing through Paul (see Acts 14:8–10 and Acts 28:8, among other verses), but the references to Timothy and Trophimus show that God did not always choose to heal, even though it is very likely that Paul will have prayed for these close friends.

Review and reflect

Now, read out loud the five statements again.

Invite the participants to **rejoin their small groups** and to **discuss for 15 minutes** using the following questions:

- What strikes you from these statements?
- What can we learn from them?
- How do they apply to us today?

After 15 minutes, invite the spokesperson from each group to share their group responses with everyone.

Emphasise the following points:

- Sin separates us from God. Being separated from God results in sickness and death. Through Jesus and his work on the cross, those who love him are brought back into relationship with God. But until we as Christians receive our new immortal bodies when Jesus returns, our bodies continue to experience decay and death. Sickness and death are part of the human condition. The Bible says that faithful Christians may be called to suffer in this way for God's glory, and it also teaches that sickness can sometimes be a form of discipline from God. But we need not look for any other spiritual or supernatural explanations.
- Sickness, health, and healing should be viewed in a holistic way. Traditionally, African people have understood health and wellbeing as part of a person's entire existence. Illness is understood to be an indication of the breakdown in the harmony in relationships with family, the community, or ancestors. Therefore, frequently an African response to illness is to visit a traditional healer to help restore good relationships and to treat the illness with herbal remedies. Although as Christians we reject any idolatrous aspects of some traditional medicine (we will be looking at that in more detail next) we must not lose our traditional understanding of the holistic nature of health and sickness.
- God is in charge. God is the Creator and God is the one who heals, (Exodus 15:26). God is Sovereign over sickness and death. He can and does heal. But He will not always choose to heal. His will be done. We must submit to Him in this, even when we do not understand why he is choosing to allow sickness.

In Isaiah 55:8–9, God reminds us:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways... As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

- In Jesus Christ, we have his promise and look forward with hope to a future with no sickness or death or mourning.

Activity 5: Story and Discussion (30 minutes)

Aim — To enable participants to discuss the issue of witchcraft.

Our story recap...

Read again, the first part of story to the participants:

Samuel and his wife Esther live with her elderly mother, Eunice, and their children Paul (10 years old) and Rachel (8 years). Also living with them is Gideon (12 years old), who is Samuel's son from an earlier relationship. Samuel has casual work as a labourer, and Esther sells tomatoes by the

roadside. One morning, Esther awoke feeling sick. She had a bad headache, fever, diarrhoea, and nausea. She felt so unwell that she could not eat, and she got weaker and weaker over the next few days.

Our story continues...

Read out loud the next part of story:

Eunice began to grumble to Samuel that the sickness had been caused by Gideon to get rid of his stepmother. She told him that Gideon was a powerful and dangerous witch and that unless Samuel threw him out of the house, he would kill Esther and the rest of her family. "I heard Gideon call out in his sleep," said Eunice, "that was when he cursed Esther and made her sick."

But Samuel refused to throw his son out onto the streets. "Gideon is not a witch. He is my son and I love him. I will take Esther to the clinic. The doctors there can maybe help us."

Samuel gently carried his wife to the clinic in a neighbouring town. He waited with her until they reached the front of the queue. Doctor Mary examined Esther and diagnosed a viral illness. "Viruses are all around us and our bodies resist most of them," said the doctor. "They are tiny organisms made of genetic material, which take over our cells to reproduce themselves. That is why they make us feel ill. We fight them off with our immune systems, but sometimes that takes time, and we need medical help to recover." she explained.

She gave Esther some medication to control her symptoms, especially her fever, and explained to Samuel how to prevent her from becoming dehydrated by mixing up a solution of sugar and salt in clean, purified water and giving it to her at home. "Dehydration is the main reason she feels so weak." said the doctor.

"So this is not witchcraft?" asked Samuel.

"No," said Doctor Mary, "Esther's sickness has a medical explanation and a medical solution. At times our immune systems may be weaker than at other times, which is why sometimes one person gets sick and another does not, or one recovers and another does not. We can make our immune systems stronger if we eat nutritious food like fruit, vegetables, and proteins. But our bodies become weaker with age and it becomes harder to fight off sickness. Fortunately, Esther is young, and you brought her quickly to the clinic, so she has a good chance of making a full recovery."

Samuel took Esther home and the three children helped him to care for her. A week later, she was strong enough to get up from her bed. "I feel much better now," she told Samuel, "The medicine has helped my immune

... system to fight off this sickness. God has designed us very well, with bodies that can repair themselves, and brains that help us to understand sickness and how to treat it. I thank God for Doctor Mary.”

Pause the story here.

Invite the participants to **rejoin their small groups** and to **discuss for 10 minutes** the following questions:

- Where do the people in our communities look for an explanation for sickness?
- What could have happened if Samuel had taken Eunice's advice?
 - What would the consequences have been for Gideon?
 - What might the consequences have been for Esther?
 - What would the consequences have been for the family as a whole?
 - What might have happened the next time someone in the family or community got sick?
- How did Doctor Mary's advice help?

After 10 minutes, invite the spokesperson from each group to share their group responses with everyone.

Ensure to emphasise following points:

- **As we highlighted before:** Sin separates us from God. Being separated from God results in sickness and death. Through Jesus and his work on the cross, those who love him are brought back into relationship with God. But until we as Christians receive our new immortal bodies when Jesus returns, our bodies continue to experience decay and death. Sickness and death are part of the human condition. The Bible says that faithful Christians may be called to suffer in this way for God's glory, and it also teaches that sickness can sometimes be a form of discipline from God. *But we need not look for any other spiritual or supernatural explanations.*
- If we try to look for other spiritual or supernatural explanations, then we risk causing more harm and suffering. In our story, Gideon would have been thrown out of the house and forced to live a dangerous and damaging life on the streets. He might also have been put through a harmful 'deliverance' ritual and would have suffered stigma and rejection. The family would have been broken. And Esther might have died because of lack of medical care.
- God can and does heal. He may choose to do so directly and miraculously, or he may choose to work through medical science. God has given us as human beings the capacity to learn about and to understand the remarkable human bodies that God created, and how to look after them. It is also true that *God may choose not to heal* and that ultimately, we are all subject to death until the time that Jesus referred to as the 'Age to Come'.

Activity 6: Story and Reflection (20 minutes)

Aim — To recognise that medicine does not have all the answers, but that we must still trust God.

Our story continues...

Read out loud the next part of the story to the participants.

A week after Esther came home from the clinic, Pastor Emmanuel visited the family. Esther was sitting quietly in a chair and Paul ran to fetch his father from the field while Rachel made some tea, while Eunice watched.

"It is good to see you looking better, Sister Esther," said Pastor Emmanuel as Samuel and Gideon came through the door and greeted him. "I am so glad that the doctor at the clinic was able to treat you and to give you the right medication."

"Yes," replied Esther with a smile, "I am very blessed."

"Indeed," said Pastor Emmanuel, "and you were wise to seek help there."

"Doctors do not know everything," said Eunice.

"It is true that the medical doctors cannot always discover what is making us sick, and that they do not always have the facilities to do detailed tests," replied Pastor Emmanuel. "They could not save the life of my dear wife, even though they tried very hard." He fell silent for a moment, remembering his wife's sickness the previous year. "I miss her very much. But she and I both trusted that God in his wisdom and goodness would do what was best for her. We did not seek supernatural explanations, like witchcraft, and did not cause further damage to our family or community by looking for a scapegoat. We understood that God has given us humans the ability to learn about our bodies and how they work and how to help them to repair when they are sick or damaged, which is why it is wise to seek medical help and advice. But humans will never have all the answers. In the end, we must place our lives into God's hands. We sought medical advice and prayed for her healing, but God chose to take her home to be with him in heaven, rather than letting us keep her a while longer. As the Bible teaches us in Isaiah 57, 'Good people pass away; the godly often die before their time. But no one seems to care or wonder why. No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come. For those who follow godly paths will rest in peace when they die.' I am happy that this should be so for my beloved wife, despite my own loss."

Samuel placed his hand on Pastor Emmanuel's shoulder. "That was a hard time for you."

"Yes, but God comforts those who mourn, and he was very close to us during that time. It is a particular comfort to know that she is with her Lord and Saviour in heaven and that one day I will join them there."

They gathered closer together and spent some time praising God and praying, before drinking Rachel's tea and eating some small cakes as they chatted and laughed together.

Pause the story here.

Ask the participants to reflect on this part of the story and to share their thoughts and what they have learned from it with the group.

Explain that if there are those with personal losses who would like prayer, there will be two couples (perhaps pastors and spouses) available at the end of the workshop for them to talk to and who will pray with them.

Activity 7: Bible Reflection (60 minutes)

Aim — To look at the example of Jesus.

Explain that we are now going to look at the example of Jesus, to see how he treated people who had sickness and disease.

Read out loud the following verses:

Matthew 11:4–5

Jesus replied (to John the Baptist's question about whether he was the Messiah), "Go back and report what you hear and see: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor."

Ask the participants what examples Jesus gave of healings in these verses.

Possible answers:

- *blind people receive sight;*
- *lame people walk;*
- *leprosy (bacterial illness) is cured;*
- *deaf people hear;*
- *spiritual needs are met.*

Now ask the participants if they can think of any other conditions that Jesus healed.

Some examples might include:

- *severe pain, epilepsy (fitting), and paralysis — in Matthew 4:23–25;*

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- *persistent bleeding — in Matthew 9:20–22;*
- *swelling — in Luke 14:6;*
- *even death — in Luke 7:11–17, Mark 5:35–43, John 11:1–44.*

Important note: Jesus also cast out demons with a word. For more detail on how Jesus carried out exorcisms, see *The Heart of the Matter Module 5, Activity 2*. In brief, Jesus was full of compassion towards people who were under demonic influence. He cast out demons with a word, not an elaborate ritual, and he treated the person whom he delivered with tenderness and gentleness — see Mark 9:14–27 for an example.

Explain: The clear message is that nothing is too difficult for Jesus, and that he has complete authority over sickness and death, and over Satan and the effects of sin.

Jesus heals

Explain: we are going to look at how Jesus heals people.

Ask for volunteers to read each of the following passages.

After each reading, **ask the participants:**

- What method did Jesus use to heal the person in the story?

Bible verses

Mark 7:33–35

Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh, said to him, 'Ephphatha!' (which means 'Be opened!'). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened, and he began to speak plainly.

John 9:1–7

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

Mark 10:51–52

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

“Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Luke 8:43–48

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

“Who touched me?” Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.” But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.”

Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”

Luke 7:2–10

There a centurion’s servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, “This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.” So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: “Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

John 4:49–50

The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”

“Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.”

The man took Jesus at his word and departed.

John 11:38–44

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.” Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

After all the participants have given their answers, **emphasise the following points:**

- Jesus healed in many different ways. Sometimes he was not even present when a person was healed. His power was always sufficient.
- Jesus healed frequently as part of his ministry, but the main significance of this was to demonstrate that he was the Messiah. Even Jesus did not heal all who were ill, but rather he acted in each situation so that his Father would be glorified.
- Other parts of the Bible show that Jesus’ followers continued this healing ministry. But as we have seen from the examples of Timothy and Trophimus, God did not always choose to heal through them.
- Miraculous, instantaneous healing will not be everyone’s experience, and the reality is that most of us will experience failing health. And all of us will ultimately experience death.

Activity 8: Story and Comparing Views (40 minutes)

Aim — To examine wise ways to seek healing.

Introducing the topic

Emphasise the following important points:

- Miraculous, instantaneous healing will not be everyone’s experience. The reality is that most of us will experience failing health and all of us will ultimately

experience death. We should keep in mind examples from the Bible that remind us of this fact.

- 1 Kings 14:4 says “Now (the prophet) Ahijah could not see; his sight was gone because of his age.”
- Even Elisha, one of the greatest prophets and miracle workers in the Bible ultimately became sick and died. 2 Kings 13:1 tells us “Now Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he died.”
- And we learn in Philippians 2:25–30 of Epaphroditus who was healed, but apparently only slowly and after a lengthy illness. We learn that the news of his illness had reached Philippi and filled the Christians there with concern. Paul does not seem to have the idea that he could simply have healed him. Healing was not something he could control, despite the authority he had as an apostle.

Stress the following:

- In all of these examples, there is no hint that witchcraft was involved.
- It is the fact that instantaneous healing is so unusual that makes it miraculous.

Explain: We will now explore the question, “What should we do if we or others fall sick?” We will now look at the next part of our story of Samuel and Esther and their family.

Our story continues...

Read out loud the next part of the story to the participants.

A few weeks later, Samuel’s sister, Lydia, called by with her daughter Elizabeth, who is 13 years old. As they sat chatting with Samuel, Esther, Eunice, and their children, Samuel noticed that Lydia and Elizabeth were both wearing fetishes.

“Why are you wearing these fetishes?” he asked Lydia, pointing to her wrist.

“There is sickness in our village,” she replied. “I bought these fetishes because I was told that they will protect us against sickness and will cure us if we fall ill. The people who do not have them will be the ones who are targeted by the sickness.”

“But aren’t you a Christian?” asked Samuel. “The Bible tells us that God does not want us to trust in fetishes.”

“Are you sure?” asked Lydia, looking puzzled. “Can you show me what the Bible says about fetishes or magic charms?”

Samuel took his Bible from beside his bed and turned to Ezekiel 13 verse 20. “This is what it says here in the book of Ezekiel,” he said. And he

started to read: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against all your magic charms, which you use to ensnare my people like birds. I will tear them from your arms, setting my people free like birds set free from a cage."

"So fetishes do not represent God's power but divert our attention away from God as the true object of our worship," explained Samuel. "He is the one we should trust. God does not promise that we will be free from sickness and suffering, but he is our refuge and help. Wearing fetishes or performing rituals that look to false gods, spirits, or the living dead for protection or healing is like worshipping other gods, which is not acceptable to the one true God."

Lydia sipped her drink and listened carefully as Samuel continued. "Fetishes are tied closely to fear," he said. "Fear that something bad will happen. But the Bible tells us that we should not fear. It says in Romans 8 verses 37–38 that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Our God is all-powerful and mighty. He is the only one who can truly protect us. People who sell us fetishes and other things which supposedly have powers like so-called 'holy' water or special oil are seeking to manipulate us or God for their own selfish purposes, such as status or money. When we are tempted to rely on fetishes and charms, we should pray the same prayer that David prayed in Psalm 31 verse 4, which says: 'Pull me from the trap my enemies set for me, for I find protection in you alone.'"

"Oh," said Lydia, "I did not know that. We must remove the fetishes straightaway." Samuel fetched a knife and Lydia cut through the fetishes on her wrist then the one that Elizabeth was wearing.

"So what should we do to protect ourselves, or if we become sick?" she asked.

"Well the Bible says that we can seek healing. This can be through prayer, through the anointing and prayers of the elders of the church, through modern medical science, and through traditional treatments provided they are not based on spiritual rituals or beliefs that are rooted in the occult, or that go against Christian beliefs or teaching. Christians should never go to a healer who uses or claims to use any kind of occult ritual or occult spiritual powers. Remember Elymas in Acts 13? Paul accused him of deceit and trickery and of being a child of the devil. There should be no harm caused to a person seeking healing. This means there should be no use of hallucinogenic drugs, or the kind of violent deliverance rites often associated with witchcraft accusations, that lead to physical, emotional, and spiritual harm."

"I see. What about medical science and doctors?" asked Lydia.

“Jesus assumed that doctors were suitable people to treat sickness.” Samuel turned in his Bible to Matthew 9 verse 12, and read: “Jesus said ‘healthy people don’t need a doctor, sick people do.’” He continued, “So, where possible, it is good to take the advice of doctors and nurses, who understand what causes our sicknesses and how best to treat them. They also help us to prevent sickness by teaching us things like observing good hygiene when we eat or use the toilet, or by taking special medication to prevent epileptic fits, for example.”

“What about our pastors? Can they help?” asked Elizabeth.

“Yes, of course,” replied Samuel. “As long as they are genuine pastors who follow the example of Christ. We should always look at the example of Jesus. When healing the sick, He did not use complicated techniques or words, or scream and shout or use physical violence, and he was always gentle and compassionate. No one was ever harmed by him. Genuine pastors will know how to pray and anoint a sick person with oil as described in the book of James. God can and does heal people, but he cannot be manipulated. No special ‘technique’ can force him to heal someone. And we must not let ourselves be tricked into any strange practices. Look here in Colossians 2 verse 8 it says, ‘See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.’”

“I understand better now,” said Lydia.

Finish the story here.

Recall key points

Draw up a table with two columns headed ‘DO’ and ‘DO NOT’.

Invite the participants to share what the key messages were in Samuel’s teaching from the Bible. As they share, add these messages to the table.

The completed table should look something like the following:

DO	DO NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek and follow the advice of medical doctors regarding both prevention and treatment of sickness. • Request prayer that God will heal you if it is his will to do so. • Accept that healing comes in many ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • immediately and miraculously; • over time; • through prayer; • through medical science; • through traditional medicines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — <i>provided these are not harmful or used in combination with invoking occult forces, or in any other way that is contrary to Biblical teaching.</i> • Accept that sickness and death are a normal part of human experience and that God is Sovereign and does not always choose to heal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place our trust in fetishes or rituals to protect or heal us. • Go to any 'healer' who invokes false gods or spirits, the dead or any other powers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — <i>these are in conflict with Biblical teaching.</i> • Accept any intervention that is abusive or causes harm, such as cutting, beating, burning, the administration of hallucinogenic drugs or drinks, stigmatisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — <i>for example, as a consequence of someone being accused of being a witch.</i>

Put up the sheet on the wall next to the one with the responses from Activity 2.

Comparing responses

Ask the participants to return to their small groups and answer the following questions:

- How do our answers in Activity 2 compare to the ones in the table?
- Is there anything we need to do differently?
- Is there anything we need to stop doing?
- What do need to do in order to achieve this?

After 10 minutes, invite the spokesperson from each group to share the responses.

Guide a discussion on the ideas that have been shared and help the participants to decide on actions to take away from the training.

Activity 9: Next Steps (20 minutes)

Aim — To evaluate the workshop and ensure ongoing action and follow-up.

Sharing ideas

Give each person a small sheet of paper. Ask participants to write down three things they have learned today, and also to write a sentence or two about what they thought of the day. Tell them not to write their name on their sheet of paper. Allow a few minutes for them to write things down.

Then **collect in the pieces of paper**, and shuffle them together. Then (in a random order) read out the different responses to the whole group.

Personal planning

Give each participant a Personal Action Plan (see Annex 1).

Explain the following to everyone:

This is a personal document which will not be shared with the other participants. Each person will take their own Personal Action Plan away at the end of the session. The Personal Action Plan is to help each person to put into practice what has been learned during the day.

Explain that as facilitator, you would like to take a copy (a photo) of each person's plan and keep it, if the individual participants agree. You would then like to follow up with them in three months or six months or one year from now (depending on what is most appropriate), in order to see what progress they are making in putting it into practice, and also to offer help and encouragement as needed.

Now ask participants to each to complete their own Personal Action Plan straight away.

Closing (5 minutes)

Give each participant a certificate of attendance, and then thank everyone for their attention and their contributions during the workshop.

Invite a participant to close in prayer.



Annex 1: Next Steps

Date		Church	
Names		Town or Village, Province	

What we commit to do next to help people suffering sickness who need our support...

Action 1: what will we do?	People: who will do it?
	Time: when will we do it?

Action 2: what will we do?	People: who will do it?
	Time: when will we do it?

Action 3: what will we do?	People: who will do it?
	Time: when will we do it?

Certificate

SICKNESS, HEALTH AND HEALING Serving the Health of our Community



This is to certify that

.....
has attended the Sickness, Health, and Healing course
for enhancing our understanding, to provide care and support
for those who need it.

hosted by:

place: date:

facilitator: *sign*
