



Healing Community



Broadway's Calling to be a Healing Community

A couple years ago when the Elders began to seek God's direction for clarifying our church's mission and vision, the word "healing" quickly came to the surface. Broadway Christian Church has been a place where people experience God's healing work. We are going to be exploring our identity and calling to be a "Healing Community" over the next three months.

What do we mean by "Healing Community"? Here is the vision statement that was adopted by our Elders regarding our calling to be a Healing Community:

We are a family bound together by the healing work of our Good Father.

- By being transparent in our brokenness and confessing our sin
- By pursuing peace and forgiveness in all our relationships

We are bound together as a church because we have experienced God's healing work in our lives. All of us have experienced reconciliation with God through the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus. Some have experienced healing from broken marriages. Others have been set free from addictions. At Broadway we talk about mental health, and we strive to be a place of belonging for those who struggle with depression, isolation, and other forms of mental illness. We believe that God can and does heal people who suffer from physical sickness and disease, and we lay hands on them, anoint them with oil, and pray in faith for their healing.

We believe that God intends to bring His healing work into every area of our lives.

Over the next three months, our sermons on Sunday mornings will explore these topics. This curriculum will guide your small groups into conversations and tangible practices to expand our capacity to be the Healing Community that God is calling us to be.

While you can use this curriculum on your own, it is designed to be used with your small group. Each week you will study a lesson that will expand on the ideas and concepts related to the sermon on the previous Sunday. Your small group is the primary place where you are called to practice being a healing community together. When you gather together each week, you will study Scripture, pray, and ask questions about what it looks like to be a healing community. As well, your day-to-day interactions with one another – whether through phone calls, texts, praying together or playing together – are an opportunity to participate in the healing work that God is doing in you and in your brothers and sisters in Christ.

God's Vision for a Healing Community

The first section of the curriculum begins by describing God's vision for a healing community. In the first four weeks we will explore how God is at work bringing His healing into our lives through the Gospel and through participation in the community of Jesus followers, called the Church.

One of the first things that we need to recognize is that healing is often a long, difficult, and painful process. Being *healed* is a wonderful idea, but *healing* is often painful and disruptive and requires us to submit ourselves to God, to face painful truths about ourselves, and to seek help from other people. And the truth is, not everyone is ready or willing to be healed.

We see this reality in the gospel stories about the healing ministry of Jesus. In the gospels, we read about how Jesus called everyone to begin the journey of healing. *Everyone*. There were some people who encountered Jesus who knew they were sick and needed healing. There were others who thought they were well, but Jesus revealed to them that they were sick. And there were still others who knew that they were sick, but resisted the healing that Jesus offered to them.

One of the curious characteristics of these stories is that Jesus' promise of healing was not always welcomed and was sometimes resisted all together. Once again, *being healed* is a wonderful idea, but the *process of healing* can be painful and disruptive.

For example, one evening Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house. Matthew was a tax collector; he was considered a traitor by just about everyone. Not only that, but there were many other "sinners" hanging about the house that night. The Pharisees (good and "righteous" people) saw Jesus and they went behind His back and asked His disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" Jesus overheard their question and He said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick... I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:10-13).

Jesus came to heal. He said that the Kingdom of God was near, and he demonstrated the power of the Kingdom by healing people. Bartimaeus was healed of his blindness, the woman at the well was healed of a life of persistent sin, Mary Magdalene was healed of demonic possession, Simon the Zealot was healed of bitterness, and Matthew the tax collector was healed of isolation.

Jesus challenged those who thought they were well to examine themselves and to see their need for Him. Those who were sick and knew they needed help did experience healing in their encounter with Jesus, but it was not always easy and it required them to reckon with painful truths about themselves.

At Broadway Christian Church we call people to accept two realities: first, to admit that we are in need of healing, and second, to submit our lives to the One who can heal us. Each of us, in one way or another, are in need of the healing work of Jesus in our life. Jesus has not stopped His healing work, and the Church is the group of people who have experienced the ongoing work of healing in their lives.

Practices of a Healing Community

Our ministry of reconciliation that God gives to us begins with others in the Church. Our relationships with one another in the Church are one of the primary ways that God brings healing in our lives. As we listen to one another and vulnerably offer our own stories and lives to others, God's Spirit is bringing about the healing work that He wants to do in our own lives and in our church.

Brain science and psychology^{1*} are beginning to catch up to what the Bible has always told us: we are made for community. We need others. Whether you are an "introvert" or an "extrovert," needing attachments to other people, being known by others and knowing others are all integral parts of our spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being.

¹ For more information on this, see *The Anatomy of the Soul*, by Curt Thompson, or search out one of his teachings on YouTube.

* Quotes from outside authors in this curriculum are not an endorsement of all those author's views.

Your willingness to offer your time and attention to others, to be a friend, to share the testimony of God's work in your life - all of these things (and more!) are ways that God brings healing into your own life and into the lives of others.

In the second section, we will look at some Practices of a Healing Community. What do we do together as a community to participate in God's healing work? These practices are: Sabbath Rest, Self-Examination & Confession, Listening, Play & Laughter, Laying on of Hands & Praying for Healing, and Forgiveness & Reconciliation. As you read through this list, some of them may seem very obvious to you as practices of a healing community while others may seem strange to you. We trust that by the end of our time together you will see the role that all of these practices play in God's work of healing in our lives and in our community.

For now, we want to emphasize these as practices that we do *together*. Of course, all of these practices are activities that we can (and should) do on our own. However, for the purposes of this curriculum we want you to consider how to practice them with other people, especially those in your small group. We believe that the Bible calls us to participate in these practices as a part of the healing work that He wants to do in us.

Fruit of a Healing Community

The last two weeks will focus on the Fruit of a Healing Community.

Second Corinthians 5:17 says that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"

The most important and profound work of healing that we have experienced through Christ is the healing work that He has done between us and God. In another letter, Paul reminds us that before Christ, we were God's enemies (Colossians 1:21). This work of healing, the mending of our relationship with God, is the starting point of all the healing work that God wants to do in us and is the source of our own calling in the world.

After reminding us that we have been made new through our relationship with Christ, we are then told that we have been sent into the world as ministers of reconciliation.

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..." (2 Corinthians 5:18)

The Church is a community of people who have been healed by Christ, are being healed by Christ, and who act as ministers of God's healing to other people.

The healing work that God does in our life and in our community is not only for us, but for the sake of the world. As God brings about healing and wholeness in our own lives and relationships, we then become ministers of God's healing work in the world in a variety of ways. During these last two weeks we will explore God's design for the Church's presence in the world as a community that proclaims the Good News of God's healing work through our words and actions.

Be prepared... We are praying for you

The topic of healing can be confusing and painful. There are some of you who have prayed for healing for yourself or a loved one for years and it seems that nothing has changed. Others of you have perhaps never considered that God wants to heal wounds that you experienced in the past, and beginning to look at and tend to those wounds can be an extremely painful process. And all of us wrestle with the question of suffering and why a good God would allow these things in the first place.

These struggles and questions (and many more!) all have the potential to rise up during this time, and that can be troubling and distressing. Being a Healing Community is messy. Being vulnerable with others is risky. We want you to know that we see you and we do not want you to take this journey alone.

In addition to the support of your small group, we want you to know that there are other resources available to you as well. Within our church we have pastors, counselors, spiritual directors, and a mental health support group who are available to meet with you and to walk with you on your healing journey. We also know Christ-centered counselors and therapists outside of our church that we can refer you to see. If you are feeling the need for intentional help along the way, please (please!) talk to one of our staff members, who can help guide you to the support that you need.

Our church leadership will be consistently praying for you and your small groups during this season. Our hope is that the next twelve weeks will deepen our understanding of the Gospel and our calling to be a Healing Community. While God has made this an important part of our church already, we know that there are many ways for us to grow in our own personal healing, in our own understanding of what it means to experience God's healing, and in the practices that God has given us to be ministers of reconciliation to one another and to the world.

Finally, I want to thank a few people who helped put this curriculum together. Luke Ash, Symps Ndlovu, and Amanda Campati were integral in helping with the overall structure and direction of this process. We were also assisted by Katie Cochran, Amanda Campati, Luke Ash, and Kevan Chandler and Katie Chandler in writing the curriculum. Thanks to each of these folks for your prayers and hard work to make this the best that it can be.

Peace to you, Broadway,

Ryan

Table of Contents

God's Vision for a Healing Community

Healing Community & Broadway's 4 Key Traits	7-9
God Heals through the Gospel	10-11
Facing Our Pain	12-13
The Role of Community in Our Healing	14-15

The Practices of a Healing Community

Sabbath Rest	16-18
Self-Examination & Confession	19-21
Listening	22-24
Play & Laughter	25-26
Laying on of Hands & Praying for Healing	27-29
Forgiveness & Reconciliation	30-31

The Fruit of a Healing Community

For the Sake of the World	32-33
The Promise of a Healed Creation	34-35
Reflection & Testimony	36

Healing Community and Broadway's 4 Key Traits

Begin your time in your small group reading through the description of the Four Key Traits of Broadway Christian Church that we explored together last Fall.

- ❖ Which one has been the biggest encouragement to you in the last year?
- ❖ Which one do you feel like you or our church need to grow in the most?

1. **Steadfast Worship**

We serve a faithful God who never fails us. His steadfast love draws us to steadfast worship.

- By responding to God's Word
- By praying with expectation

2. **Healing Community**

We are a family bound together by the healing work of our Good Father.

- By being transparent in our brokenness and confessing our sin
- By pursuing peace and forgiveness in all our relationships

3. **Uncommon Unity**

We are a diverse community brought together by our shared experience of the love of Jesus, Our King.

- By expressing our spiritual gifts
- By welcoming each person as a unique bearer of God's image

4. **Faithful Witness**

God calls us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in the city of Fort Wayne and to every other place the Holy Spirit sends us.

- By proclaiming the Good News of Jesus
- By good works of kindness, justice, and mercy

Opening God's Word**Luke 4:14-21**

- ❖ In what ways does Jesus intend to heal?
- ❖ What is something in Jesus' words that stands out to you now?
- ❖ What is a particular work that you long to see be true in your community at Broadway or beyond?

2 Corinthians 1:3-7, 13:11

- ❖ How do these verses speak to your heart?
- ❖ What memories or hopes do they stir up in you?

Healing Community fosters Steadfast Worship, Uncommon Unity, and Faithful Witness.

When Jesus announced His intentions in the Gospel of Luke, He made it clear that His work would affect every area of life. He would relieve the poor of their distress and give them good news instead. He would set captives free, heal the human body, and give liberty to the oppressed. He would bring the Lord's favor—the Lord's healing—to anyone who would receive it.

There is no area Jesus leaves untouched once we let Him affect us. Jesus' touch heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, and with others. Jesus began His work the day He announced His calling, so long ago. The same Spirit that anointed Him anoints us. What good news! We may now *join with Jesus* in His healing work in ourselves and in our community.

As we learn about Healing Community in this study, we can notice how the work of healing community fosters the other Key Traits of Broadway. As we participate in God's healing both individually and together, we make room for God's Spirit to do other good work that we might not imagine. Healing can lead to Steadfast Worship, Uncommon Unity, and Faithful Witness. Our participation in healing will have wonderful side effects!

In John 9, Jesus heals a man born blind. After being questioned and rejected by the Pharisees, the man encounters Jesus again. Through God's healing work, the man recognizes Jesus as the Son of Man and worships Him.

When have you experienced healing in some way or witnessed the healing of someone else? When we experience God's healing, gratitude and worship are a natural response. *We serve a faithful God who never fails us. His steadfast love draws us to steadfast worship.* As we discover more about the heart of God through healing, we join together with the saints and worship Him.

We are a diverse community brought together by our shared experience of the love of Jesus, our King. We might also say we are brought together by our shared experience of God's healing in our lives. God has drawn us to Himself, and He binds us together in this shared experience of His healing love. We belong to God. Therefore, we belong to one another. As the hymn proclaims, "We are one in the bond of love". As the body of Christ, we can now participate together in God's ongoing healing work. We pray for one another. We comfort one another. We challenge one another and confront the sin in one another that makes us sick. We forgive one another and pursue peace with each other. Once again, we take the anointing of God's Spirit and *join with Jesus* in His healing work in each other's lives.

Jesus' work didn't stop when He ascended to heaven. It continues in and through His people. God's healing work restores the individual to God, reconciles and comforts the community of believers, and rolls out into the world like a healing river. We get to be a part of all of it! We are witnesses of Christ's healing of us and others in our community. Like the man born blind, we can simply tell about what happened to us. As we share the good news outside our church community, others will take notice. Some may reject it. Others will be drawn to it. The healing work of God continues to affect every area of our lives if we let it. We preach this Good News to each other at Broadway. And we bear witness to others outside of our community. As Paul says, we are sent into the world as ministers of reconciliation. *God calls us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world in the city of Fort Wayne and to every other place the Holy Spirit sends us.* Let's *join with Jesus*, hop in the river, and go.

Discussion Questions

1. How does God's healing power affect your worship?
2. In what way do you desire to see God's healing in the life of Broadway?
3. In what areas do you long to see God's healing roll through your city and beyond?
4. How might your small group *join with Jesus* and participate in the healing work of God this year?

God Heals through the Gospel

Opening God's Word

Luke 4:38-40

- ❖ What prompted/motivated these people to come to Jesus for healing?
- ❖ What kind of healing did these people seek?

Mark 2:1-12

- ❖ What was Jesus' priority in his interaction with this man?

Luke 8:1-3

- ❖ What was the outcome of these women being healed by Jesus?

The Gospel changes everything. In John's first letter to the Church, he says, "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us" (I John 1:3), because his time with Jesus, the Gospel personified, turned his life completely upside-down. Its impact on him was so awesome that he wanted *everyone* to have the same experience! Let's take a look at a few of those things he experienced firsthand, alongside the other disciples.

Early on in Jesus' ministry, right before He officially started recruiting His disciples, He went to the house of His friend Simon (who he nicknamed Peter). Peter's mother-in-law was there, sick with fever, and Jesus healed her with a word. The next thing Peter knew, his house was overrun with sick people. Folks flooded in from all over town, bringing their sick and disabled to be healed. Luke's account says Jesus laid hands on *every single one of them* and healed them.

Why did they come? Word was spreading. Peter's mother-in-law wasn't the first person Jesus had healed. Earlier that day, He'd cast out a demon from a man. People saw Him working, making right what was wrong with the world around them, and they came running. They gathered because they hoped maybe He could do the same for them.

Some time later, also most likely in Peter's house, Jesus was teaching a crowded room of scribes and intellectuals. Mark's account says the house was so packed, they couldn't fit another person in there. They were bursting at the seams. And on the outside stood a handful of friends, carrying their paralyzed buddy on a cot. They'd not come the last time Jesus was there, and they weren't going to miss it again. Nothing would stop them, not even walls. They tore away part of the roof and lowered the paralytic down right in front of Jesus. And it says that, when He saw their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5).

As the story goes on, Jesus does heal the man's body and sends him on his way, but He starts with the man's heart. And I wonder what that did to him, who laid crippled on the floor before *God Incarnate*. Suddenly, his feeble limbs and twisted chest meant nothing as the chains of guilt and failure fell from his soul. In Paul's letter to the Roman church, he refers to our adoption as sons of God and says it is "the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:23). I wonder if he picked up that turn of phrase from hearing Peter, John, or one of the others regale him with this memory.

Finally, there were the women who followed Jesus, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. There were others as well, and Luke's account tells us concisely that they'd all been either healed of ailment or delivered from demonic possession. We read more about Mary throughout the gospel accounts, but here it's interesting to note the result of their healings.

Whether they'd come to that first night at Peter's house or had met Jesus in the street sometime, He had seen them to their core and healed them just as deeply. And what followed was devotion. They continued with Him from then on, along with His disciples, and it says they were "helping to support them out of their own means" (Luke 8:3). All that was theirs, they committed to Jesus because they loved Him so much. Their souls were redeemed, their bodies healed, their lives forever changed by the Living Word. They wanted to stay close to Him and surrender everything to Him because He had made right in them what they knew was wrong.

Jesus was, indeed, the Gospel personified. He was the Good News on two feet, and the thing is—He still is! He stands, alive and well, at the right hand of the Father, and His Holy Spirit dwells with us until He returns. Jesus' presence healed people, healed creation, healed hearts, and it still does today. Touching, speaking, eating with others—it all requires one to be present, and that's what He was, He was present. And His presence is still a reality, by way of the Holy Spirit. We can read these stories, look around our world and community, look within, and know He is still working. He makes Himself known, He makes His Father known, and His Holy Spirit moves among us. Healing happens and the world is turned upside-down, now just as it did back then, and we are invited to see it and let it affect us just as profoundly. This is the conviction with which John wrote to the Church, telling his own story of what he saw and encouraging them to let that same living, breathing Gospel change them, too.

Discussion Questions

1. What draws you, personally and as a community, to Jesus for healing?
2. What is Jesus' priority in His relationship with you?
3. What is, or should be, the outcome of Jesus' healing work in your life?

Facing Our Pain

Opening God's Word

John 4:7-29

- ❖ What does this story reveal to you about the need to face our pain as a part of our healing?
- ❖ What does this story reveal to you about the heart of God?

Romans 8:18-30 & 2 Corinthians 1:3-6

- ❖ What do these verses tell you about how God is at work as we turn to Him in our suffering?

In this life each one of us experiences pain from our own personal sin, from the sin others have committed against us, and from simply living in a broken world. Our brokenness affects us physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. We may suffer from a physical disease or disability, mental illness, grief from a significant loss, trauma from abuse, a broken relationship with a spouse or a close friend, or perhaps we struggle to believe in God's goodness and love toward us. Each one of us experiences pain. It's simply part of our human experience living a fallen world.

Our places of pain are places of great vulnerability – they make us feel exposed, weak, and perhaps even ashamed. Our temptation in our pain and vulnerability is to try to protect ourselves from more pain and shame by avoiding it, and by keeping others – perhaps even God – at a distance. We can easily become deceived into believing this is the safer, better way. However, the danger in avoiding our pain and keeping God and others at a distance is that our wounds fester, and we will turn to unhealthy ways of coping (such as numbing our pain through addiction to drugs, alcohol, sex, food, shopping, Netflix, or our smart phones) that lead to only more pain, shame, and isolation. Avoiding our pain ultimately makes us vulnerable to Satan who loves to use our pain to cause further harm and to keep us from truly healing and living into the plans and purposes God has for us.

God, however, desires that we experience *life* and life *abundantly* (John 10:10). Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God communicates to us that He has not forsaken us in our suffering, and that He desires to offer us life, hope, and healing in our broken areas.

Throughout the New Testament, the word “reconciliation” is often used to tell of the work Jesus is doing in our lives (Romans 5:10-11, 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, Colossians 1:19-22). “Reconciliation” simply means to be restored to a right relationship with someone or something. Jesus is first and foremost at work restoring us to a right relationship with God. Through Jesus, we're united to God and we become recipients of His grace and love instead of His wrath. As we continue to walk with Jesus, He continues to grow us in this relationship, healing us of lies we've believed about God by replacing them with His truth, and teaching us what it means to be loved by Him and to live our lives dependent upon His grace.

In addition to reconciling us to God, Jesus is also at work reconciling us in our broken relationships with our selves (restoring our God-given identities), with other people (restoring the way we love others and receive love from others), and with His creation (restoring the way we steward our resources and care for the things God has given to us).

Through Jesus, *all things* are being made new – including *you*!

This healing work that Jesus is presently doing in our world and in our lives is a *foretaste* of the complete healing we will one day experience through Him *in full* – when He will wipe away every tear from our eyes; and death, mourning, crying, and pain will be no more (Revelation 21:4). **For this reason, we can face our pain with hope, knowing that God is *with us* and *for us*, and desires to heal us and redeem our pain as we turn to Him in it.** As we do this, facing our pain becomes an opportunity for healing and growth in these three areas:

1. Our relationship with God
2. Our relationships with others
3. Living into God's good plans and purposes for our lives

Our relationship with God

Very often many of us “know” things about God intellectually. But there's something unique about how God uses pain in our lives to move us from mere intellectual knowing of Him to knowing Him *personally*. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, Paul calls God the “Father of mercies and God of all comfort” in response to his personal experience of God in the midst of his own suffering, saying, “For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too” (2 Corinthians 1:3-5). Paul's pain served as a doorway for him to experience something of God (His mercy and comfort) in a way that he otherwise wouldn't have.

Our relationship with others

It has been God's design from the very beginning for us to live in relationship with others where we are known and loved (Genesis 2:18). We cannot be healed or whole people apart from healthy relationship with others – it's essential to our flourishing as human beings. Proverbs 17:17 tells us, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” We need people in our lives who tangibly express to us the kind of devotional love God has toward us to help us endure through hardship and heal from our wounds.

Living into God's good plans and purposes for our lives

Our pain often feels like a detour to God's plans for our lives. But Scripture tells us otherwise! God, in His sovereignty, uses our pain and brokenness to *fulfill* His good plans and purposes for us (Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28). As we turn to God in our pain and receive His healing, our stories are redeemed and we become “ministers of reconciliation” to others as a result of God's healing work in our lives (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

Discussion Questions

1. How can you see “reconciliation” with God, our selves, others, and creation as part of the healing work God wants to do in your life?
2. In what ways have you experienced healing as you've faced pain in your life?
3. Is there any pain in your life right now that you believe God is inviting you to face with Him? How do you desire healing in that area and how can your church community pray for and support to you?

The Role of Community in Our Healing

Opening God's Word

Acts 2:1-21, 42-47

- ❖ What strikes you about the community of believers described here?
- ❖ Where do you see healing taking place in their gathering?

Ephesians 2:11-22

- ❖ What does this text reveal to you about what it means to be a part of God's family?

It has been God's design from the very beginning that we live in community with others where we are truly known and loved in relationship. After God declared all that He had made "good", the only thing He declared "not good" was man's aloneness (Genesis 2:18). By himself, Adam could not adequately reflect God's relational nature nor fully live into all that God had called him to be. So God provided him with a companion to fulfill Adam's God-given needs and calling.

However, one of the consequences of the Fall and our sinful nature is that we fall short of living according to God's design for relationships and community. Dr. John Townsend, a well-known Christian psychologist, comments on how our wounds, sinful nature, and culture often impact our relationships and life in community as God intends:

Many committed Christians are unknowing 'sanctified addicts' of otherwise good things [work, sports, hobbies, religious activities, etc.] that help keep them away from a black hole of loneliness in their hearts and the crucial necessity of close relationships.... It's a sad fact that Christians who have never been able to be vulnerable with their needs for connection sometimes are then drawn to fellowships where true bonds are trivialized – or, even worse, dismissed as 'trusting man too much.' The fact is that having relationships with God and other persons is not an either-or proposition: it's a both and necessity.¹

As mentioned in the previous lesson, part of the reconciling work Jesus is doing in our lives is healing our broken ways of living in relationship with others. God wants to restore the way we love others and also the way we *receive* love from others as we live in community together that we may be a people who *experience* healing in community and *exemplify* what it means to be a healing community for others.

Ephesians 2:18-19 says that through Jesus, we have access to the Father in one Spirit, making us "no longer outcasts and wanderers but citizens with God's people, members of God's holy family, and residents of His household." The Church is not a building, institution, program, or social club – we're a *family*! The very essence of what it means to be "the Church" is God's Spirit indwelling a community of people. This is *good news* for us, particularly when it comes to our healing, because we need relationship with others in order to heal.

¹ Dr. John Townsend, *Hiding from Love*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 69.

For us to live into the kind of healing community God has called us to be, we have to be willing to do two things: 1) We have to be willing to risk being truly known in relationship with others (this includes our inner lives – our motivations, sin struggles, wounds, needs and desires), and 2) We have to be willing to offer safe relationships to others in which a person's story and needs will be accepted and loved, not criticized and judged. This doesn't mean we have to agree with every person's choice or beliefs, but that we avoid "fixing" them, projecting our own experiences onto theirs, or taking on the role of God in their lives.

While God is ultimately our Healer, our healing requires our participation. And as we participate in God's healing work, we must surrender to the reality that not every interaction will be perfect. We're all on a healing journey together and learning what it means to love one another. It will be messy and painful at times. But take heart – God is at work in these places!

Next Six Lessons: Practices of a Healing Community

Over the next six lessons we will be diving into the various practices of a healing community as outlined in Scripture. These include: Sabbath Rest, Self-Examination & Confession, Listening, Play & Laughter, Laying on of Hands & Praying for Healing, and Forgiveness & Reconciliation. Some of these practices will be more solitary than others, and others will be more communal. We encourage you to press into relationship with those God has placed in front of you as you seek to grow in areas of healing in your own life and as we grow more into what it means to be a Healing Community at Broadway. It's important to remember that these are called "practices" for a reason – we won't do them perfectly and we will likely fumble through them at times. But that's ok – it's part of the process! Stick to it and trust that God is at work, even in your fumbblings.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways have you experienced healing relationships and community in your life?
2. What is most challenging for you when it comes to living into the kind of community God desires for us?
3. In what ways do you believe God is asking you to grow in receiving healing in community?
4. In what ways do you believe you need to grow in offering healing relationship to others?

Sabbath Rest

Opening God's Word

Isaiah 58:6-14

- ❖ What does this passage reveal to you about what God desires for us in keeping the Sabbath?

Mark 2:23-28

- ❖ What perspectives on Sabbath do you see represented in this text?
- ❖ What clarification does Jesus provide about the purpose of Sabbath?

In the story of creation found in the book of Genesis, we see a rhythm of work and rest unfold. During the first six days of creation, God speaks different aspects of His creation into existence and ends each day by declaring goodness over what He has made. On the seventh day, however, we see a break in this rhythm: God pauses to rest and delight in the goodness of His creation. The rest God enjoyed was not one of recovery from exhaustion. God's rest was one of pausing from activity to enjoy the goodness of all that He made. Genesis 2:3 tells us that God blessed the seventh day and intentionally set it aside to be *holy* – different from all the others. It was a rhythm He established for us to pattern our own days of work and rest after.

Later, in the book of Exodus, God's original design for a healthy rhythm of work and rest for His people is disrupted by a cruel taskmaster named Pharaoh. We're told that Pharaoh and the Egyptians "set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens" and that "in all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves" (Exodus 1:11, 14). There was no Sabbath rest for God's people – *every day* was a workday. God's people cried out to God for help and He responded by sending Moses to deliver them from the heavy hand of Pharaoh that they be set free to live as God intended. After God led His people through the Red Sea and out of the grip of their oppressors, one of the very first things He re-established for them was the Sabbath (Exodus 16:22-26). What was God's purpose in this? It was to remind His people that they were no longer enslaved servants to a cruel king, but liberated people under the good and loving care of a better King (Deuteronomy 5:15).

What role does Sabbath rest play in our healing?

Like the Israelites who were under the oppressive rule of Pharaoh, we are tempted to submit to our own "cruel taskmasters" that keep us from receiving the rest and care that God desires for us. Workaholism (enslavement to our jobs) is an example of a modern-day taskmaster we face. For others, our taskmasters may be anxieties we carry in our hearts and minds that we struggle to release over to God, creating unnecessary burdens in our lives.

Often underlying our refusal to practice Sabbath rest is a broken relationship with God and a broken relationship with our selves – we believe that God is not at work while we are at rest, that *we are* God, that we have no limits or need of rest, and that God will not provide for our needs or the needs of others if we cease striving to meet them ourselves.

In her book *Sacred Rhythms*, Ruth Haley Barton quotes Wayne Muller in his thoughts on Sabbath, saying: “If we do not allow for a rhythm of rest in our overly busy lives, illness becomes our Sabbath – our pneumonia, our cancer, our heart attack, our accidents create Sabbath for us.”²

A life without Sabbath rest is the *opposite* of healing – it’s actually *wounding*.

Practicing Sabbath helps to remind us that we are not God, that God alone sustains us and the world, and that God is not a cruel taskmaster but a good and loving Father who cares for us. As we participate in God’s rest for us, we not only avoid unnecessary wounding, but we also experience the healing that God desires for us (physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually).

Three Principles to Sabbath-Keeping

Adapted from Barton’s book, *Sacred Rhythms*, are three helpful principles to keep in mind when it comes to practicing Sabbath rest in your own life:³

1. The heart of Sabbath is that we cease from our work so that we can rest and delight in God and God’s good gifts. Everything we choose to do or not do on the Sabbath should fit into these purposes.
2. Establishing a regular rhythm is important. Our bodies and souls are made for living in rhythms. Part of the restfulness of Sabbath is knowing that it is always coming at the same interval. When Sabbath is not observed on the same day every week, it means that we go longer than seven days without rest, and that is not optimal. After seven days without rest, we are at risk of becoming dangerously tired.
3. Sabbath-keeping is not primarily a private, self-indulgent discipline. It is and always has been a communal discipline. This doesn’t mean that there’s no place for solitude, but that part of your restful rhythms involves life-giving community with others.

If you have not established a healthy rhythm of rest in your life, it can feel overwhelming, not knowing where to begin and adding one more thing to an already busy schedule. But this is not God’s desire for you in practicing Sabbath! Jesus’ desire for you is that the Sabbath would not be a burden, but a gift for your good (Mark 2:27). As you seek to more fully partake in this good gift God has for you, may you find rest and healing for your heart, soul, mind and body.

Discussion Questions

1. What has your understanding and practice of Sabbath looked like throughout your life? What does it look like now?
2. How have you experienced healing through the practice of Sabbath rest?

² Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 131.

³ Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 139-140.

3. What modern-day taskmasters tend to interfere with you being able to enter into God's rest?
4. How do you desire to grow in practicing rest and Sabbath in your life right now?

Self-Examination & Confession

Opening God's Word

1 John 1:5-10

We often think about confessing our sins to God and to others.

- ❖ Have you ever thought about confessing your sin to yourself as well?
- ❖ How does this passage teach us to be truthful with ourselves about our own sin?
- ❖ Why does this matter?

Hebrews 4:12-16

- ❖ How does it feel to know that the very thoughts and intentions of your heart are already exposed to God? Is this reassuring? Troubling?
- ❖ How does it feel to know that Jesus was tempted in every way and can sympathize with our weakness?
- ❖ If you were to talk to Jesus this week about your temptations and weaknesses, in what ways would that experience be difficult for you? In what ways might it help you?
- ❖ Is the "throne of grace" a place you feel drawn to?

Psalm 139

This psalm begins with the knowledge that God has already searched and known David. The psalm ends with David asking God to search him and know him once again.

- ❖ Is being known by God something you long for?
- ❖ How does this psalm show us the intimate connection of both being known *and* loved by God?

Self-Examination and Healing

Last year we learned about self-examination as a practice that can bring about healing in our lives. The word *examination* is usually not one that we associate with pleasure. An exam can be unpleasant, whether it's in a classroom or at a doctor's office. Yet, when we participate in an examination, we can almost always say that it is for our good in some way. When we take an exam in school, we have to work hard and pay attention to what we know. When we submit to an exam by a doctor, we learn what parts of us are healthy and if any part of us is sick.

As we practice self-examination, we do the work of learning what is true about ourselves. This is all for the sake of growing in God's love for us and experiencing God's healing in our lives and our community. We follow the Holy Spirit into the territory of our hearts, trusting that God intends to heal us, not crush us. God loves us. This is a journey not into condemnation, but into love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It's a path that leads to freedom, never bondage.

We let God show us which parts of us are well and which parts are not. We let God shine His light into our hearts and our lives. With God's help, we can begin to know what God already knows about us. We can agree with God about what He shows us, and we can allow God to heal us and our relationships.

First John tells us that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we ignore what is going on inside of our hearts and minds, we practice self-deceit. In the same way, if we

deny our inner motivations, we deceive ourselves. How can we grow in God's true wisdom and knowledge if we don't even know the truth about ourselves? Choosing to ignore or deny our motivations and sin stunts our growth and prohibits healing.

At the end of this section there is an exercise that can help us invite God to lovingly know us and show us what is true about us. Remember that as we confess our sin to God, we are at the same time fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139) and deeply loved, accepted, and forgiven by God. As Hebrews 4 tells us, we can confidently draw near to the throne of grace to receive mercy and grace to help in our time of need.

Confession

Confession is simply agreeing with God about what is true. While this experience can be painful, it can also be sweet. As we open up to God and show Him what we've been hiding, we can be known and healed. How freeing! Can you sense God's smile as He attends to your healing?

In our church community, we also have the gift of one another. When needed, we can confess our sins and the motivations of our hearts to another person. A trusted friend can pray for us, hold us accountable, and remind us that we are forgiven. At times, we may also need to confess our sin to someone we've harmed. God is at work in our confession, bringing healing into our hearts, our relationships, and our community. Can you sense God's joy as he attends to our church? As we confess our sin to God, to ourselves, and to one another, we can let the burdens fall, the tears roll, and the healing flow.

Lord, show us what you know. Give us the courage to agree with you. Let us leap with joy in the freedom we find.

A Practice of Daily Examination

In this practice, we take time to sit down with God at the end of our day or week and reflect on our experience of God and ourselves during that time. As we allow God to help us see what He sees, we can agree with God, confess what is true, and respond to God's revealing and healing work in us and then in our community.

This is an exercise of reviewing our day. In doing so, we note the places we saw God at work, felt assured of God's love, experienced God as absent or perhaps as silent, or forgot or resisted God in our day. As we pay attention to God's presence and our responses to Him, we can align ourselves with God's Spirit more and more in our daily lives. God is at work where we live—and this is where our healing happens.

1. Find a quiet place and settle in. You might begin your time with a Scripture verse or by praying along with Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"
2. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you reflect on your day. Ask God to make you aware of where He was at work in your life that day. Invite God to show you what He wants you to see about Him and about you.

3. Play back the events of the day in your mind. Review your day from the moment you woke up to the moment you sat down in the evening. Consider the specifics happenings of your day: eating breakfast, events at work, interactions with others, what you did.
4. Notice what stands out to you. What might God be showing you about Himself or about you through the events of your day?
5. Reflect on what stands out to you. What do you want to tell God about your experience of Him? Is there anything that feels troubling or unresolved? Is there anything you feel led to confess to God from your day? Or is there something you want to thank God for? A reason to rejoice? Express your heart to God as you see what God shows you, as you agree with God about what is true about Him and about you.
6. How would God have you respond to Him now? Is there someone you need to confess something to? Is there an area in which God would have you cooperate with Him, rather than resist Him? Is there a call to action of some kind? Ask God to help you live more in step with His Spirit, more yielded to His healing presence with you.

Consider sharing what God reveals to you with a friend. Over time, this practice of prayerful reflection on our day can help us grow in freedom and more freely participate with God in our lives. Healing awaits!

Listening

Opening God's Word

Isaiah 65:24

God speaks here about the new heavens and the new earth he will create. One of the benefits of the redeemed creation is that God will hear us perfectly, and God will answer us.

- ❖ Knowing that God hears you, how does this impact the way you approach Him?

Genesis 16:1-15

In the story of Hagar, we see God both hearing and seeing someone who called out to Him for help. Hagar was outside of Abraham's family, yet God cared for her.

- ❖ What in this story stands out to you about how God listens and responds to people?

John 4:7-26

- ❖ Describe the way Jesus interacted with the Samaritan woman.
- ❖ How does He listen to her?
- ❖ What does this reveal about the way God listens to us?
- ❖ How is Jesus' interaction with the woman an example for us of how we might listen to others?

Scripture is filled with stories of God listening to His people. God's listening—which we also might think of as God paying attention—leads to God's actions on behalf of His people throughout the Old and New Testaments. One of the first instances we see in Scripture is when God noticed that it wasn't good for Adam to be alone. From that careful noticing—that attentive listening to Adam's daily life—God provided Eve.

Have you ever considered that listening and healing are related? When Jesus encountered Blind Bartimaeus, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51). In that encounter, Jesus saw Bartimaeus, gave him His attention, and then healed him.

Have you ever been listened to in a healing way? Have you ever felt that someone has truly heard you? What did that do for you?

Broadway Christian Church already has some practices in place where people are invited to come and listen to one another. During the Men's Testimony Time and Women's Journey Nights, brothers or sisters gather together to listen to how God has been at work in each other's lives. These times together are often deeply moving as people share their stories with one another, listen, and share in encouragement.

In addition, Celebrate Recovery offers a safe place to share about one's struggles and be listened to and known by others as you work toward healing. Sunday morning prayer is another time of attentive listening by those at Broadway. As the prayer team reads the blue request cards, they listen to the needs of those in the body, and they offer those needs up to God in the trust and confidence that God is actively paying attention.

As God listens to us, we are invited to listen to others. As we offer our attention to another person, we give them a precious gift. In fact, we can cooperate with the Holy Spirit as we listen to a person share their heart, life, struggles, and confessions. We can think of this as listening to the person with one ear and to God with the other ear. This is prayerful listening. We might ask, *What is God up to in this person's life?*

When Jesus listened to people, something happened. A person might have been healed, released from bondage, exposed, troubled, or rebuked. An encounter with Jesus put that person in a place to respond to God in some way—whether it was to praise God, wrestle with God, or recognize their own beliefs or sin.

The quality of our listening matters. When we listen with half of our attention, or when we are too quick to offer our own perspective or solution, we can unintentionally hurt others. When we listen with our full attention and ask for the help of the Holy Spirit, we offer a listening ear that can really make a difference in someone's life. Perhaps even a healing difference. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes,

Secular education today is aware that often a person can be helped merely by having someone who will listen to him seriously, and upon this insight it has constructed its own soul therapy, which has attracted great numbers of people, including Christians. But Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by Him who is Himself the great listener and whose work they should share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the Word of God.¹

The God who made us is a listening God. He hears our prayers and He notices the intimate details of our lives. He acts on what he sees—whether God intervenes or provides in some way, or whether God is silent for a time. As Saint Benedict has said, we can offer the “ears of our hearts” to one another. A community of people who listen to others with the help of God's Spirit can experience wonderful healing in the presence of God and one another.

A Practice for Listening to Another Person

Let's give listening a try! The way we read Scripture can actually help us listen to others. When we read the Bible, we often read with the hope of hearing from God. One way to do this is to read a short Scripture passage a few times.

1. In the first reading, take notice of what stands out to you in the passage.
2. On the second time through, reflect on what stood out to you, considering how this connects to your life currently.
3. On the third reading, ask God what He might be saying to you through this passage. Ask God how He wants you to respond to Him.

A prayerful reading of Scripture such as this can help us listen to God through His Word and respond to Him.

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (United Kingdom: Harper Collins, 1954).

We can listen to people in a similar way! When you turn your attention to another person, ask God to help you listen.

1. *Recognize* what grabs your attention in what this person is saying to you. Is there anything that seems important?
2. When it's your turn to speak, you may invite that person to *reflect* further on what stood out as a place God may be reaching out to them.
3. Finally, you might ask them if they sense God calling them to *respond* to Him in any way.²

As we listen to God with the ears of our hearts, we can practice listening to one another with the same ear.

Lord, heal us as we listen to one another.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you experienced God's healing through the attentive listening of another person?
2. Do you enjoy listening to other people share about their lives? Why or why not?
3. What stands out to you about listening and healing?
4. When might silence have a proper place in listening?

² Beth and David Booram, *When Faith Becomes Sight: Opening Your Eyes to God's Presence All Around You* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2019).

Play & Laughter

Opening God's Word

Jeremiah 31:2-14

- ❖ Make a list of the things that God promises to do. Which of these resonate with you in your life experiences?
- ❖ How does God call His people to respond to the things He promises to do?

Proverbs 17:22 says that a “merry heart is good medicine”. Some versions say “laughter” is good medicine. In our conversations about healing we want to give time and space for grief and mourning, for repentance and confession. These are necessary, for us to receive God’s gift of healing. But God also wants to give each of us a “merry heart”. Along the journey of healing God will often prescribe the medicine of fun, play, and laughter.

The funny thing about fun is that we can’t have it when we’re scared or angry. A spirit of play comes from—and can only come from—a spirit of security and joy. It is when children feel safe, knowing their parent is in view, that they can run with abandon over the soccer field, reach for the moon on their swing set, or dive into the deep end of a pool. And it is when we are overcome with gratitude, excitement, or wonder that we laugh uncontrollably or break into song and dance without shame. All fear is gone!

Jeremiah was a prophet whose message was packed with warning and judgement, but in the middle of his charge, a promise of hope comes through. A vision of what’s to come by way of Jesus, both in His first coming and the one we look forward to now.

“Again,” he says in verse 4, “you shall adorn yourself with tambourines and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers”. And why shall we do this? Why does God call us to rejoice, to have a party, to play? “For the Lord has ransomed Jacob (us) and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him” (v. 11). We have been set free by Jesus in His sweet loving kindness, so it’s no wonder the next verse says, “they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord”.

When we consider the goodness of God to us—when we truly settle into it—*radiant* is the appropriate response. “Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,” declares the Lord through Jeremiah, “and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy... and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness” (v. 13-14). The goodness of God is worth celebrating (the understatement of the century), and that celebration is play, expressing with lighthearted activity the gladness of such a revelation.

Recreation is another word for it, which the dictionary defines as “refreshment by means of some pastime, agreeable exercise, or the like.” Enjoy the Gospel, the living goodness of God, by doing something fun. May we be whimsical in grace and may we do so together as a community of sinners set free, ransomed and rescued.

Discussion Questions

1. Share a testimony of God's goodness in your lives.
2. How does the goodness of God lead you to play?
3. What sort of playful activities do you enjoy and want to share in community with others?
4. How has God used play and laughter to foster hope and healing in your life?

Laying on of Hands & Praying for Healing

Opening God's Word

Luke 4:40

- ❖ What is the significance of Jesus touching each person that He healed?
- ❖ Why was it important to Him?
- ❖ Why was it important to the ones being healed?

The laying on of hands is an expression of intent. What may have been concealed in the heart is laid open for all to see by the laying on of hands – to bless or to curse, to heal or to hurt. The laying on of hands and prayer can be a means to miraculous healing if our hands are outstretched in His power and for His glory. Let it be so in our community.

A biblical survey of laying on of hands

❖ *Intent to harm*

In Genesis 22:12, Abraham was instructed not to lay his hand on Isaac when God provided a ram. In the New Testament, Jesus calls out the officials who did not lay their hands on him when it was inconvenient for them (Matthew 26:55). In both of these instances, laying on of hands expresses the intent to kill.

❖ *Passing the curse*

On the Day of Atonement, the priest laid his hands on the head of the live goat who would be the substitute for the sins of Israel. By the laying on of hands, the priest passed the curse to the innocent animal before sending it away into the wilderness (Leviticus 16).

❖ *Jesus' hands bless and heal*

"And He took [the little children] in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them" (Mark 10:16).

"At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them" (Luke 4:40).

❖ *Christ's healing work continues*

In Acts, the apostles continued the work of physical healing often by the laying on of hands in the power of the Holy Spirit. Ananias laid his hands on Paul so that he would be healed and filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul later prayed and laid his hands on Publius' father. After word of that healing got around to the people of the island of Malta, Paul ended up healing "the rest of the sick" (Acts 28:9).

However, we also know that physical healing was not always accomplished because Paul leaves Trophimus sick in Miletus and because Paul himself has a thorn in the flesh he cannot remove (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Three occasions for laying on of hands and prayer1. *When we pray for healing (Acts 28:7-10)*

This includes, but is not limited to, physical healing. A couple of great opportunities to do this are on Sunday mornings at the prayer rail and in the context of your small group.

2. *When we commission and commend someone for Christian ministry (Acts 13:2-3)*

This includes, but is not limited to, the blessing of new elders. We may also see this when missionaries or the youth group is sent out to share the Gospel.

3. *Any word of blessing (Mark 10:16)*

Often this will happen before or after a baptism, or when someone shares their testimony. Brothers and sisters will gather around to encourage and pray God's blessing over the one who has testified.

Abuse of healing

Throughout Church history, there has been no shortage of charlatans peddling promised physical healing for selfish gain. When results are lacking, the sick person may even be blamed for not having sufficient faith. This can be very damaging. Insufficient faith is only one of many reasons that healing may not happen. Ultimately, it is God's hand alone that has the power to heal. We may get to deliver His gift through our hands, but it is always His work in His time. We should not promise physical healing by our hands in our time. His ways are higher than ours.

Appropriate response

Although there has been abuse when it comes to physical healing, misuse does not negate proper use. When we are sick, James 5 instructs us to ask for prayer from the elders. This act of humility is likely not only to get the elders involved, but so that they can ask others to join in prayer. James' instruction is not limited to elders, but he tells us to pray for "one another."

Practical Words of Wisdom Concerning Laying on of Hands and Prayer

1. Always ask, "Is it ok if we lay our hands on you and pray?" If they decline, then don't. Some people have experienced trauma that would make this type of interaction terrifying. Do not assume they are ok with your touch.
2. Let your hands be light and appropriately placed. The shoulders are a good place, but if everyone is leaning on you, they may have to also pray for your back by the end.
3. Ask, "How can we pray for you?" Jesus modeled this for us. He had perfect knowledge. Asking is a way of honoring the person. Don't assume you know what the person needs even if it seems obvious.
4. Listen. Do not just listen to the person's request. Listen, as well, to the voice of our Wonderful Counselor. The Lord may give insight to you for the good of the person you are praying for.
5. Discern. Take your time with the person in front of you. This will communicate your care for them. If you believe that the Lord has given you insight, use humility and compassion to ask questions rather than making emphatic statements.

6. Open your eyes. This is a part of discernment. Many times, the Holy Spirit will begin to uncover emotional wounds and a person may cry or have other physical signs. If you are not paying attention, you may stop praying and move on, and the window of healing could pass. It may take years for the person to come back for prayer and be willing to be vulnerable again.
7. Be natural. Healing is not a show and it should definitely not be for our glory. Instead of saying “thus saith the Lord,” maybe try, “I believe that the Lord may be saying...”
8. Be conversational. We don’t have all the answers. We are coming alongside a hurting person and hurting with them. Being moved with compassion, we go with them to Jesus. We can pause and ask questions and then return to talking with the Lord.
9. Be flexible. After praying for someone about one thing, the Lord may want to heal further. The Holy Spirit may want you to change the course of your prayer altogether. Here is an example: A woman I never met before asked for prayer for wisdom about next steps after coming home from a mission trip. I listened to her and began to pray for that. While I was praying, the Holy Spirit was revealing that something was going on with her mom. I didn’t know any more than that. Before saying Amen, I just asked her, “How is everything going with your mom?” She responded, “Why do you ask?” I said, “As we were praying, I just felt like I needed to ask you about her.” She began to weep and tell me how their relationship had been strained, and I asked if I could pray for forgiveness and reconciliation. She agreed, and I believe that a miraculous work of forgiveness began that day.
10. Remember that healing is the Lord’s work. It is not about us. We may look like a fool, asking God to heal and believing that He will. If God does not heal, we may be tempted to be embarrassed. This does not mean that we should give up praying for the sick. That would be disobedient to God and unloving to the sick (James 5). Healing is the Lord’s work in His time. Our job is to faithfully carry to Him those who are hurting.

Let us pray like Peter did in Acts 4:30: “Lord... Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

Discussion Questions

1. How have you seen the gift of physical healing and laying on of hands practiced?
2. How has abuse and/or proper use of these gifts impacted your life?
3. Share about a time when you got to witness the healing hand of God at work in your life or someone close to you.
4. What relational good could come as a result of physical healing?

Forgiveness & Reconciliation

Opening God's Word

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

- ❖ What is our responsibility now that we have been reconciled with God?

Colossians 3:12-15

- ❖ What characteristics should be evident in God's people?

Philippians 4:4-7

- ❖ What is the correlation between reasonableness/gentleness and peace?

Paul tells the church of Corinth, and tells us, that in Christ we are a *new* creation. We are something else entirely from what we were. What was in us before is now dead and gone—it is no more—and what has taken its place is brand new.

We have been reconciled. We were enemies of God before, but because of Jesus, we have been made right with Him. This is the new creation that, unlike the old, is reconciled to God. He has not only forgiven us of our sins, but more than that; He holds those sins against us no more, as if they never happened. And He replaces our sin with a new responsibility: to exemplify the change.

God has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation, to live in the grace of His forgiveness, and to be a beacon of that redemption to a rebellious world that needs it, too. But what does that look like for us? How do we live that out? In his letter to the Colossians, Paul tells us what it should look like. He says that if we are God's children (if we are indeed a new creation), we should be compassionate, kind, humble, meek, and patient. We should bear with one another and, when we have issues, forgive each other. And here's the kicker: if there's any question about that forgiveness bit, Paul says, "as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (Colossians 3:13b). This is a heavy statement, considering God's extent of forgiveness.

Jesus didn't just say, "You're fine, man, don't sweat it!" He was sinless, and *became sin and then died* to make us right with the Father. That's how far He went for us! Then He calls us to carry on that ministry of reconciliation and that same degree of forgiveness one to another. Why? Two reasons: the world needs a witness, and this way of life (this new creation) is better for us than the old.

We are called to peace, and that can be found only in Christ, in being a new creation. Paul says in that same thought to the Colossians: "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15). Forgiving is such a huge part of that peace, as both the propeller and the outcome. In his letter to Philippi, Paul says the peace of Christ will guard our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7). Peace will give our hearts and minds the capacity to forgive, and even reconcile, in ways we could never have dreamed. And when we submit ourselves to the Lord, moving toward forgiveness and reconciliation, we can find peace. A cycle begins, transforming our lives from the inside out, drawing us closer to Jesus and affecting the world around us in the same light.

Discussion Questions

1. What does (or should) the ministry of reconciliation look like in your life?
2. How does God's forgiveness of you inform your approach to forgiving others?
3. How have you seen God at work to bring healing through forgiveness and reconciliation in your own life?
4. Are there any relationships in your life right now that are in need of forgiveness and reconciliation? How can we join you in prayer for that?

For the Sake of the World

Opening God's Word

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 & Romans 8:18-25

- ❖ How do you see the theme of healing being communicated in these two passages of Scripture?
- ❖ What words or phrases are used to describe the kind of healing that we have been exploring over the last two months?
- ❖ Both passages talk about the New Creation that God has in store for us and for the whole world. What roles do we have now as we wait for God's finished work?

Broadway's calling to be a Healing Community is a gift from God for members of our church. As we participate in the practices that we have been studying over the last few weeks we can experience healing and reconciliation with God and with other people. Growth and health are available to us as we entrust ourselves to God and to one another.

However, our calling to be a Healing Community does not end with us. The healing that we experience in our relationship with Jesus is meant to spill over into our relationships outside of the Church and our work and labor in the world.

Every human being has experienced wounds that come from living in a fallen world. We've been wounded by the actions and words of other people and we have wounded others through our words and actions. Everyone experiences grief as we encounter death and loss.

The question for everyone is this: *What will we do with our wounds?*

Wounded people wound people. Those who have experienced wounds that have not been tended to and healed will pass on their pain and hurt to other people. On the other hand, healed people heal people. Those who have taken the spiritual journey of healing by allowing Jesus to tend to and heal their wounds can be a source of healing in the lives of others.

The practices of healing that we explored in the earlier lessons can be tools that God uses in the lives of others to bring healing. We can be people who are at *rest* in our own souls and can *listen* well to the lives and pain of others. We can be people who know when to grieve with others and when to bring *the cheerful heart of laughter and play* into a relationship. We can demonstrate the Good News of Jesus to others by receiving the forgiveness of God that comes through *self-examination and confession* and by modeling *forgiveness* in our relationships with other people. We can be people of bold and tender faith who *lay hands on others and pray for their healing*.

Second Corinthians 5 tells us that this is God's plan and design for the Church. Those who have been reconciled to God are then made ambassadors of the Good News that we have received. We are representatives and proclaimers of God's healing work through Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you know of someone in your life who is a “healed person who heals people”? What is it like to spend time with that person?
2. Which of the practices of healing do you feel most ready to pass on to others?
3. Which practice do you feel most uncomfortable with and feel that God may be calling you to pursue in your own life?

The Promise of a Healed Creation

Opening God's Word

Our Scripture readings today include long passages of visions of God's prophets about the final salvation that we are hoping for. Read these passages slowly, thoughtfully, maybe even dramatically! If someone else is reading out loud, close your eyes and try to imagine what it will be like when these words become true.

Isaiah 65:17-25, Ezekiel 47:1-12 & Revelation 21-22:5

- ❖ What similarities do you see between the visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel and John in Revelation 22? What differences?
- ❖ What parts of God's creation are included in God's healing work in these visions?

In our lesson last week, we read Romans 8:21, which said that all of creation is waiting to be set free from its bondage to death and decay. This hope was seen in visions by the prophets of Israel, who looked forward to a day when the waters of a river flowing from the temple would bring life to the barren desert and the briny waters of the Dead Sea. The prophets spoke of a day that would come when lambs would lie down with lions, children would be safe from danger, and every person would enjoy the fruit from their own gardens.

Life in our present world is marred by humanity's sin. Our hearts are bruised and our bodies are battered by the ways that we sin against one another. The beauty of God's creation, while never erased, bears the scars of humanity's lack of care and good stewardship as our air is polluted, our rivers are poisoned, and our soil is eroded. And, most tragically, we know that our rebellion (yours and mine) are the source of all this brokenness.

But the vision of the prophets and of John in Revelation tells us that we are waiting for the healing of all the broken and fractured relationships that we experience in our fallen world. In Revelation 21 and 22, John's vision promises that there will be a time when God and humanity are at home together. After quelling our human rebellion and its resulting destruction, God will come. John sees a garden-like city coming down out of heaven to earth where God promises to be so near to us that he will wipe every tear from our eye and there will be no more mourning or crying or pain. Our healing will be finished, complete, and everlasting.

Notice that in these visions, there is no part of God's creation that remains untouched by God's healing work. Individuals are there, receiving God's care (Revelation 21:4), and so are the nations represented by their rulers (Revelation 21:24-26 and 22:2). We will find healing rivers and budding fruit (Revelation 22:1-2), and both wild and domestic animals (Isaiah 65:25). Human creativity and labor will be enjoyed by everyone and the danger of famine, theft, and war will be no more (Isaiah 65:21-23).

Sisters and Brothers, these visions are descriptions of what God's healing work is moving toward. They are visions of God's creation fully redeemed of our abuse of it and of one another. They are visions of God, in his great mercy, choosing to make His home with us.

These are healing visions that will be fully consummated when Christ returns. There is a sense in which we will always be waiting for the fullness of these visions as we work and labor and struggle through life in our fallen world. But what we have been learning over the last three months is that a real taste of this healing is available to us *right now* if we are willing to submit ourselves to Jesus and His good rule in our lives. As we commit to our shared life with one another and the shared practices that we have learned about over these past weeks, the Holy Spirit is at work bringing God's future into our present lives and community. A foretaste of the healing that will one day come in all its fullness is available to each of us right now.

Discussion Questions

1. As you heard these visions read, what made you most hopeful and excited?
2. Is there any part that made you fearful or confused?
3. What part of these visions do you want to meditate on and know more about?

Reflection & Testimony

Now that we've made it through these past 12 weeks, we encourage you to commit time for reflection and testimony within your small groups to remember and celebrate what God has done during this time. Perhaps even have part of your time together be committed to feasting and playing together as you share!

Reflection & Discussion Questions:

1. What new understanding or perspective was gained for you about healing community these past 12 weeks?
2. Was there any area in your life you experienced healing in some way?
3. What do you hope to carry with you from what you've gained through this curriculum and time in your small group?
4. Are there any other ways you sense God calling you to respond beyond this time? How can we journey with you in that?

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

2 Corinthians 5:17–19