

Healing Vision Lesson #07

*Engaging people
Leading them into a relationship with Jesus Christ
Declaring hope, healing, and redemption.*

Text:

Luke 7.36-50

Leader Notes:

The last phrase of the vision statement is in some ways the most difficult because we are least able to make these things happen. We know how to engage others. We can learn, if we do not know how, to study and grow in our relationship with Christ. What we cannot do is “give” people hope, healing, and redemption: these are things God does. This does not mean we cannot point to—we have chosen the word “declare”—hope, healing, and redemption, but we cannot make you redeemed. So the challenge becomes how we provide others opportunity to find that hope, healing, and redemption. In what ways do we say to others: here is the answer you have been (possibly unknowingly) searching for?

We looked at “hope” last week. This week I want to spend more time on healing. When I say healing, I really mean more a sense of spiritual, emotional, and physical wellness, than being healed from a specific disease or ailment. While we see Jesus healing physical ailments often, I think the opportunities we will have, given what I assume to be our lack of miraculous healing abilities, will fall more along the line of emotional and spiritual healing.

I also want to point out that the ways we declare hope and healing to others is closely tied to the needs the people around us have, whether they express those needs or not. For instance, why do people become addicted to alcohol? There are a lot of reasons, but one reason might be to avoid some pain that is inhibiting their life. Alcohol becomes an avoidance mechanism. The person may not even be aware that this cycle is going on, yet when it is examined, it may become clear what is happening. Wouldn't it make sense that addressing that pain and finding healing from that pain might be a better way to move forward than drinking it away? So, the thing we attempt to do is find a way that the pain can be addressed, so as to avoid the unhealthy mechanism or behavior that is a substitute for health.

NOTE: When we use examples in this lesson, they may seem very cut-and-dried. “Real life” is never quite that way, so understand that the examples are being used to illustrate ideas, not provide a blueprint for the next step. You will have an example in your life or that you are aware of that will not fit the model and so therefore, must work to find out ways to offer healing in that unique situation.

There are several passages we could have looked at that describe Jesus addressing the needs of the people with whom he comes in contact. Some I would add to today's story would be: The woman caught in adultery in John 8, the woman at the well in John 4, or the crowd Jesus feeds in Mark 6 (they were like sheep without a shepherd). You might read each of these stories in preparation for your group meeting, just to help you get the feel for how Jesus dealt with these situations.

One final note I want to point out. Too often, I think we try to determine how to fix people in order for them to be “qualified” to be a part of the kingdom. We may say we do not, but our actions have a powerful way of revealing themselves, especially to people we do not think live up to the standards of purity we feel must be maintained in the church. We can exclude people without ever saying a word to them. I wonder if

our job is not to fix people, but to point people to God so that he can transform (read: fix) them? What if our job was simply to declare the goodness of God to people so that, in their knowing him better, they are transformed into physical, emotional, and spiritual health? I really do believe we become more of the church God calls us to be when that happens.

Suggested Group Meeting Agenda:

Start your group with the *Icebreaker Question*, then read the text, and do the discussion questions.

The end of your discussion time will include some reflection on the items your group was asked to do during the week this past week. Be sure to allow people time to discuss the ways they have seen people around them in need during this week.

You will spend some time discussing ways to address some of the needs people have identified. I would pick an item, perhaps two, and spend time with just that need. After you have had an opportunity to discuss how to address that need, consider actually doing the plan you guys have laid out.

Close with a time of prayer.

Discussion Questions:

Icebreaker Question: What does a completely healthy person look like? How would you describe them and what attributes, characteristics, or behaviors do they have? What sort of actions, activities, or behaviors do people do in order to find and live spiritual, emotional, and physical health? How successful are these activities?

- When we read in our passage today that a woman who had “lived a sinful life approached Jesus,” what do we assume about this woman? We are not told much about this woman’s sins or her lifestyle. What reasons might exist for her to live such a life?
- How do you think you, or South Plains as a whole, would react toward this woman if she came into one of our gatherings? How did Jesus react?
- Why do you think Jesus did not focus on trying to maintain the purity of himself and his guests gathered around the table? How can we determine the best ways to determine what should have priority: avoidance of sinful people who might pull us away from holiness versus acceptance of people who are in need of Jesus’ healing and love?
- Jesus declares that this woman’s sins are forgiven and her faith has saved her. Is this how you would have expected Jesus to act in this situation? How do you think we would have handled a situation with a woman like this? How do you think we would have tried to offer her healing?
- What is it that saves this woman? How does she find this?
- Think about your exercise from last week, in which you were to think about the needs of the people with whom you came in contact. What needs did you see in the people around you? How do you think Jesus would have addressed the needs you see in these people?
- If we were going to be Jesus’ instruments or agents, how might we show an opportunity of “healing” for the needs people around you demonstrated? What specific things might happen in order for that healing to be known to these people?

- Pick one of the needs you identified and as a group, spend some time determining ways you can work to create opportunities of healing for others who might have the same needs. For instance, if one of the needs you have identified is overcoming addictions, how can you as a group or South Plains as a congregation offer ways to actually overcome those things? Whatever you see as one of the greatest needs in your neighborhood, define ways to address it.

To Do For Next Week:

Spend some time this week reflecting on how you came to the place you are in your spiritual journey. More important than that, what sort of things would you consider non-negotiable about that journey and about the story of God as he intersects your life. What is it that you know about God that provides the tipping point, if you will, from interest to all out devotion to him?

Next week we will spend some time talking about redemption, so be prepared to share when we come back together next week.