

# ***COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE MIDLANDS***

***Unapologetically Christian, Unapologetically Progressive***

## **Pastor's Paragraph**

### **IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY, CAN WE STILL BELIEVE IN SPIRITUAL HEALING?**

The title of my article this month is a quotation. I am using the exact words with which the question above was posed to me. At the time, I did my best to respond helpfully and I'll do so again now. Since the issue has come up a number of times during my ministry, it seems to be of interest to a lot of people. That appears to be true despite the fact that virtually everyone today depends exclusively upon doctors, nurses, and a host of other medical professionals for diagnosis, treatment, and healing.

However, since the New Testament gives consistent testimony that Jesus was well-known as a successful healer, the issue of the legitimacy of spiritual healing today is, among many in the Christian community, still an unanswered question. The example of Jesus is given additional weight by the report that he told his followers to carry on the tradition of healing. Most churches, with which I am familiar seem to pay little or no attention to Jesus's injunction to continue his healing ministry; and frankly, in my entire lifetime, I have never heard a minister address spiritual healing in a sermon. So, I think the issue deserves more attention than it receives.

The problem I face in writing about the issue of spiritual healing is that it has so many ramifications that it would require almost an entire book to do justice to it. However, I'll do my best, in limited space, to touch on some of the most important matters.

Before one can think clearly about spiritual healing, it is necessary to look at what *salvation* means. Many people are turned off when they hear that word, and for good reason. In some churches its *actual* meaning has been seriously distorted. It is not uncommon today to hear someone say “Come to Christ and be saved” without explaining what they mean by that. If any explanation at all is given, one frequently is told that if he or she simply says “I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,” that person will be “saved,” avoid eternal punishment, and go to heaven. That is *not* an adequate explanation; and, unfortunately, it significantly cheapens the word and creates a profound misunderstanding of its biblical meaning.

In actuality, the *basic* meaning of salvation in both the Old and New Testaments has to do with *rescue, deliverance, restoration*. Well, rescue or deliverance *from* what *to* what? It is rescue or deliverance from dysfunction to greater fullness of life by enabling us to experience God’s *shalom*. *Shalom*, of course, frequently is translated as “peace,” but the meaning of that Hebrew word is far more all-inclusive than that. It essentially means all that is best in life, whatever contributes significantly to the most *abundant* life; and *one’s health and well-being would be aspects of a maximally fulfilling, salvific life*. That, we can presume, is one reason why the healings attributed to Jesus were such a significant part of his ministry and why he asked his followers to continue to meet the health needs of persons.

But how can that be done? How might it be possible for spiritual healing to take place—*if* indeed it *can*?

Since science and modern medicine are gifts of God for healing in our time, those marvelous advantages, of course, should be utilized—never abandoned in a misdirected effort to use spiritual healing as a substitute. *All* proven modalities for healing are important. Various kinds of body work by qualified practitioners, attention to diet, exercise, a non-toxic environment, etc., *also* are helpful adjuncts along *with* spiritual healing.

But if the potential for spiritual healing is available and is a potentially reliable resource, how might we go about employing it for our well-being and for that of others? It is important to remember that the word “healing” is preceded by the word “spiritual.” Jesus, after one of his healings, is reported to have said to the person healed, “Your faith has made you whole.” or “Your trust has healed you.” Jesus was crediting that individual’s *spiritual* orientation as the necessary ingredient for healing.

The accounts of healing that the New Testament writers have given us usually are in a very brief, “shorthand” version of what may have happened. It may be that many of them were not *instantaneous* occurrences, but events from which numbers of details and mention of a somewhat longer periods of time weren’t included. But it is evident that spiritual orientation of *some kind* was an important aspect of the healing process, and spiritual development, of course, rarely happens overnight.

If some significant details about the healing process *were* often omitted by a writer who may have given us an abbreviated version of a report, what *spiritual* information to which Jesus alluded might we have missed?

Particularly important for *spiritual* healing surely would be what the New Testament writer, Paul, called “fruit of the Spirit”—indications that the Spirit of God *is* working in a person’s life. He mentioned nine: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith/faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In light of modern scientific research, those nine indications of spiritual presence now take on even more importance for *us* than they probably did for Paul, and they may provide a helpful clue to how spiritual healing takes place. Scientists have discovered that in the presence of others who exhibit such qualities, genes that give rise to illness actually are turned off and genes that precipitate healing of the body are turned on. Moreover, researchers tell us that if those nine qualities are not *just* encountered in someone else but are

introduced into the life of a sick person, the process of healing seems to be expedited.

Of course, a problem that we all face is that we frequently are surrounded by people who exhibit few (if any) indications of spiritual presence. Sometimes we live with these individuals, work with them, have them for neighbors and even as members of our extended family or social gatherings. Research indicates that such people can have a powerful influence on the activation of genes that precipitate illness. Parents can become carriers by passing on illness-producing genes to their children. That unfortunate possibility of “contagion,” by heredity or by association, may explain why Jesus implored his followers to be deeply committed to a *vital* spiritual community—persons who are more likely to exhibit the nine indications of spiritual presence in their lives that turn on genes with *healing* potential. Those, too, are “contagious;” that is, they, also, have the power to influence our health and well-being so that *our* potential for spiritual healing can be activated and strengthened. For truly vibrant health, it appears that the *quality* of the persons with whom we choose to surround ourselves *matters!*

As stated earlier the question that was put to me was, “In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, can we still believe in spiritual healing?” The evidence, underscored by the gift of modern science, is yes. In fact, based upon what we now know, not only can we *believe* in spiritual healing, unless we have inherited a defective gene, it is possible that we can actually *experience* spiritual healing!

The aforementioned good news leaves each of us with two valuable questions: First, to what extent are the nine indications of the presence of God’s Spirit active in *my* life? Second, am I prioritizing deep involvement in a qualitative spiritual fellowship to help *counter* the numerous more negative influences I encounter in everyday life?

It is my hope that the limited but critically important information on spiritual healing that I have shared with you will contribute significantly to the health and well-being of all of us.

As always, please remember how profoundly I love and believe in you.

**Warmly, your pastor and friend,**

**John**

# IT'S HAPPENING AT CCM

*June, 2019*

## Sunday, June 9<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Month)

### 10:00 a.m. **WORSHIP GATHERING: SPECIAL SUNDAY OBSERVANCE**

Our gathering today is labeled a *special observance* because we'll be celebrating two important occasions: the observance of Independence Day Sunday and Pentecost Sunday. Of course, we all know what Independence Day is and what it represents. But some of you may not be familiar with Pentecost Sunday, although a majority of churches observe it.

A biblical account of that event in the New Testament book of Acts sounds strange to our ears, strains our credulity, and even seems irrelevant to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It tells us about the sound of violent wind transforming people, tongues “as of fire” from heaven, and people being able suddenly to speak and understand multiple foreign languages—admittedly “weird stuff” that appears to have nothing at all to do with life today. It's tempting, if we read about it, to say. “Well, forget *that!* It's just a lot of nonsense!”

However, our pastor sees that hard-to-swallow passage of scripture from Acts as being of crucial importance for our time *IF its symbolism is accurately interpreted*. There seems to be a profound message there that is critical for our nation, *especially* at this *particular* time which is characterized by so much fractiousness and division. So, to address that issue, John will

be delivering a sermon entitled “WHAT OUR PRESIDENT, CONGRESS, AND EACH ONE OF US NEEDS MOST TO KNOW.” We anticipate that our time together will, indeed, be a special observance—one that will call our attention to some helpful insights that we rarely consider.

Our usual time for discussion of the message will follow worship. (Out by about 12 noon)

### **Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Month)**

#### **10:00 a.m. HOW TO USE MINDFULNESS TO EXPERIENCE A BETTER LIFE BY AGING SUCCESSFULLY**

If you have ever been angry in your life or been upset by the anger of someone else, our last session on mindfulness was filled with information on recent scientific research that could help you to transform your life *and* to have infinitely more fulfilling relationships. *That* opportunity to experience a more abundant life, is over. However, another opportunity, *also* filled with potential, will be offered in our *next* session.

Today, we’ll be addressing a reality that none of us can avoid: the fact that, from the moment we’re born, we’re all *aging*. There are productive and unproductive ways to age, functional and dysfunctional approaches to aging, but few people actually know the difference. The *good* news is that there has been an immense amount of research in this area and we will be sharing its most important insights with you. Our topic will be “WHAT SCIENCE TEACHES US ABOUT SUCCESSFUL AGING.” (Out by about 11:30 a.m.)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

A number of you have requested CDs of John's last two sermons to share with family members or friends and, also, to keep for personal reference. As a result of the excellent work of our superb webmaster and digital wizard, Mark Fox, we are now able to make John's messages available to you again.

(His previous messages, going back to Thanksgiving of last year, did not record, so we regret that we are unable to honor requests for *those* sermons.)

The resumption of our CD availability is exciting because, *through* it, we are able to extend CCM's significant ministry well beyond our own congregation. During the past 20 years, our sermons have been disseminated in cities throughout the United States and even in a few other countries. One of our former members, a chaplain supervisor in a large medical center, called about 10 years ago to tell us that he had heard one of our pastor's sermons delivered in a church in California—almost word for word that he'd heard a month or two earlier at CCM! Even if our pastor sometimes is plagiarized, it is good to know that our ministry here is benefiting others, even in places of which we may be unaware.

The two most recent sermons that are available to you are John's Easter message, "THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY: HINTS OF THE HEREAFTER," and his Mothers' Day sermon, "JESUS'S OUTRAGEOUS VIEW OF THE FAMILY." We do not charge for our CD's, but we do accept donations to help ensure the continuation of this vital ministry.

**CCM:**

**HELPING PEOPLE TO CONNECT MORE DEEPLY WITH  
GOD, THEMSELVES, AND ONE ANOTHER!**

**WHOEVER YOU ARE, WELCOME TO CCM!**

**AS FOLLOWERS OF THE PATHWAY OF JESUS,  
WE ARE A SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP IN WHICH WE  
SEEK TO GROW IN LOVE FOR GOD, SELF, AND  
OTHER PEOPLE IN A WAY THAT AFFECTS ALL OF  
OUR RELATIONSHIPS, ACTIONS, AND DECISION  
MAKING, THEREBY HELPING TO MAKE THE WORLD  
A BETTER PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE. WE WELCOME  
WITH OPEN ARMS, MINDS, AND HEARTS ALL WHO  
DESIRE TO CONNECT  
WITH US.**

***WHEREVER YOU ARE, THE DIFFERENCE  
IS WORTH ANY DISTANCE!***

**Our Telephone:**

Senior Pastor: (803) 331-9999. Our mobile cell phone is more reliable than our landline phone, because it is on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If no one answers, it usually means that our pastor is in a meeting, in a counseling session, doing regular spiritual mentoring, or is involved in some other form of ministry; but he will return your call as soon as possible, so please be sure to leave a message.

**Our Websites:**

**CommunityChurchMidlands.com (Also .net, .info and .org)**

*or*

**CommunityChurchOfTheMidlands.com (Also .net, .info and .org)**

**Our Mailing Address: P.O. Box 6946, Columbia, S.C. 29260-6946**

**Our Location:** CCM usually gathers on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month, and any changes will be noted in our monthly newsletter. Please join us at the gorgeous Seven Oaks Community Center in beautiful Seven Oaks Park, 200 Leisure Lane (between St. Andrews and Piney Grove roads, just off I-26 West). When you enter the spacious parking lot, you'll see the main entrance to our newly renovated building on your right. Once you are inside the Reception Area, our meeting locality is on your left. For updates on our programming, to verify meeting times, to learn about changes in scheduling, or for any pastoral need, please feel free to call 331-9999, night or day.

***ALWAYS, WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!***