

Anecdotes from My Ministry

by Dean Helland

It is my hope that by sharing these anecdotes from my past ministry, other ministers who have not yet entered into the full-blown dimensions of the gifts of the Holy Spirit will be inspired to do so.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."
Matthew 7:7-8

Angol, Chile—Two pastors served in Angol during our time in Chile. The first was Pastor Lagos, who moved on to Curicó, and the other was Pastor Almendra. I was often invited to Angol by both pastors. Angol is a lovely little town quite a way south of Concepción. It is home to a museum created by a Methodist Missionary who was in Chile during the 19th century. The museum includes a nursery for Copihues, the national flower of Chile. It featured some 23 different varieties of Copihue when I visited it with the pastor once. They are a lovely flower, and each variety had a different color. This place ships them throughout Chile, wherever they are ordered.

The most memorable healing that took place there during my meetings was one evening when a young man came up in the line for prayer. He said that he had asthma and had to be very careful not to exert himself too much or he would have a problem breathing. After he was prayed for and while I was continuing to minister to the people one-by-one, he suddenly appeared entering the back door of the church and came forward requesting the microphone.

He said that after he was prayed for, he decided to go outside and run around the block to test his healing. He said that he was about half-way around the block when a dog came out after him and started chasing him. He said that he really started running then, and when he arrived at the church, he was hardly even breathing hard. He had indeed been healed!

San Quentin, California—I ministered at the Penitentiary in San Quentin for the months of April-September during time I worked at Teen Challenge in San Francisco. The year was 1966. There was an enormous outburst of miracles of healing during that time, both in the Teen Challenge Center and in the Prison. I arranged to meet with the men one-at-a-time on my last visit there to say goodbye. I had my appointments in the chaplain's office, and the men had 15-minute appointments with me. I was in meetings for about four hours.

One of the men shared that he had started coming to the meetings when I started to teach from the Bible that healing is real today, and we can be healed directly by God. He saw a number of healings take place, but this was something entirely new to him. It turned out that he had been suffering from a constant, severe headache for the past four years. In fact, he had had a brain scan that showed that there was something very wrong with his brain waves.

As he was in his cell mulling over the things he had seen and the various healings that people were getting, he suddenly found himself saying to God, "If this is real and people really are getting healed, then heal me!" He said that suddenly his pain stopped and he was quite amazed. A few days went by and the pain never came back. So he went to the prison hospital and had them do a brain scan again. He said that at the time he was meeting with me, the official results had not come back yet, but that an inmate that worked there confided in him that he had seen the results and that his brain waves were completely normal!

Abidjan, Ivory Coast—At a small village outside this capital city, pastor Nestor took me along with his superintendent to minister one afternoon. As we walked through the village toward the room he had rented for the church's outreach, the people saw us and began gathering. It was mostly women and children, and he said that the men were working in the city and couldn't come until after work, but that everyone there knew that he was coming for a meeting sometime during the day. The room he had rented was quickly filled with people. It was a very small room, and sat only about 60 comfortably.

The pastor ministered some first, and, to my surprise, two young boys about 12-13 years-old started fist fighting and the pastor had to break it up to go on with the meeting. In all my years of ministry, that is the only time a fistfight has broken out in the congregation during a service! Anyhow, before long, the pastor introduced me and told the people that I would pray for the sick.

I had spent time in fasting and prayer before going to Africa in order to be sure I was close enough to God to see the great miracles take place, so I was pleased at the results I was having as I talked with the people individually, asking them their ailment and then praying specifically for their healing. I remember that one man said that he had a severe pain in his lower abdomen which had started hurting ten years before. He said he had done everything possible to get relief from the pain, even having surgery for it, but the doctors had found nothing that was causing it. When I prayed for him, the pain immediately stopped, and that was a great encouragement to my own faith.

The next person in line was a young girl who brought up her younger brother, just 18 months old, for prayer. She said that he was born blind and deaf. Previously to this meeting, God had been healing

many people who were deaf in one ear when I just tested them, even before praying. So my thought was that maybe by testing his eyes, God would heal him as I tested him.

His eyes were just moving around aim-lessly when I tested him by moving my finger above him as he lay resting in his sister's arms. Since he did not get healed while I was testing him, I laid my hands on him and asked God to give him sight and heal him. After a short prayer, when I opened my eyes, he was looking right at me! I was so excited! The pastor handed me a paper napkin, and I took it and held it out and the baby took it from my hand! Then I took the napkin back and moved it around before the baby's eyes, and they track-ed perfectly. I got goose bumps when that happened that lasted over the next two days.

It was two days later that I said to Pastor Zidago, "Wasn't that baby deaf, too?"

He replied, "Oh, yes. We visited the home yesterday and the child is both seeing and hearing now. The family is very happy!"

Oakland, California— While I was pastoring there during 1970-1973, a needy family started attending church. The daughter was a prostitute, and this was before abortions were legalized in the U.S. So one day this daughter came to church with the family and brought her newborn baby girl. After the morning service, she lingered a bit until most of the people had left and then asked me if God could heal her little baby girl. She explained that the child had been born with her left collar bone only partially formed, and it had a discernable gap half-way between the neck and the shoulder.

Whenever anyone asks me if God can heal, I always say "yes," even if it is hard for me to imagine how! So I said "yes," and she then asked me to pray for her child.

She was seated in a folding chair. My wife and one of the sisters from the church were there. Since my wife, Penny, is a nurse, I asked her to feel the gap in the bone, which she did. Then I put my finger in the gap and held it there as we began asking God to heal the child.

While praying with I John 3:8b as the basis for our prayer, I suddenly felt one end under my finger shoot over to the other end, closing the gap! While was still praying, my mind started rationalizing. I thought, "I think God just healed this child. How else could that gap close like that? Maybe the mother raised the baby's arm up and closed the gap and I just thought it closed."

When the prayer was over, I said to the mother: "Did you raise the baby girl's arm up while we were praying?"

"No," she replied. "I had my arm over hers just like this the whole time we were praying."

"Then, check out the baby's shoulder, and I think you will find that God answered our prayer!"

She did so, and we all rejoiced at the great healing that God had just done. Now the child would not be handicapped and would have full use of that arm for her whole life!

The sister who was there with us as we had joined in prayer knew the entire situation and stepped up to the young lady and said, "You know, God really loves you!"

I don't think she could have said anything more appropriate!

Later I was informed that been X-rays had been taken showing the gap in the bone both before and after that prayer, clearly confirming the miracle!

Years later, the girl's brother tracked me down while we were in California on furlough and told me that his sister was still healed and still had total use of the arm. Praise God!

Forteleza, Brazil--My son, Aaron, and his wife, Esther reported in part of their December 2013 newsletter:

"One little girl had bone cancer, but was miraculously healed of God when the children prayed for her. She still has scars of the tumors the doctors had removed from her legs, but she can now run and jump like all the other children and does not have to use her crutches anymore."

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

"They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Mark 16:17-18