

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

By Roger Sapp

Introduction

I appreciate the opportunity of reflection and response that Mark Stibbe has offered to me on his review of my beliefs and practices. No one should criticize Mark for doing this. It is entirely appropriate to evaluate or “test” anyone’s teaching. This should also include beloved and honored teachers, living and those who have passed, such as Francis McNutt and John Wimber. We are not judging them. I am not being judged by having what I teach evaluated. Conversely, I am not judging Mark or the New Wine leadership, John Wimber or anyone else by reflecting on what they teach or say that I teach. I do think that John Wimber, if he were alive, would give me fair hearing since so many treated him unfairly and misrepresented his views.

I certainly did not intend to create a controversy. I did not know what John Wimber taught specifically until recently. I had little exposure to him in my past with the one exception of the service when I was originally ordained. He was the guest speaker at that conference. I did read *Power Evangelism* many years ago and embraced it entirely. I don’t know if I could embrace everything there now and haven’t recently reread it. Because of learning of this controversy, I read for the first time *Power Healing* and found that I could embrace most but not all of John’s theology of healing. I will define where I agree and disagree in this document so that there is clarity about what I believe and don’t believe. I heard that some think in New Wine leadership that I am coming from the classical Pentecostal viewpoint but I really don’t think so. My background is Methodist. I was trained in a Methodist Seminary. In so far that Wesley was Anglican, I share this with many in New Wine. I actually think that I have little in common with most Pentecostals except perhaps the belief that healing is in the atonement. In fact, most of what I have rejected came originally from classical Pentecostals and charismatics. I don’t believe that what I believe fits nicely into anyone else’s theology. I didn’t get what I believe second hand from someone else’s teachings and books.

In an odd way, it is an honor to be at the center of a controversy over the best ways to teach and minister healing. It is an honor to have my theology compared and contrasted with such honored leaders. However, I must admit that I think that this public controversy might have been avoided if anyone from the New Wine leadership would have asked me to sit with them for an afternoon and discuss these matters privately rather than being so public, formal, and distant. Nevertheless, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss these things from afar. In another odd sort of way, the outcome of this controversy will not really affect me. I cannot minister more than I am presently. In fact, I have felt the need to slow down and not to accept as many invitations. My calendar is full and was full before I ever came to a “New Wine church”. I regularly come to the U.K. these days and minister with several diverse groups of believers outside of the New Wine network. In saying this, my hope that this controversy will end with everyone agreeing that there is room for continued discussion and no need for division. I do admit to having a theology on healing that differs from John Wimber at certain points. I didn’t know this until recently. I will make my differences very clear in this response. Mark’s outline has me a lot further away than I actually am. I am sorry that I have poorly communicated what I believe with New Wine. I will try to do better here and in the future.

I have chosen to follow Mark’s outline of my teachings even though it is not how I would have presented what I believe. Mark’s outline is for a verbal presentation and since I have not been

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

invited to hear this presentation of what I believe in person, I must respond to what he has written. This is somewhat difficult since Mark is only giving me an outline of what he is going to say and not the actual details. Theology is often about the details. My responses may miss the mark because of these limitations. My responses are much lengthier than his outline since I am writing rather than speaking in response. Nevertheless, I will try to respond. I am also short on time to respond in writing. Please allow me some mercy if this document isn't edited perfectly and arrives near the meeting time. I received the outline from Mark on the morning of Thursday, December 12 and I still have a busy schedule to complete before the Christmas and New Year holidays and family matters to take care during the holidays..

While I do believe the Mark was trying to be generous in his evaluation, in important ways he was not consistently accurate in this outline. I don't know for certain that his outline will be presented to the participants at this meeting so I will include it without editorial comment at the back of this document. That way the readers of this document will understand what specifically I am responding to in Mark's comments. Some of the thesis statements Mark uses in his outline do not reflect in themselves what I teach accurately. Some are substantially misleading. I am sure that this is unintentional. Additionally, Mark attributes beliefs to me in these thesis outlines that I never have embraced or taught anywhere. This has to be unintentional as well. Occasionally, he has statements in quotation marks that appear as if I said or wrote the statement. In these cases, I cannot identify and never would have written some of these statements. I'm sure that Mark will clarify these things and not give the impression that I said them. Some of the logic that he uses as a projection of what I believe also appears as if I said or believed the logic but I cannot embrace it. While I believe that these kinds of projections can be very damaging to my reputation, I am sure that Mark means no harm. I think that Mark is projecting beliefs on me from classical Pentecostal theology that I don't hold. I think that we could have avoided Mark's clearly unintended misrepresentation if we had had some private discussions where he and others in New Wine might have understood me better. Some thesis statements make my theology and what he believes to be my theology sound extreme when I believe that I express consistent pastoral concern for those in need of healing in both my writings, preaching and personal ministry. I will list Mark's thesis statements and then comment on them in the order that he presents them along with some of Mark's written thoughts in the outlines. Here are Mark's statements:

Thesis 1: Jesus Christ Reveals the Father.
Thesis 2: The Father Wants Everyone to be Well
Thesis 3: It is Always the Devil who Wants People Ill
Thesis 4: On the Cross, Jesus bore our Sicknesses
Thesis 5: We must Believe in Christ as Healer
Thesis 6: The Key to Healing is our Exercise of Faith
Thesis 7: If we Believe, We will not Die of Sickness
Mark's Conclusion

Thesis 1: Jesus Christ Reveals the Father. I think that Mark is essentially presenting what I believe here but I can't be entirely sure. His use of "however" and "yet" on several pages without telling me what he means by these words probably means that I don't really know what Mark will say when he presents what he thinks I believe. It appears by the use of these words in his outline that he sees a problem or a contradiction in my theology but I am not clear what problem is that he sees since he doesn't say what the problem is, so I am unable to respond.

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

Mark chooses a text out of the Old Testament and from the Old Covenant of the Law to define the goodness of God rather than seeing Jesus Christ Himself as the Christian definition of goodness. In my opinion, Mark's expression here is not as Christ-centered theologically as it could be. I believe that Christ reveals the Father perfectly. The New Testament describes the things in the Old Covenant as *shadows* and *the substance is Christ*. While Mark says that *we must not define the Father's goodness too narrowly*. I would say that his Old Testament definition doesn't define goodness at all. By building into the idea of God's goodness the theological idea of the sovereignty of God, we essentially say that God can do whatever He wants including not healing and even causing sickness and this is all good. In other words, whatever God does (or what we think He does or doesn't do) becomes the definition of goodness. There is no definition of goodness at all here since it allows for anything experientially to become the will of God. It also leaves us with a serious problem of discerning experientially if God is at work or if the devil is at work or neither. We will have to have tremendous faith in our own ability to spiritually discern the difference in people. This will not work at all in a practical sense to consistently have people receive healing. *How do I know this?* Because this is the understanding that I ministered from *before* I saw many healed.

In contrast, I believe that Jesus Christ does define the goodness of God for us in His example and teaching. In His example, He heals all who come to Him for healing revealing that this is good and what the Father wills. He treats each sickness and injury as if it were not good. What He verbally teaches coincides with these actions. For example, He teaches that we can compare what a human parent would do with the Heavenly Father. If we wouldn't make our children sick, injured, depressed or discouraged, then the Heavenly Father isn't doing these things either. He teaches the care of a loving Father who knows each detail of our life and will answer our prayers. He teaches that God will supply each need because we are of greater value than the birds and the lilies of the field. Christ teaches us great simplicity in child-like faith while adding this confused sovereignty of God idea creates great complexity, undermines simple faith and presents God in a very different way than Christ does. My choice of simplicity over complexity is also Christ-centered. Please don't think that I have not chosen complexity because I do not understand the theology of the sovereignty of God. I understand it well since these were the views that I held before I saw much healing. I have chosen simplicity because I believe Christ teaches and demonstrates it. Beyond that, it works well in helping people receive healing.

Mark says *Jesus reveals a Father who is sovereign as well as kind*. I am greatly concerned at this presentation of God. It will create serious doubts for those trying to receive healing. The sovereignty of God cannot mean that Christ today acts differently than the Christ of the Gospels. The sovereignty of God cannot mean that God has a different method today than He had with Christ in the Gospels. That is a presentation of a different Jesus. The apostle Paul warned us about some in Corinth presenting another Jesus. This other Jesus is not as reliable and acts differently than the one in the Gospels. This other Jesus is not the same as yesterday in the Gospels and therefore we cannot expect Him to do the same things today or tomorrow. This other Jesus will not heal everyone who comes to Him. This other Jesus today is exercising sovereignty and revealing the Father very differently than the Jesus revealed by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Does the sovereignty of God mean that God will not save someone when they truly believe in Christ as Savior? The implications of this use of the theological idea of sovereignty of God are serious and create more problems than it answers. They create very serious pastoral issues. They can present a God who is not always reliable and can be fickle about His promises. *Does the sovereignty of God mean that God will chose who He will answer when they are responding to the Good News with*

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

genuine faith in Christ? If so, how can anyone ever have any faith in this God who is so arbitrary? This presentation ought to be a serious pastoral concern. *Does the sovereignty of God mean that God can ignore or partially fulfill His promises today in favor of a future time in history? Doesn't that make His promises unreliable today and not worth believing?* I believe what God promises and what He has revealed in Jesus Christ are as truthful today as they were in the past and as they will be in the future. Nothing has changed but our faith in them because of complex theology.

Jesus Himself *never* explains someone not being healed using the idea of the sovereignty of God. Instead Jesus consistently explains healing on the basis of faith. With His disciples He explains their failure to heal a boy because of their lack of faith. The New Testament explains the failure of Jesus to heal many in His own home town because of their unbelief. *What are we going to do with these passages?* Certainly, the sovereignty of God is not the issue in these places and the fact that Jesus Himself and the New Testament *fail to mention* God's sovereignty as reason why someone was not receiving healing is revealing in itself. My reasoning on why Jesus didn't heal everyone at the pool at Bethsaida is consistent with these other passages. They didn't come to Jesus for healing in the same way that the people in His own home town did not come. They were not seeking healing from Christ. I occasionally am able to minister healing to someone who was not actively seeking it as well. What I assume is the mercy of God and not that some sovereign act is happening. If I did assume this, I would be much more passive in regard to the suffering people around me. In contrast, I know that Christ wants, wills for them to receive healing whether or not I am able to accomplish that completely with them.

I believe that the misuse of the sovereignty of God idea prevents many from successfully believing in Christ as Healer. It allows room for just enough doubt that God will act consistently and reliably to prevent some from receiving healing. It also prevents many leaders from humbly admitting that they did not get the job done and having their beliefs and attitudes adjusted by God. Instead many justify themselves and the person that they prayed for as having no faults in the arena of healing for at the expense of God's reputation as faithful and reliable. This theology creates serious pastoral issues for future healing situations for those who hear their justifications.

Thesis 2: The Father Wants Everyone to be Well. I think that Mark understands some of what I believe here. There are a few misfires about my beliefs about *immediate* healing. There are also a few statements in the outline about resurrections and some logic about resurrections that he attributes to me that I do not embrace at all and have never thought, said or written. I reread the pages where he said he got this from and do not find these thoughts there either. I think that he must be projecting what he thinks I would say albeit very inaccurately. I am sure that this misunderstanding of what I teach is purely accidental.

Now, Not Yet

The theological idea of "now, not yet" is prominent in Mark's criticism of what I say in this area. While he agrees that Father does want us well, he uses the *parousia* as a place where the will of God becomes complete. I would agree with this but for different reasons. Mark's explanation of why some are not healed is still saying that God is not healing some. My explanation is that some are still not receiving because things like this are taught that create doubt. The theology of "now, not yet" needs serious examination. *Is the "not yet" part because God is not giving the kingdom completely? Or is the "not yet" part simply because we are unequipped to understand and deal with things the way that Jesus would?* I believe that God is completely reliable in all His promises and is not giving the kingdom partially. Christ demonstrated that the expression of the kingdom on

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

earth at that time was completely adequate to deal with all kinds of sickness and injury in all people who came to Him. The disciples seem to demonstrate that as well. To now insinuate that things are different and the kingdom is somehow less here today than it was in Christ's day is very problematic theologically and it is unbiblical. The problem is not on God's side of the kingdom. The work of the cross is complete. The kingdom is now present and not in some sort of lesser way that it was with Jesus. Jesus simply did a better, actually a perfect job of expressing God's kingdom. The problem is on the human side of the kingdom. The King is perfect and it is His good pleasure to give the Kingdom. On the other hand, those who are receiving the Kingdom are more problematic today. We are being taught things that hinder our faith in Christ and create doubt. We have 1500 years of medieval theology to work through that have affected our beliefs and practices and therefore have affected our experience. We simply do not express the kingdom like Christ and His disciples did. We need to be more Christ-centered and learn from Him how to express the kingdom in the same way that the original Twelve did.

Kingdom Immediate or Ultimate

Mark states that my teaching is that the kingdom is "immediate" in healing rather than "ultimate". I would say "yes" and "no" to this. I do believe that I am being misunderstood here. I do believe that Jesus taught that "the Kingdom is at hand." He also demonstrated what that meant by healing all who came when they came. There was no problem with the kingdom then and now. The problem is with us. That's why I put lots of emphasis on the power of partial healings to lead to a complete healing. (Mark seems to have missed this emphasis in his evaluation of my theology since he says nothing about it.)

Mark seems to be quoting me on page 8 in the outline that he supplied me... "*God wills IMMEDIATE healing of all spiritual, psychological and physical sickness*" but I don't think that I've ever said or written this... I believe this is Mark's projection of what he thinks I would say. Mark implies by this that I think that everyone gets healed immediately if they have believing faith. That has not been my personal experience or the experience of many that have received healing in my ministry. This is not what I teach at all. I teach that while some healing is immediate, other times there may things that must be overcome. Jesus taught persistence in prayer by two parables that I often cite in public teaching about healing. I teach that some do not receive healing except by persistent believing prayer.

I have often told the story of my own healing from chronic sinus infections that took ten days of intense spiritual warfare to receive. I often tell the story of my wife's healing of asthma that took approximately a year for her to have the complete healing. I also teach what I have called the "healing tension". What I mean by this is that when someone really does believe for healing and does not receive immediately, the Holy Spirit begins a work that deals with whatever is preventing the person from receiving. Theological doubts may come to the surface. Sometimes other issues become evident through a crisis of faith while they are in this tension. (*God is punishing me... I deserve what I am getting... maybe God won't heal me because I have been working too hard and not taking care of myself...*) Sometimes they are able to receive healing after this crisis reveals the blockage to simple faith in Christ as Healer. A properly equipped person often can help the person deal with these issues and then they may receive healing.

I believe that "not yet" is *not* what Christ revealed. He always revealed the *now* in healing. He did not reveal that the "not yet" was on God's side of the equation. The only "not yet's" were people who did not come to Christ for healing. If there is a "not yet", it is always on the human side of the

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

equation in the New Testament. We must militantly pray and receive all that Jesus has done. This may mean spiritual warfare and prevailing prayer until we receive. It is hard to see how anyone who believes that God sometimes may say “not yet” to them will be able to prevail in spiritual warfare and prayer. The idea creates doubt and will create passiveness and failures in healing. Faith in Christ's willingness to heal is what is necessary to prevail even if it takes a season to receive.

Believers Who were Ill in the New Testament

Mark uses the two examples of *people who remained ill* in the New Testament to prove his point that *immediate* is wrong. It is obviously wrong but I don't teach *immediate* anyway. What I teach is God's will is for us to receive healing. We may receive quickly or it may take a season and involving a battle but the problem is not with God or Christ's kingdom. It is with us and may be with demonic resistance that must be overcome.

Mark's makes a point in his outline. “*Here are two cases even the apostle Paul cannot heal and if HE couldn't heal them, why should we presume to be any different.*” I would say that my experience is similar to the apostle Paul's experience. I don't get everyone healed either and never have claimed to do so. However, Mark sees these situations differently than I do. I do not see them as evidence that God's will was not to heal. I see them as evidence that we don't always receive what Christ has done. We have similar failures just like the disciples had failure with the sick boy. Our failures to heal in each situation do not reveal the will of the Father.

I have seen many times in my experience that I failed to get someone healed on the first try and after several times of prayer I finally connected and they received healing. Something changed in me perhaps or the person that I was praying for. I have had the experience that I prayed on Friday with little success, Saturday with little success and Sunday they were healed. What happened? The will of God did not change but possibly I changed and the person I was praying for changed. Something was different on Sunday in us that was not there on Friday or Saturday. Persistence made the difference. Many times the person (or I) will know exactly what changed. A profound but simple dealing happened during the weekend that was aided by me preaching the gospel and assaulting the doubts that I know people have in western culture. They dealt with a particular doubt and were able to receive Christ as their Healer.

I need to review these *people who supposedly remained ill* because this view of these people creates doubt. Mark only speaks of two believers but I believe that *Power Healing* reveals four examples. This is one of the places that I would differ somewhat with what John Wimber taught as revealed by *Power Healing*. There are four believers in the New Testament who are often used as examples of believers who were not healed. They are:

- Timothy, a close companion of the apostle Paul who had frequent ailments.
- Epaphroditus, a leader at the church at Philippi, who was seriously sick.
- Trophimus, the Ephesian that Paul left behind because he was sick.
- Paul, the apostle who describes a particular time that he was sick.

I will examine these examples briefly and then comment on how they are being used today. I believe that Mark is using two of them in this fashion in the outline that he provided me.

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

Timothy's Stomach and Frequent Ailments

The first of these examples is a single verse found in Paul's first letter to Timothy. There Paul writes:

No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. 1 Timothy 5:23

Some have noted this verse indicated that Timothy had not been healed but actually this verse does not really say that at all. It does not indicate that healing prayer had been ineffective either. It does not indicate that Timothy was presently suffering from a particular problem at the time of the writing of this verse. It does indicate that Timothy had some reoccurring physical problems. Paul was recommending to Timothy a natural *preventative* measure, a way of staying well. Paul's comments here do not mean that Paul thought his prayers for healing of Timothy were not effective. Timothy might have been repeatedly healed. The ongoing stress of his life might have caused him to need healing again and again. Therefore, Paul may have thought that preventative measures were wise. For example, someone asks for prayer for friction wounds on their heels from badly fitting shoes. We can pray in faith for healing of their wounds and wisely recommend a preventative measure; a new pair of properly fitting shoes. We can do both without contradiction. The examples may differ but the principle is the same. If we can successfully prevent illness through natural means, then isn't that wiser than seeking healing after we are sick? But if we are ill, we can count on the will of God being healing for us because of what Christ consistently reveals of the Father's will.

Epaphroditus, a Sick Servant of Christ

The apostle Paul in the book of Philippians writes about Epaphroditus who apparently was *sick to the point of death*. Paul writes:

But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Philippians 2:25-27

Epaphroditus recovered from this sickness. Paul credits *God* with Epaphroditus with his recovery by writing that *God had mercy on him*. Since the word *mercy* is often connected with the healing of individuals in the New Testament, it is evidence that Epaphroditus was healed. In fact, this example is not really of someone who was not healed, but could be more properly an example of someone who was seriously ill for a season before they received healing. These first two examples beg the question: *Does healing always have to seem instantaneous, immediate and miraculous?* I do not think so even though it appears that Mark thinks that I do. I am astonished that Mark missed this point in my teaching but perhaps I have misunderstood Mark's outline. That is quite possible. It would have been better to be with the New Wine leadership in person to sort these things out.

Trophimus; Paul Left Him Sick at Miletus

This single verse reveals that Trophimus had not received healing at the time it was written. Paul writes:

Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. 2 Timothy 4:20

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

Of course, the weakness of this verse is that we do not know what happened the next day. This is a simple snapshot of a moment in time. We have to speculate that Paul had prayed for Trophimus without apparent success up to the point of writing this verse. Truthfully, we don't even know that much. Actually, it is possible, although not probable, that Paul never prayed for Trophimus to be healed. We can only speculate about the details of this situation. We don't know how sick Trophimus was. We don't know how many times Paul prayed for him if at all. We don't know if he quickly recovered from a simple ailment like influenza that would not allow him to travel or he had something more serious for a longer period. We don't know if he simply recovered in a natural way, died, or was miraculously healed a day after Paul left. The unknown outcome of this situation makes this situation a questionable one to conclude anything about healing with one exception. The one fact that we can glean from this verse is that not everyone that Paul prayed for received healing immediately. This is not a surprise. It is my experience as well. I just see this verse differently than Mark and apparently John Wimber. I do not see it as evidence that God does not wish to heal some. I just see it as evidence that some do not receive immediately.

The Apostles Paul's Experience of Illness

Paul reveals in the book of Galatians that because he was ill, he was able to preach the Gospel to the Galatians. He writes:

...but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. Galatians 4:13-15

This situation is similar to the previous. We do not know the specifics of the situation. We do not know what the outcome of this situation was. It does appear that Paul recovered. He might have been healed. It does not appear that he was healed immediately when he would have first asked God for healing. This situation is also a snapshot of a particular moment in time with no details as to what happened afterward. The fact of Paul being ill, even for a season, does not reveal that the will of God was not to heal him. All ideas of that sort are simply speculations based on a particular theological view and are not based on what Christ reveals of the Father's will or what is specifically revealed by these verses.

The apostle Paul is the author of all the verses used in these four examples. Paul would have never used these verses in the manner that they are being used today. He was not trying to teach believers that God is not willing to heal some people by these examples. He says nothing at all like that in any of these examples. He was not teaching doctrine by telling us about these people. He was simply relating to the Philippians, the Galatians and Timothy personal news about people that they knew.

It is likely that Paul had prayed for healing for each person and of himself. Instead of Paul believing that the will of God was being revealed when people were not instantly healed, he was having a similar experience with healing that many of us have: *Not everyone receives healing immediately*. Sometimes, healing follows over a period of days or months. Sometimes, more prayer is needed. Sometimes, a crisis of faith erupts in a person and they experience a profound dealing of the Holy Spirit that leads to healing. Sometimes persistent prayer is what is needed to see a complete healing. Assuming it is not the

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

will of God because someone is not immediately healed makes it impossible to persist in praying in faith.

These four examples are often cited to support the view that God does not always heal. This is a misstatement. More properly, some do not receive healing instantly or may not receive at all. God is still willing that they receive healing even if they don't receive. In two of these situations (Epaphroditus and Paul) the New Testament reveals the detail that these believers did recover. *So how can anyone properly use these two as examples of someone not being healed?* They were healed although perhaps not instantly. The right conclusion would be that we simply do not know if these other two believers (Timothy and Trophimus) received healing eventually or not. Two of these situations (Timothy and Trophimus) are simply snapshots of a particular moment in time in the life of these believers. We do not know what happened in the hours and days after those verses were written. The assumption that they were not healed is not based on the New Testament and may reveal a theological bias being read into the verses.

These four examples are often cited to support the view that God is selective about who He heals. This is a very wrong conclusion from these passages. The right conclusion would be that these believers had "not yet" received healing. This "not yet" is on the human side of the equation. The reasons that they had not received are unclear and unrevealed by the passages. They may have simply needed to prevail in prayer to be healed. Even if, these examples included someone who had died from sickness, they still would not reveal the will of God for that person. The perfect will of the Father is not revealed by anyone but Jesus Christ. The Church's individual experience with healing, good or bad, First Century or now, does not reveal the will of the Father. The fact of the Church's mixed experience with healing being recorded in the New Testament does not change anything. We can build nothing on the mixed experience of the Church, then or now. We can only build reliably on Jesus Christ. He reveals that the will of the Father is for everyone to be healed. He reveals this repeatedly by healing everyone in a multitude. He reveals this consistently by never turning anyone away unhealed.

Resurrections

The worst misrepresentation of what I teach that I have found so far in the outline is on page 9. I am completely sure that this is completely unintended. There some really horrible logic is attributed to me about resurrections that I am certain that I have ever said or written anywhere. I looked at the page numbers that are cited in the outline (pg. 77 and 278 of *Performing Miracles and Healing*) and cannot find anything that supports this logic. I didn't say it or write it and I don't believe it. Mark may be projecting what he thinks that I would believe very inaccurately. I believe that this practice of projection of what I might say could unfairly damage my reputation. I am sure Mark doesn't want that to happen to me. It amounts to putting words in my mouth and thoughts in my mind. I have never said, stated or even thought that "*Jesus raises every dead person whose relatives ask Him to.*" It is not in the books or my public teaching. Truthfully, I have never even considered this clearly erroneous theological idea until now. From a Christ-centered perspective, I can find no evidence of this. We know that Christ healed all the sick and injured in a multitude repeatedly but as for resurrections, there is nothing at all to base this idea that Christ responded to every request for a resurrection. We don't even know if anyone even asked Him. There were no such requests recorded. There are three resurrections in Christ's ministry; the resurrection of Lazarus, the widow of Nain's son, and the synagogue official's daughter. None of these stories in the New Testament record any requests at all. The scant evidence provided by the request that Peter received to raise Dorcus (Tabitha) from the dead is certainly not enough to determine anything definitive.

Thesis 3: It is always the Devil that Wants us Ill. This thesis seriously misrepresents what I teach. I do believe that Mark thinks that I hold the “Pentecostal view” so he is incorrectly projecting that view upon me without close examination of what I written and teach publicly. I am sure that this is unintentional. I am sorry that I have failed to communicate what I believe and caused this confusion. I *do not* hold the view that all sicknesses are due to the personal sin of the sufferer or the direct intervention of Satan. Mark quotes from me in several places in his outline but seems to miss in those particular quotations that I wrote *the fallenness of the world* is also a cause of sickness. Therefore, I also believe that many sicknesses are “neutral” in origin. Mark kindly charges me with “simple dualism” in the outline but for some reason he does not know that I frequently have said in public ministry and written twice that *only about one-quarter* of the healings in Jesus’ ministry seem to be related to demonic activity. I have also stated in writing that all sickness is *not* caused by evil spirits (see pages 195 & 334 in PHM). I devoted a single chapter to that in my book “Performing Miracles and Healing” to those cases where removing demonic activity was involved in healing someone. In other words, as I wrote there *three quarters of the specific healings of sickness or injury in Christ’s ministry do not appear to have a demonic cause*. The rest of the book (PMH) treatment apart from that one chapter *does not in any way* imply that demons are always the cause of sicknesses and injuries. Mark gently writes that I need to reflect on theologian Chris Thomas’ book on healing. While I am certainly willing to reflect upon Thomas’ book as Mark thinks I should, I suspect that Thomas will just reinforce what I already believe since Thomas’ conclusions as I understand them from Mark’s outline are exactly where I presently stand. Please forgive me for poorly communicating this. I thought I was pretty specific about this in my writings and public ministry.

Thesis 4: On the Cross, Jesus bore our Sicknesses. Mark seems to have the gist of what I believe here with a few variations.

The Healing Confession that I often use in Public Ministry

Mark is slightly misquoting in his outline what I have people say. I am sure this is not intentional. He actually appears to be interpreting rather than quoting. Actually, I have them say “This belongs to me because of what Jesus has done”. I have reasons for being this specific. I have them say “this” rather than “this healing” because a physical healing may not be what they actually need from God. They may need deliverance. They may need some inner healing that will lead to a substantial physical healing. In addition, I have them say “because of what Jesus has done” rather than “because of what Jesus has done at the cross” because I know that a few struggle with believing that healing is in the atonement. While I do believe and preach that healing is in the atonement, I make this allowance for those who believe that healing may be in the passion but not necessarily in the atonement. I am not going to ask them to say something that they do not believe. There is no point in them making a confession that they do not believe. On occasion, when someone doesn’t really understand what I am asking them to say, then I might fill in the blanks for them and say add “healing” and add “the cross” but it is not my normal practice to do so and I probably have only done this a handful of times in the past ten years.

Separation of the Gospel of Christ, the Cross and the Kingdom

Some are able to theologically separate the Gospel of Christ the Crucified King from the Gospel of the Kingdom. Some think that the kingdom can be preached without preaching the cross. I believe that there is only one Gospel. It is the one that Christ preached and He commissioned His disciples to preach. It is the same Gospel that Paul preached and submitted to Peter and James as recorded in Galatians. It is frequently called several things... they preached Jesus... they preached the Gospel

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

of Christ,... they preached the Gospel of the Kingdom. It is all the same thing, just described differently. I preach Christ the King as Savior, Healer, Deliverer and Lord. I see this as preaching the kingdom. Isn't preaching *the rule of the King* the same thing as preaching the Kingdom? While I don't frequently use the word "kingdom" in my messages, I am preaching the *rule* of King Jesus as Savior, Healer, Deliverer and Lord manifested in the experience of salvation, healing, deliverance and Lordship in this present age. My message is purposely Christ-centered in presentation. This does not mean that the content of the message of the kingdom of God is not present simply because I do not use those terms as frequently as others.

Healing in or through the Atonement

Two of the apostles who walked with Christ, Peter and Matthew clearly connect healing with the atonement. Isaiah Chapter 53 mixes healing verses with atonement for sin verses. Mark says that he believes that there is a complex relationship between healing and the atonement. I cannot come to that conclusion. Two apostolic witnesses are simply enough for me combined with Isaiah prophetic description of the atonement. I am amazed that two apostolic witnesses are not enough for some. On page 15 of the outline, Mark says that "*We should not build big doctrines on little evidence.*" What *biblical* evidence does Mark offer that healing is *not* in the atonement? Mark offers the *absence* of a discussion of healing from the apostle Paul to be his biblical argument that healing must be less present in the atonement. This is a weak argument at best since the apostle Paul does not teach anywhere, hint or imply that healing is *not* in the atonement. In other words, three places in the Bible clearly connect healing with the atonement. Two of these places consist of primary apostolic witness and teaching. The third is from a primary messianic prophetic passage quoted numerous times in the New Testament about Jesus. Balanced against this double apostolic and prophetic witness is Paul's silence on the subject. Mark and others want to lean toward the silence. I think that the scant evidence is on Mark's side. It seems to me that most, if not all arguments against healing in the atonement are coming out of theology, reasoning and experience rather than the teaching of the apostles found in the New Testament. This theology doesn't seem to *want to believe* that healing is in the atonement. My experience with many of those who hold this view is that they ask "*What else?*" I find it interesting that these three passages are not enough. Two primary apostolic witnesses are not enough. Even Christ tying healing with salvation by eighteen uses of forms of the Greek word for salvation (*sozo*) in situations where someone is receiving healing ministry is not enough. *What would be enough evidence?*

As Mark notes correctly, I do believe that it is important to come to the right conclusion on this matter. If healing is *in* the atonement, then we can always be sure that God will heal when we receive Christ as Healer in faith. If healing is *only through* the atonement, then healing is some sort of add-on given at God's sovereign choice. It should be evident that it would be difficult to ever be sure that God would heal if healing is *only* through the atonement. If healing is *only* through the atonement, then consistent, personal faith for healing would be difficult to obtain. It is not enough to believe that God heals. One must believe that God wishes (wills) for them to be healed. Faith would be based on less than a stable foundation for the one who believes that healing is through the atonement. It would require a personal revelation, some sort of proof, that God wished the person to be well to inspire faith for healing. Otherwise, doubt would always be present and could prevent reception of healing. On the other hand, if healing is in the atonement, then a believer can always be sure that God wishes them to receive healing. The price would already be paid and healing would be received just like salvation is received.

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

The Apostolic Witness

As I stated a few paragraphs before, there is much biblical evidence to believe that healing is *in* the atonement. First of all, two of the Twelve apostles, Matthew and Peter, quote from the Isaiah Chapter 53 passage in their New Testament books. Both apostles connect the passage with healing. The Isaiah Chapter 53 passage is widely accepted to be a description of what Christ would accomplish at the cross. Matthew writes:

(Christ) healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases.

This is a quotation from Isaiah 53:4 that Matthew directly connects with Christ healing all the sick in Matthew Chapter 8. Matthew obviously believed that Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled by Christ healing the sick. He obviously believed that Isaiah prophecy was also describing physical healing rather than spiritual. The second quotation is from the apostle Peter. Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:24:

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, for by His wounds you were healed.

Peter quotes from Isaiah 53:5. First of all, Peter connects the work of the cross very closely to healing in actual words of the verse above. Secondly, he quotes from the prophecy of Isaiah about healing that also connects healing with the atoning work of Christ. We conclude without any difficulty at all that both Matthew and Peter believed that healing was *in* the atonement. Thirdly, a quick study of the passage in Isaiah Chapter 53 should reveal a few simple linguistic facts. The language of Isaiah Chapter 53 does not lend itself at all to the idea that Isaiah was trying to separate the work of atonement from the work of healing. Only the phrase below separates the two quotes about healing with Matthew's quote just before it and Peter's quote just after it:

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities. Isaiah 53:5a

Again, the quote above is between the two quotes from Isaiah Chapter 53 used by Matthew and Peter. This portion of the verse is unmistakably about the atonement. Isaiah is not separating healing from atonement for sin but is mixing them. Just after Peter's quote about healing this phrase is found:

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. Isaiah 53:6

In other words, every other statement in these verses is about healing or atonement for sin (forgiveness). This is how this part of the passage is constructed:

...the "took/carried away sickness" phrase used by Matthew
...followed by the "pierced-transgression" phrase
...followed by the "wounds-healed" phrase used by Peter
...followed by "iniquity-on Him" phrase.

Isaiah is mixing the ideas Christ paying the price for healing with Christ paying the price for the forgiveness of *transgression* and *iniquity*. To then say that healing is not in the atonement, is an arbitrary statement that is not based on the linguistic facts of this passage. The passage does not separate the ideas. I believe that theology separates healing and forgiveness in the atonement without biblical license to do so.

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

Fourthly, as I already stated the fact that Christ used forms of the Greek word *sozo* eighteen times where someone is healed is striking evidence that healing is part and parcel of salvation.

Fifthly, logic and theological reasoning, sometimes faulty, often plays a part in the decision to believe that healing is not *in* the atonement but *through* it. John Wimber in *Power Healing* offered an interesting discussion of these two opposing views. I have distilled down the reasoning of a brother that Wimber quoted but did not write about the flaws in his reasoning.

Forgiveness of sin is offered through the cross for all who sincerely believe. Physical healing is not offered freely and certainly for all who believe. Not one of those who have believed for forgiveness has ever been denied, but thousands and thousands who have believed for physical healing have been denied. Therefore, healing cannot be in the atonement like forgiveness is in the atonement.

This logic sounds convincing but contains many assumptions that cannot be proven or observed. This statement assumes that *no one who has believed for forgiveness has ever been denied*. This statement is scriptural and easily accepted, but it cannot be observed and proven. Neither faith nor forgiveness of sin can be visually observed or measured. Neither can they be proven experientially. They must be assumed and this assumption in specific situations can be full of error. This is a statement of belief and nothing else. There would be some who would contradict it out of their understanding and experience. Some people today think that they have believed but have not received forgiveness. I suspect that in many legalistic places there are many of these people. Most of us would immediately reject this as being a true evaluation of what is actually happening to these people. We would kindly correct them that they had not believed in a proper biblical way. We would tell them that intellectual assent to the facts of the Bible, desperation, being good, church attendance, and sincerity are not the same thing as saving faith in Christ and if they truly had believed, they would have experienced forgiveness.

The statement that *thousands and thousands who have believed for physical healing have been denied* is not observable or proven either. It is a statement of belief out of a particular theological position and nothing else. Believing on the part of these people cannot be observed either. We cannot know what is in another person's heart and cannot righteously make the judgment that they properly believe in Jesus as Healer and yet are not healed. Many things are confused with faith for healing. Intellectual assent to the fact that God heals is not the same thing as overcoming faith in Christ as Healer. When someone who appears to believe and has not received healing is interviewed about their beliefs, they often have significant doubts that need to be addressed before they receive healing. A person may appear to believe and even believe that they believe, but this is always an assumption on their part and others. Receiving healing alone proves that they have believed properly in Christ as Healer. Everything else is simply an unproven assumption.

Beyond this, when we teach and preach about forgiveness, we do so with conviction that God will always forgive. There are few that would dispute this. When many Church leaders teach about healing this is not the case. Church leaders often impart all their doubts and unbelief. If the Church taught about forgiveness in similar ways that it teaches about healing, then many would have trouble receiving forgiveness. There are examples of this. Some do have problems receiving forgiveness today in legalistic churches. It is not surprising today that some who theoretically believe in healing have difficulty receiving healing. If healing were taught with the same assurance that God would heal as easily as He would forgive, then those hearing would receive healing much more easily. It has not been uncommon in my experience to see those ministers who have serious theological doubts about healing in the atonement to have problems receiving healing. While those who know nothing of this debate often receive easily.

Thesis 5: We Must Believe in Christ as Healer. I could be wrong but Mark seems to think that I believe that no one will ever die if healing is part of our salvation. I have never taught this nor do I believe it. I just believe that we can receive healing throughout our lives and do not have to die sick. Death does not require sickness as a prerequisite. There are a number of scriptural examples of this as well as some from Christian history. Even if we do die through sickness, there is no condemnation. We are completely well then. (Mark later in the outline mentions Smith Wigglesworth. He is an example of someone who died without being sick or injured or even having tooth decay.) Mark presents salvation as a process in the outline. I also believe this to be true. Salvation is body, soul and spirit. Our discussion seems to be about salvation for the body. I believe that healing of the body is the present form of that salvation and resurrection of the body is the final form of that salvation. I think that Mark would agree with reservations. Those reservations I think would be around whether we can have healing always right up to our deaths. Mark says it this way on page 17 of the outline “...we will one day experience the fullness of what it means to be healed...” Yes. I believe this is true but I believe that this is what *resurrection of the body* means. Our bodies will never need healing again but until that time, I believe healing is always available to us through faith in Christ right up to our death.

There is a “lifeboat” illustration in Mark’s outline on page 17 that Mark doesn’t explain, so I am unable to comment. I must assume that this has something to do with my theology of healing but I can’t be sure.

Mark seems to think that I get my theology of healing from the classical Pentecostals. (Outline, pg. 17.) My background and training are United Methodist. I did my theological study at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. I was influenced a little by classical Pentecostals but never really could embrace what they taught or their style of ministry. As a charismatic believer, I would give more credit to British teacher Derek Prince and in a lesser way Father Francis McNutt and California Pastor Jack Hayford in influencing my early thinking on these matters. However, none of this influence brought me into the present experience I have with healing. It was my own detailed meditation on the New Testament after a personal revelation in prayer that changed my views. Most of the things that classical Pentecostals believe I have come to reject with a few exceptions (like healing in the atonement). I neither embrace their style of ministry, attitudes or doctrines about healing. I do not believe that many classical Pentecostals are very Christ-centered in their thinking, practice or theology. (While my calendar stays full these days, I seldom receive an invitation from a classical Pentecostal church. I think that I have only been to one in the past three years even though they abound in the United States.)

Thesis 6: The Key to Healing is our exercise of Faith. I could be wrong but Mark seems to acknowledge on pages 16-17 of the outline that the New Testament teaches that faith in Christ is critical in miracles and healing but then seems to quickly let that acknowledgement be weakened by resorting to the theological idea of sovereignty on page 18 of the outline. He seems to call this *balance*. I must ask... *Doesn't Christ know about God's sovereignty when He teaches faith? Do we have to balance the New Testament's clear teaching by using our theology? How does the New Testament really express this idea of God's sovereignty? Are we looking for a gentle way to say to others that God may not save, heal or deliver? Isn't this another way of saying that the Jesus of the New Testament is misleading? We cannot expect Him to do the very same things that He did in the Gospels. This seems to be a way to avoid the responsibility to believe and preach Christ's words as they are written. I cannot apologize for wanting to stick with the New Testament and Christ's example rather than imposing a theology on these passages.*

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

On page 20 in the outline, Mark says I *sound hyper-Armenian*. However, he sounds hyper-Calvinistic to me in that he seems to say that God will act anyway that He chooses. *Does this include contradicting the Word and the example of His Son?* I believe that Christ reveals the Father. Our Father will act consistently according to what Christ has revealed about Him.

Mark writes in the outline that I emphasize the human rather than the divine side of the healing equation. He is partly right and partly wrong. I have consistently emphasized the Gospel that God is faithful to the example of His Son and that the work is done at the cross and so on. I believe that to for people to have genuine faith in Christ, then the Gospel revealing God as loving and faithful must also be presented. *This is the divine side of the equation*. I believe I have emphasized both sides equally. I preach the divine side, i.e. the Good New about what Jesus had done and then ask people to respond simply by believing, i.e. *the human side*. I believe that this is very balanced and has been the practice of true believers and the servants of Christ throughout the ages.

Mark overstates what I teach in "*The apostles were in control of these healings; there was nothing mysterious or "other" about them.*" This is not what I teach precisely. It is near but just far enough away to be problematic. I am sure that he does not intend to misrepresent me. What I teach is that healing and miracles are not sovereign acts of God and therefore mysterious *in the way that some think*. The New Testament repeatedly tells us that Christ and the apostles and later followers *performed miracles and healing*. The Greek word for *performed* can be translated *do*. Christ and the apostles *did* healing and miracles. In other words, they knew how to make this work in practice. They knew how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. They knew how to create a faith environment by the means of the Gospel. This doesn't mean that they had complete control and could do healing at will apart from cooperation with the Holy Spirit. It means that they were able to do healing because it wasn't mysterious to them. In light of God's love, grace and mercy and the work of the cross, I don't find healing mysterious either. It seems entirely consistent with what Father has revealed of Himself in Christ. I do find healing and miracles awe-inspiring as they also reveal the love, grace and mercy of God.

The vast majority of those who were healed in Jesus ministry were healed in the context of the proclamation of the Gospel. In those situations, those who came in faith to Christ were being healed. With few exceptions, those who didn't come were the ones not being healed. *In what way is sovereignty being expressed here?* The people were making the choice to come in response to the Gospel to receive healing. Christ healed all who came. Those who pray for healing are not really in complete control either except for creation of a "faith environment" by proclamation of the Gospel and by praying in faith for those who respond. We see hundreds healed each month and have had this level of experience happening since 1998. For the four or five years before this, we were seeing a continual increase of numbers and percentages of people being healed while we were learning better about how to *perform healing and miracles*. Of course, we hope to grow and get a lot better with this. In fact, I believe that I am presently experiencing a new development of understanding about healing being Christ-centered and an expression of mercy and not just grace that I believe will lead to many more healed.

Mark politely implies that I believe that the *apostle's hands did all the work*. Of course, I don't believe this. I believe that we do nothing but believe and share good news in a believing way. God does the healing. We are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit making the things that Jesus has purchased real in the experience of people.

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

I also *pray for God to extend His hand to heal*. I see the answer to this prayer often coming by God preparing me by giving me a particular focus in my preaching the Gospel and open doors to proclaim the Gospel. I see God's answer coming by equipping others to heal the sick and injured doctrinally and emotionally. The apostles were experiencing fear and conflict when they asked for God to do this. The answer came in boldness to continue while under pressure. The answer also comes when God weakens opposition by visible miracles and healings. Interpreting this prayer in a Calvinistic way does not change the fact, that there is scant evidence that New Testament healing is an act of sovereignty. Christ and His disciples *perform healing*.

I think that Mark uses the word *imbalanced* to describe my exegesis of Scripture because I do not interpret the New Testament through *the Sovereignty of God theological template* that he is using. I don't use that template because I do not see Christ expressing it the way Mark is expressing it in the Gospels. I do believe that God does express sovereignty in many things but not in regards to the choices we make in matters of salvation, healing and deliverance. In those matters, God desires a free-will faith response to the message about Jesus Christ. God's sovereignty may get us to the question by wonderfully unusual circumstances and interventions but the eventual answer must freely come from us. This is where free-will and sovereignty meet. I don't think that Mark and I are far from each other on this, even though I think that Mark thinks that we are far apart. I also experienced a wonderful gift from God and my experience had the "Sovereignty of God" written on it as well but the decision was mine to follow Christ as Mark's was. The decision today is also mine although I experience sovereign blessings from God often as I walk with Christ. I believe that I have free will. I believe that I must believe what God says and this truly makes a difference in my life and others.

Mark says that faith is a gift and that supports his conclusion that sovereignty (as He sees sovereignty) should not be undermined. (Outline, page 21). Mark takes us to Arminius to present this. By virtue of the statements there, Mark apparently thinks that I am a follower of Arminius. I am not a follower of Arminius or Calvin either. I don't believe that either presented much of a Christ-centered theology. I much prefer to stick with the New Testament. The New Testament lists *faith* among the nine *gifts* of the Spirit. The Bible also says that we have been given *a measure of faith*. It also says that *faith* is a *fruit* of the Holy Spirit. So faith is much more than just a gift. It is a human quality since we have been given *a measure* of it. It is also a human quality in a special way in that the Holy Spirit grows it as *fruit* in the lives of very human believers. This quality of the fruit of faith makes believers more like what every human should be, the perfect human Christ.

Mark says that I must believe that faith is *a human quality*. He is right. It is a human quality as we humans are reflections of the divine. God used faith to create the world according to Hebrews Chapter 13. As we are created in the image of God, we have the quality of faith although misguided and darkened by sin in our formerly unregenerate state.

Mark says on page 21 of the outline.... *Even when it seems most like we are taking the initiative, it is still God who decides NOT us*. I agree that we are totally dependent upon God but I believe that God has decided *already* what His will is and His will is clearly revealed in His Son Jesus. I believe if we think that we must find out about God's will from healing situation to healing situation, we have not seen clearly that God has revealed His will in His Son Jesus. I believe that anyone thinking that they must determine the will of God in healing from situation to situation will have problems with consistently healing the sick and injured. This belief that God's will changes from situation to

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

situation will produce doubt and interfere with consistent results in healing. This is the one of the major points of my teaching that does vary from John Wimber's beliefs and teaching

Thesis 7: If we Believe, We will not Die of Sickness. Mark seems to have what I believe here correct with a few misstatements. It is a very minor point in my teaching that he is majoring on. I do think that the idea that we must die by sickness creates serious doubt for the seriously ill and those who love them. I do not teach that *they should see that their terminal illness is not willed by God but is demonic*. I do not teach as I stated before that all sickness is from the devil.

Mark is right that I believe that healing is possible and is God's will right up the point of death. This is consistent with what Christ reveals of the Father's will. There had to be people who were dying in the multitudes that came to Christ and He healed them all. This doesn't mean that they didn't die sometime after that.

Mark is also right in that I do believe "doubting doctrines" are the cause of many untimely deaths by sickness and sometimes injury. They cause untimely deaths because people don't ask for healing or they ask in a double-minded fashion. The real cause is that they cannot come to Christ in simple faith. Doubting doctrines have made it all so complex and mysterious.

I think that Mark's consultation with medical authorities is incomplete. He needs to ask them the question.. *Do some die of unexplainable causes?* The answer he got is an expression of the *belief* of many medical authorities and not the actual facts. Medical authorities often philosophically believe that there must be a specific cause to death and therefore look for one even where one is not evident. Presently, there are quite a number of worldwide deaths attributed to *Sudden Death Syndrome* and *Sudden Cardiac Death*. In those cases, there is not a good explanation of why the person died, even after serious examination. Sometimes, this is a young person. They just died without apparent cause. Their perfectly good heart just quit beating and there was no heart attack or injury to the heart. In the United States, the phrase on a death certificate "Natural Causes" can mean that there was no discernable cause found even after autopsy. It only means that injury from some other means has been ruled out even though in some situations, the "natural cause" is still unknown for the death.

Additionally, there are apparently healthy people who die instantly or nearly instantly of massive heart attacks, strokes, accidents, poisoning, electrocution, gun-shot wounds and other kinds of massive trauma. Experts in the field of medicine would say there was *a lack of health* in those situations. However, from the personal point of view of a saved person, it is possible that they were felt perfectly healthy one moment and had not suffered any debilitation at all and then found themselves in Heaven the next moment. The New Testament reveals some martyrs as well who experienced injury only moments before death. I write all this to make this minor point again. *You do not have to be sick in order to die*. People enter Heaven regularly who were not sick or had to live through a long experience of injury to die. Even elderly people who are generally healthy do die without apparent sickness being the cause. They just pass away. I suspect that "organ failure" will be the cause put on their death certificate. However, they died without being sick. Their previously healthy bodies just quit working. (I think that we are "splitting hairs" here.) My only point here is that *death by sickness* is not inevitable. Healing prayer should work until we no longer need to be healed either because we have died or we are completely well. There had to be elderly, sick, and dying people in the multitudes that came to Jesus and He healed them all. James Chapter 5 does not distinguish between those who are supposed to die and those who are suppose to live. It

A Response to Mark Stibbe's Seven Theses

implies that all believers can receive believing healing prayer all the days of their life. For those of us who are considered elders, it falls on us *not* to draw distinctions that the New Testament doesn't draw. We should pray *the prayer of faith* over the sick, no matter how old or how sick they may be. We should expect them to be healed. I do not believe that this is *American can-do optimism* but a simple faith in Christ and the New Testament revelation.

In Conclusion. Mark's Seven Thesis statements forced me to respond in an uncomfortable way. He seemed to major on some of my minor points and He minored on some of my major points although certainly not to harm me. So I find myself presenting something much less on some things and much more on other things than what I would do if I was simply teaching. I do believe that Mark had good intentions but has at least partially misunderstood me and he is often disagreeing with his own misunderstandings of what I teach rather than me. I know that he has made an honest effort. It would have been easier for Mark if there had been a private meeting. *No one should be critical of Mark Stibbe.* He is and was attempting to help the New Wine leadership make a decision about me. I'm sure that he did not rejoice in this task. Also, I would ask for mercy for me if my response does not reveal brotherly love at points. The response was written rapidly and not much effort was given to editing. My unedited writing is very direct and therefore tends to sound harsher than I often intend. I am not angry with anyone, especially Mark.

Beyond all this, I have learned to live with misunderstanding and/or disagreement and to remain in peace. Some theological conflict seems to come with the ministry that the Lord has given me. Few criticized me before I was seeing many people receiving healing each month. Also, few listened to me. I sure John Wimber would understand this. I almost decided not to respond at all to Mark's outline and just to retire from a potential debate based on what Christ told his disciples to do in this kind of situation. However, I did respond because I know that some of my friends associating with New Wine might be harmed by me being misrepresented or misunderstood.

I am completely at peace with whatever the leadership of New Wine decides about me, even if it is official exclusion. I will not be harmed at all by exclusion. I will not give it a second thought. The world is too large and the needs too great for me to be weighed down by exclusion by a single group of Christians who hold a different theological view. I am too busy as it is and need to slow down. Do what you feel you must do. The Lord's will be done.

Blessings in Christ to all who took the time to read this flawed and hastily written response.

For Christ the King and His present and coming Kingdom,

Roger Sapp

This file was found on www.allnationsmin.org in the free files area. There are many free files available there as well as Dr. Sapp's audio, video and printed materials on healing available for order.