

A Bible Study for Adults Living with Chronic Illness using

The Healing Stories of Luke

By Jessica A. Harren

Context: This study is meant for people who are acquainted with Christianity and the Bible who are also living with chronic illnesses. It may also benefit the family members related to people with chronic illness.

It will be best led by a pastor or counselor – especially if that person has some Biblical knowledge and some knowledge of chronic illness. Two books are suggested to be read by the leader before the beginning of the study, *The Wounded Storyteller* by Arthur Frank, and *Healing in the New Testament* by John Pilch. Each session may be too long for some with chronic illness, feel free to break the sessions as appropriate for your context.

The Bible study is important, but more important is that this group offers a place for healing moments to occur, a place where people are heard and listened to, wherever they are in the process of dealing with their illness and their faith. It will be helpful for the discussion leader to remember that coming to terms with a chronic illness includes many stages, both personal and spiritual. Allow time for discussion, and if someone needs more time to talk allow time for this, and save the Bible study content for next week.

I pray that this will bring healing to all those it touches.

Session One: Healing v. Cure, Jesus cured them?

Opening:

Pray. Then, have everyone introduce themselves, their illness, why they came to this class. Explain that we'll read Bible stories in Session Three, but will take the first two sessions to understand some other concepts that will inform how we read the bible stories again.

Ask:

1. How do you feel when you read or hear healing stories in the Bible?
2. Do you wonder why Jesus would heal others, and not you?
3. Have you ever been told that if you had more faith, or prayed harder, you would be cured?
 - a. Allow time for people to tell their stories and share their feelings. Help those in the group to reflect other's feelings and be good listeners.
 - b. Note that living with chronic illness is often isolating because others get tired of hearing about this. This study can become a place for healing if it is a place where people are heard.
4. In what ways has the church hurt you or been painful for you as you've dealt with this illness?
5. In what ways has the church helped you or supported you as you've dealt with this illness?

Discuss that one way to find life for us in Bible stories is to understand the difference between healing and cure. Jesus often brought both to those in the healing stories. Explain that one of our main tasks will be to try and discover what healing Jesus gave in the Bible and if that kind of healing is also open to us as a resource for living with chronic illness.

Explain that healing and cure are technical concepts used by medical anthropologists. "Healing is directed toward illness, that is, the attempt to provide personal and social meaning for the life problems created by sickness."¹

"In other words, healing boils down to meaning and transformation of experience."²

Make copies of the following two pages and hand them out to the group. Handout 1 is a list comparing healing and cure done by someone who does ministry with those managing chronic illnesses, so these definition are less technical, but perhaps more helpful. Go through each statement and allow people to comment, to share their stories of healing and cure. Encourage them to keep this page for future reference. Ask questions like these:

6. When/how have you experienced this?

¹ John H. Pilch. *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000, p. 25.

² Pilch, p. 35.

7. Do you want cure or healing, or both? Which do you want today?
8. How does this list help you to think about your illness in a new or different way?

Handout 1: Healing V. Cure by Pr. Fred Rekalu

1 Cure may occur without healing; healing may occur without cure.

2 Cure separates body from soul; healing embraces the whole.

(Cure looks at what sort of disease a person has; healing looks at what sort of person has the disease – Cure categorizes; healing individualizes. Cure addresses disease; healing addresses illness³.)

3 Cure isolates; healing incorporates.

(Cure is technical; healing is relational.)

4 Cure costs; healing enhances.

5 Cure combats sickness; healing fosters wellness.

(Cure fixes, healing corrects. Cure is reactive; healing is proactive.)

6 Cure fosters function; healing fosters purpose.

7 Cure alters what is; healing offers what might be.

(Cure controls; healing frees.)

8 Cure is an act; healing is a process.

(Cure is a closed system; healing is an open system. Cure closes the past; healing opens the future. Cure is a goal; healing is a quest. Cure seeks to change reality; healing embraces reality. Cure takes charge; healing takes time.)

9 Cure acts upon another; healing shares with a sister, a brother.

(Cure speaks; healing listens. Cure is produced by power; healing grows from surrender.)

10 Cure manages; healing touches.

(Cure depends on dispassionate skill; healing depends on compassionate care.)

11 Cure seeks to conquer pain; healing seeks to transcend pain.

(Cure is taunted by suffering; healing is taught by suffering.)

12 Cure ignores grief; healing assumes grief.

³ Author's note: Disease is what is physically wrong or identifiably with a person, illness is both the disease and how it affects a person's life.

13 Cure encounters mystery as a challenge for understanding; healing encounters mystery as a channel for meaning.

(Cure often issues from fear; healing usually issues from faith.)

14 Cure rejects death and views it as defeat; healing includes death among the blessed outcomes of care.

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Closing

Invite people to close their eyes, if they are comfortable, and take three deep breaths. Invite them to imagine how their lives might be different if they could find more healing. Invite everyone to share one thing they found helpful or how they feel about today's lesson. Close in prayer.

Session Two: Cultural Considerations: How are we like those whom Jesus cured?

Opening:

Welcome everyone back to the group. Encourage them to talk about how their day or week is going. Ask if anyone would like to say anything about last week's session or the ideas of healing and cure. Pray.

Discuss the illness narratives⁴ in our culture. Namely: we get sick, go to the doctor, do what the doctor says, and then get better. We exercise. We eat right. We take vitamins. There is a narrative in our culture that if we do things right, we will not get or stay sick.

Invite the group into discussion:

1. Discuss how in your own life you defy the illness narrative.
2. Discuss how others around you resist your personal illness story that is chronic.
3. Share stories about times you have heard, "If you would only. . . then you wouldn't be sick anymore." Or "If you would only. . . then you'd feel better."
4. Share how these stories make you feel.

Explain: In the ancient world, ". . . Illness was a catastrophe in the first century BC and AD, both intrinsically to the sufferer, and to [his or her] honor and standing in the community, so healing was very important."⁵ Audrey Dawson (a medical doctor in England who went back to school to earn a theology degree and authored one of the books quoted in this study) and others point out that often any kind of illness was completely socially isolating. As in the gospels, many people who were sick were kept out of town, and away from those who were "clean." Much of what happens in the gospels has to do with old Jewish purity laws about who was "clean" and could come before God and be in touch with other humans, and who was "unclean" and had to stay away. However, there is debate about how much the purity laws were enforced at the time of Jesus.

Ask:

5. Do you ever feel as though your illness keeps you from others, or as though you are "unclean" because you are sick?
6. In what ways does your illness socially isolate you?

Explain: Another common thought behind illness in the first century BC and AD was that the person who was sick must be a sinner, or that God must be punishing the person with illness. Sometimes it was thought that the parents had sinned to have a sick child. Other times illness was thought to be caused by demon or spirit possession.

⁴ In order to lead a more detailed discussion on this topic, see Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

⁵ Audrey Dawson, *Healing, Weakness, and Power: Perspectives on Healing in the Writings of Mark, Luke, and Paul*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008, 57.

“. . . Illness is understood in terms of misfortune. Such a concept is important here, because fortune or misfortune in the world of Luke-Acts comes not from personal human activity, but from the operation on humans by gods or spirits.”

Ask:

7. Do you ever feel as though God is punishing you?
8. How is your illness misfortune in your life? How is it fortune?
9. Do your parents/family ever feel guilty about your illness?
10. Do your parents/family ever cause you to feel guilty about your illness?
11. Is there ever shame in your family about your illness?

Read:

“The classic definition [of health] offered by the World Health organization is, ‘state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity.’”⁶

Ask:

12. What is your idea of health?
13. How do you define a healthy day?
14. How are your values related to how you view health and illness?
15. How do you feel about this definition by the WHO?
16. Is this how your culture defines health? If not, how does it?

Explain: In the Western world, only the symptoms viewable and testable are generally considered as evidence of the problem. In the ancient world, and much of today’s non-Western world, the patient’s experience of the illness or problem is given much more meaning. Illness is socially constructed, and we have very narrow definitions of illness in our Western medical world. In other words, our “[c]ulture dictates what [we are] to perceive, value, express, and how to live with illness. . . Culture’s greatest contribution is the meaning given to the illness experience.”⁷

17. Share a time when a doctor did not believe that you had a symptom that mattered, or did not value your experience of your illness.

Explain: Jesus valued people’s experiences of their illness, as any healer would have done in the ancient world. Jesus often restored people to the community, a high value of the first century world.

Healing in Luke-Acts

⁶ Pilch, 24.

⁷ Pilch, 27.

Explain that In Luke-Acts there is a distinctive view of healing, with healing occurring to a person's entire well-being in the world. "Ultimately, a sick person is restored to a proper state of being, not an ability to function."⁸

Ask

18. Do you like/dislike this understanding of health? Why or why not?
19. How is this different than how we understand healing today?

Read:

"Our biblical ancestors did not expect pain to be eliminated; it could only be alleviated. In a similar vein, healing was quite likely not expected to be lasting; very possibly the ailment could return later."⁹

Ask

20. How does knowing this about the ancient world help you to understand the healing stories in the gospel of Luke?

Closing:

Discuss in what ways we have it better or worse than those in the first century. Share one insight from today that will be helpful as you live with your illness and/or how you are feeling as we close. Pray.

⁸ Pilch, 112.

⁹ Pilch, 110.

Session Three: Who knows the Messiah? Luke 4: 38-41

Opening:

Pray. Allow anyone who wants to share tell about how his or her day or week is going. Ask if anyone wants to talk about anything from last week regarding culture and illness.

Bible Story: Have someone read the story aloud to the group.

Luke 4:38-41 ³⁸ After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. ³⁹ Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them. ⁴⁰ As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. ⁴¹ Demons also came out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah."

1. Share immediate reactions and feelings about the story.

Getting into the story:

Methods of curing:

Ask:

2. List the three methods of healing in these stories: rebuking, laying hands, and coming out. Share the Greek for each of these methods:

Rebuking: *epitimao* (v. 39 and 41)

Meaning: to honor, to mete out due measure, hence *to censure*

Ask:

3. Do you every rebuke your illness, or wish that you could?
4. Is rebuking the same as being angry at? (Explain that anger is a stage of grief, as having a chronic illness causes one to go through the stages of grief: denial, bargaining, anger, depression, and acceptance.)

Laying on of hands: *epitithemi* (v. 40)

Meaning: to lay upon, to place upon

Ask:

5. Have you ever had anything placed or laid on you to aid healing? (Hot rocks, massage hands, acupuncture needles, heating pads)
6. Have you ever imagined Jesus laying his hands on you? In what ways? Do you believe that Jesus would heal or cure?
7. Are there others who lay hands on you? How does that feel? How does that bring healing?

Coming out: *exerchomai*

Meaning: to go or *come out of*

Ask:

8. What is your understanding of demons in the world today?
9. Do you fight demons you wish you didn't have to?
10. What would it mean if your demons recognized Christ?
11. How does your illness help you recognize Christ?

Response to healing:

Ask:

12. What are the two responses to healing in this story? (Simon's mother-in-law serves them, the demons affirm Jesus as the Son of God.)
13. If you have one, share a story about a healing moment in your life.
14. How would/do you respond to moments of healing in your life? What are they?
15. How can/does your illness help you to proclaim Jesus as Son of God?

Themes in Healing

Ask:

16. Is it possible that in this gospel story, Jesus has retuned people to a whole state of being, even if people are not totally cured?
17. In what ways has Jesus done this?
18. Is it possible that Simon mother-in-laws fever will return?
19. What do you imagine that would that mean for her? (Perhaps that healing can happen again, and she can draw strength from the last time Jesus touched her.)
20. How can/do you draw strength from past times of healing to cope with new times of illness?

Themes in Luke

Explain:

One of the themes in Luke is that Jesus has the power to heal. In ancient times, people's "primary value orientation was to suffer nature, be subject to it. So, Jesus' healings and miracles stand out as exceptional events in a world where humankind has no power over nature."¹⁰

Ask:

21. When have you felt like you've had no control over nature?
22. Do you believe that Jesus could still have control over nature? If so, why do you think he doesn't always choose to exercise that control?
23. When in your life have you felt as though Jesus was taking control over something? Was that healing for you?

Closing

24. What in this story was healing for those touched by Jesus?
25. How might that kind of healing be open to us today?
26. Share one insight you've learned today that will strengthen your faith or help you to cope.

Offer a prayer for the group, including that they would feel the touch of Jesus and know some healing in their lives.

¹⁰ Pilch, 11.

Session Four: When doctors can't help – Luke 8:43-48

Opening:

Pray. Allow anyone who wants to share tell about how his or her day or week is going. Ask if anyone wants to talk about anything from last week about who Jesus is and healing moments. Ask if anyone would like to share a healing moment from last week.

Bible Story: Have someone read aloud.

Luke 8:43-48 ⁴³ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. ⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. ⁴⁵ Then Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you." ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me." ⁴⁷ When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

1. Share immediate reactions and feelings about the story.

Getting into the story:

Personal Experience:

Ask:

2. How has your illness impacted you financially? (The woman in the story spent all she had.)
3. Do you ever feel as though no doctor can help you?
4. What do you do in that situation? How do you feel in that situation?
5. Who do you turn to if a doctor can't help you? (The woman turned to the prophet Jesus.)
6. How often do you turn to prayer instead of a doctor?

Methods of curing:

Ask:

7. What is the method of healing? (Have the class list the method of healing: touch) Share the Greek for this.

Touched: hapto

Meaning: *to fasten to, lay hold of*

8. In what sense is this touch different than the laying on of hands we studied last week?
9. Are there ways that you lay hold of your faith when all else has failed?
10. Do you ever feel that Jesus' power is there when you do that? (Be ready for tears, or for people to say no, they are struggling with their faith, or can't feel Jesus' presence today. Affirm and listen to all responses.)

11. What might it mean for us that the woman did not wait for Jesus to come to her, but she initiated the touch?

Themes in Healing

Explain:

This story teaches us something about purity laws and their enforcement in this time period. Usually a woman with a flow of blood would be considered unclean and would not be allowed to touch anyone. Yet, this woman was in the crowd with everyone else and had access to Jesus. However, while she was in the crowd, it was unlikely she was allowed in the temple.

Ask:

12. What does it mean for you to be in crowds, where you know you are still ill?
13. Do you ever feel that others can't see you or find you because of your illness? (Note how Jesus had to look around for the woman.)
14. In what ways was the woman cured?
15. In what ways was she healed? (She was made clean, she could worship in the temple again, she was restored to relationship.)
16. Are there times your illness prevents you from worshipping?
17. How might you ask Jesus to heal that?
18. How could you help to heal that for others on days you would be well enough to do so?

Response to Healing

19. What was the response to healing in this story? (Your faith has made you well.)
20. How do you feel about that response of Jesus? (Be prepared for people to say it makes them feel bad, and like they should pray differently or harder and they would be cured.)
21. Think about a healing moment, however small, in your life where you feel like your faith made a difference. We might not be cured, and we might not always have healing, but Jesus is with us, and can help us through our illnesses.

Themes in Luke

Explain:

One interesting Biblical note about this story is that the author of Luke is called a physician. However, recent evidence contradicts this statement. One of the points for Luke being a physician is that in some Lucan manuscripts, the phrase about the woman spending all her money on doctors who could not help has been omitted. Some people say that this is evidence that Luke did not want to disparage his own profession. However, according to Pilch (a medical anthropologist who studies the Biblical healing stories), "His Gospel exhibits the kind of healthcare knowledge that every educated person would know,

it contains no information that only a physician would know or report.”¹¹ Dawson agrees with the interpretation that Luke was not a physician.

Ask:

22. Does it matter to you if the author of this gospel was a doctor or not?
23. How does it change, or not, the way you read/understand these healing stories?

Closing:

24. Share one thing you thought today that was a new thought for you.

Offer a prayer for the group, including that they would have the courage for ask Jesus for healing moments, and that they would be able to recognize them when they come, even if no dramatic cure happens.

¹¹ Pilch, 95.

Session Five: Fighting culture to get healing -- Luke 13:10-17

Opening: Pray. Allow anyone who wants to share tell about how his or her day or week is going. Ask if anyone wants to talk about anything from last week about asking Jesus for healing.

Bible Story: Have someone read the story aloud to the group.

Luke 13:10-17 ¹⁰ Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. ¹¹ And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." ¹³ When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. ¹⁴ But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day." ¹⁵ But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?" ¹⁷ When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

1. Share immediate reactions and feelings about the story.

Getting into the story:

Ask:

2. Do you ever feel like you'll have to wait 18 years or longer for healing in your life?
3. Are there times when you've been refused care by someone because it was not the right time? How did that make you feel?

Methods of curing:

Ask:

4. What is the method of healing in this story? (laying on of hand) Share the Greek for this method.

To lay [hands] on: (epitithemi)

Meaning: to lay upon, to place upon

This is the second time in our study that method of healing has been used by Jesus.

Ask:

5. Have you thought more about this since the last study?
6. Has anyone laid healing hands on you recently?
7. How do you feel about this method of healing?

Response to Healing

Ask:

8. What was the woman's response to healing? (She stood up straight and began praising God.)
9. How do you feel about this? What do you think your response would be?
10. Have you had any healing moments this past week? How did you respond?

Themes in Healing

Explain: The leaders of the synagogue usually liked to control the healing, and were often the ones who decided who was cured and who was not. Jesus affronts the normal way of doing things to cure this woman on the Sabbath, and offends the leader of the synagogue.

Ask:

11. Has anyone ever stood up for you and helped you to do things differently, or at a different time?
12. Where is your support for healing in your life? (This woman clearly had Jesus, who violated synagogue rules to help her.)

Themes in Luke

Explain: Note that the response to healing in this story is that the woman praises God, not Jesus. Nor does she thank Jesus. One of the things Jesus does in this gospel is point people toward God, not toward himself. Also, in this gospel, Jesus clearly heals with the spirit of God he received at his baptism.

Ask:

13. Do you tend to have a relationship more with God or Jesus?
14. How do you see the difference between them?
15. Do you think this woman was right to praise God, or should she have thanked Jesus?

Closing:

Have everyone name one thing they are able to be grateful for today. Also, ask for closing thoughts on the story. Offer a prayer for the group, including that they would find support and people who would stand up for their healing.

Session Six: Can we give thanks in the midst of illness? Luke 17:11-19

Opening:

Pray. Allow anyone who wants to share tell about how his or her day or week is going. Ask if anyone wants to talk about anything from last week about culture and illness.

Bible Story: Have someone read the story aloud to the group.

Luke 17:11-19 ¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³ they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶ He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?" ¹⁸ Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" ¹⁹ Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

1. Share immediate reactions and feelings about the story.

Getting into the story:

Ask:

2. Who are the principle characters in this story?
 - a. Jesus
 - b. Ten Lepers
 - c. Priests
 - d. Samaritan Leper
3. What role does each of them play in the healing
4. Do you think faith is also a central character here? What does that mean for you?
5. In what ways do you find this story helpful? In what ways do you find it hurtful?

Methods of curing:

6. What is the method of healing? (Jesus' words) Share the Greek for this method:

(lego)

Meaning: *to say*

Ask:

7. What other connotations does the word lego/logos bring up for you? (Perhaps Jesus as Logos, The Word, or perhaps the Bible as The Word.)
8. How have words been used in the past to hurt you?
9. How have words in the past been used to provide healing moments for you? Share a story.

Response to Healing

Ask:

10. How did the lepers respond to the healing? In culturally appropriate ways by going to the priests.
11. How did the Samaritan respond to the healing? (Both by praising God and by thanking Jesus.) Why do you think he responded differently?
12. How did Jesus respond to the Samaritan?
13. What would it mean in your life for Jesus to respond that way to you?
14. Are there ways your faith brings you small moments of healing?
15. Do you always recognize those moments? What makes it difficult, at times, to recognize those moments?
16. Are you able to be grateful for them, or do you resent that they are only small moments and not complete healings? (Be ready for an answer about how it depends on the day, affirm all responses.)

Themes in Luke

Explain: Once again, we see in the gospel of Luke, that Jesus' ability to heal occasions praising God, and thanking Jesus. In a patronage culture, thanking someone is the same as ending a relationship. It is possible that the foreigner, the Samaritan, thanked Jesus because he did not expect to need his help again, whereas the others might.¹² However, as we discussed in the last Bible study, the others could have still praised God.

Ask:

17. How do healing moments point you to God in your life?
18. How does your relationship with Jesus point you to God?

Explain: The healings in Luke, "" . . . allowed [Jesus] him to gain the confidence of people suffering from the social consequences of various types of oppression, including illness and poverty, and allowed onlookers to witness in those healed, the love of God, as dramatic evidence of the nearness of the Kingdom of God."¹³

Ask:

19. Have you experienced or how do you experience the nearness of God through healing moments?

¹² Pilch, 52.

¹³ Dawson, 211.

Explain: “In the final analysis, this holistic perspective on the illness category of human misfortunes in Luke-Acts prompts the observation that in the ministry of Jesus, all human beings . . . are totally in need of God’s redemption, which Jesus provides.”¹⁴

Ask:

20. Do you believe that God can redeem (make something new) out of your illness? Why or why or why not?
21. How do you imagine this might look and/or feel?

Themes in Healing

Explain: In each of the stories we’ve studied, people and Jesus have had various responses and methods to and of healing.

Ask:

22. What themes have emerged for you in the Bible during this study? What themes in healing have you discovered?
23. What has been the most helpful for you in terms of your own healing during this study?
24. Is there anything that hasn’t been helpful or has been hurtful?
25. Name the thing you’ve learned that has helped you the most.

Closing:

Have everyone take a turn being the appreciated person. Have each person in the group go around the circle and say something affirming about the person whose turn it is. It can be something they have learned from this person, or something they appreciated about being in the study with them. Be sure to give yourself as the leader a turn for people to affirm you and your leadership skills.

Allow people to offer a one or two sentence closing thought.

Offer a prayer for the group that seems appropriate to you.

¹⁴ Pilch, 110.

Afterward

What I've Learned from This Study

Writing this study has been a healing experience for me. I've learned that my experience of chronic illness is not uncommon, but is shared by some of my friends and even those in the Bible. Before doing this work, I thought that the healing stories were not for me – that I had no place in them because my illness cannot and will most likely never be cured. However, after doing this study, I realized that there is a healing message for me, too. Healing comes in moments – in the laying on of hands and other healing instruments, in the speaking, and the rebuking. I now, after careful study and thought, have a place with those who were ill in the Bible. I know what it is like to spend all my money on doctors, or to be sick for many years, or to be ignored or told healing is not possible for you today, or it is not my job. My experience of illness is not all that different from those in the Bible. As Jesus touches them and restores them to society, this study has brought me out of the isolation illness causes, which is a healing moment and one of the ways Jesus works in my life today. I pray that this study will also help others out of their isolation, and will help them to see their stories in the Biblical story, too. I pray that people will find a Jesus that creates community and points people to God. These are all things I have discovered, and ways I have been healed in the writing of this study. I pray that others may experience the same.