



Would you please explain your understanding on healing, and what specific procedures do you apply in your Church for anointing and public prayer requests?

We have discussed the issue of physical healing in several of our Q&As, eternalgod.org/qa/4963, eternalgod.org/qa/3221, eternalgod.org/qa/3749, eternalgod.org/qa/2842, and also at length in our free booklet, "Sickness and Healing-What the Bible Tells Us."

The following issues will be discussed in this Q&A:

- Our Belief on Physical Healing
- What to do When We Are Sick
- Why Anoint With Oil?
- The Use of an Anointed Cloth
- Does God Heal Only Baptized Members of His Church?
- When Does God Begin to Heal a Person Who Is Asking for an Anointed Cloth?
- When Should We Ask for Anointing?
- Can or Should We Ask for Anointing More Than Once for the Same Sickness?
- When Should We Ask the Ministry to Announce a Sickness to the Church and Ask for Prayers?
- Should We Seek Out a Particular Minister for Anointing Because He May Have the "Gift of Healing"?

In this Q&A, we are setting forth briefly our belief and practice, as well as administrative procedures. For a more comprehensive discussion, please consult and review our additional literature, as quoted above.

Our Belief on Physical Healing

God tells us in Exodus 15:26 that He is our LORD who heals us. We are healed by the stripes of Jesus Christ who gave His life for us, and who was tortured and beaten so that we can obtain

forgiveness of our sins and healing from our sicknesses and diseases (Psalm 103:1-3; Matthew 8:16-17; 1 Peter 2:21-25; Isaiah 53:5).

What to do When We are Sick

We ought to pray to God in private for healing. IN ADDITION, based on the severity of the sickness, we are to call for the elders of the Church of God to pray for us, to anoint us with oil, and to lay hands on us, so that we can be healed (James 5:14-15; Mark 16:18).

Why Anoint with Oil?

We read in Mark 6:13 that Christ had His disciples anoint sick people with oil, and they were healed. We know that Christ healed the sick with the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 8:43-46 ~ the Authorized Version has here, "virtue," but the literal meaning is, "power," compare New King James Bible. Compare, too, Mark 5:30; Luke 6:19).

Christ said that His ministers would heal the sick by the power of the Holy Spirit (Mark 16:18), which presence is symbolized by the anointing of the sick person with oil (James 5:14). Oil can symbolize a consecration, or a special setting apart for a holy purpose~the divine purpose of physical healing, for example. Oil can refer to the Holy Spirit abiding in a person, or it can also refer to God's presence, through His Spirit, to motivate, guide or lead, as well as heal a person, although the Holy Spirit might not reside in that person.

The Use of an Anointed Cloth

Many times, a ministerial visit may not be possible, as the sick person might live in a remote area. If this is the case, then elders are permitted to pray over a cloth, anointing it with a drop of oil as the symbol of the Holy Spirit, and asking God to heal the sick person who will receive this cloth.

It is up to the ELDER to decide whether to personally visit the sick person for anointing, or whether to send him or her an anointed cloth. Even if the sick person asks for a cloth, the ELDER may decide to visit the person; conversely, if the person asks for a visit, the elder may decide to send the person a cloth.

The use of a cloth is based on numerous passages in the Bible, showing us that people were healed when they touched the garments of Christ (Mark 6:56) or the aprons or handkerchiefs from Paul's body (Acts 19:12).

There is no magical importance attached to an anointed cloth. It cannot and will not heal anyone. As mentioned, it is through the stripes of Christ that we are healed.

When a person who is sick receives the anointed cloth, he is to place it on his head and pray to God (as the minister did when anointing the cloth) that God would heal the sick person from the sickness. Since our faith must be in God, and not in any man or in the anointed cloth, the cloth should be destroyed immediately after it has been used.

Does God Heal Only Baptized Members of His Church?

The sick person does not have to be a baptized member of the Church of the Eternal God or one of its corporate affiliates, the Global Church of God in UK or the Church of God, a Christian Fellowship in Canada, or even the spiritual body of Christ (of which the Church of the Eternal God and its corporate affiliates are a part). It is necessary, however, that the sick person has faith in the sacrifice of Christ, believing that he or she will be healed by God because of what Christ did for us. Unique examples of healing do occur based on the actions of faithful ministers of Jesus Christ (compare Acts 3:1-10); however, a sick person's faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice remains the basis for healing—and this is vitally important for those who have been called to a knowledge of the truth of God.

When Christ was here on earth in the flesh, He healed many people, and none of those were converted, as the Holy Spirit was only given at Pentecost in 31 A.D. Even after the New Testament Church was established, God continued to use the apostles and elders to heal people who were not members of the body of Christ. Today, children of parents in the Church, as well as unconverted mates, may experience healing, sometimes in unusual ways, so that their

faith in God the Father and Jesus Christ may be strengthened.

If a sick person asks one of our ministers for anointing or an anointed cloth, believing that God will heal them, the minister, based on his judgment and discretion, will anoint such a person. God gave command to His servants to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God and to "heal the sick" (Matthew 10:8; Luke 9:2; 10:9).

When does God Begin to Heal a Person Who Is Asking for an Anointed Cloth?

God may begin to heal a sick person when he or she places the cloth on his or her head and prays to God for healing. On the other hand, we have seen over the years that God may heal a sick person, or begin to heal him or her, prior to the receipt of the cloth, or, for that matter, prior to the arrival of the elder to anoint the sick person with oil and pray over him or her.

Our faith in God must not be restricted to actually receiving an anointed cloth; rather, we should have faith that God can and will heal us whenever it pleases Him. But, we are still to follow through with His command to ask for anointing. Having shown God that we are willing to obey Him in everything, we can and should have the faith that God will heal us, whenever He chooses. To repeat, there is nothing magical about the anointed cloth. IT does not heal anyone. We must be careful that we don't place our faith and trust in the cloth—or in the anointing minister—rather than in God.

Even though a sick person who has asked for anointing already feels better, or has been completely healed, by the time of the arrival of the elder or the cloth, the procedure of anointing and praying over the sick person, or of applying the cloth, should still be carried out and followed through, thereby showing God our diligence and our gratitude for His ongoing intervention. (Peter still baptized Cornelius, even though he had already received God's Holy Spirit in this unique and extraordinary circumstance).

When Should We Ask for Anointing?

Basically, if we are too sick to go to school or to work or to attend Church services, we are "sick

enough" to ask for anointing. Of course, if we are suffering from a continuing serious sickness which is not contagious and which would not prevent us from attending Church services, we should still be anointed (sometimes more than once, see below) in order to be healed.

Remember, God **COMMANDS** us to ask for anointing when we are sick. Far too many prefer to consult with medical doctors and expect healing from them, rather than taking advantage of the means by which God promises us physical healing.

Can or Should We Ask for Anointing More Than Once for the Same Sickness?

This is most certainly permitted in a more serious sickness. On the other hand, as stated, we must never place our faith in elders who anoint us, or in an anointed cloth. Our faith must always be in God, our Healer. Therefore, if a repeated request for an anointed cloth for the same sickness would become tantamount to a misplaced faith in the cloth, then such a request would be inappropriate.

When Should We Ask the Ministry to Announce a Sickness to the Church and Ask for Prayers?

Should we ask the Church to make an official prayer announcement via email or during services (being broadcast on the Internet), before asking a minister to anoint us or send us a cloth?

The answer is, generally not. The first step for a sick person is to fulfill HIS or HER responsibility—that is, to ask God in private prayer for healing and then to ask the ministry for anointing. In more serious cases, it is appropriate to **ALSO** ask for a prayer announcement to the brethren—either subsequently or even simultaneously (depending on the severity of the sickness or injury).

Please note carefully the order in James 5:14-16: "(Verse 14:) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. (Verse 15) And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up... (Verse 16:) ... pray for one another, that you may be healed."

Verse 14 says that first should come the prayer and anointing of the ministry, together with the prayer of the anointed and others who might be present during the anointing; and then, according to verse 16, a more encompassing prayer by the brethren for others could follow.

Normally, barring extraordinarily circumstances, and based on the judgment of the ministry, we are sending out or announcing prayer requests for our members or prospective members/attendees, on their own behalf or on behalf of close family members. (When Church members ask for prayers for their unconverted sick close relatives, no requirement of prior anointing would normally be made, as the sick persons might not even know about the possibility of anointing.) These prayer requests are normally only sent to our members and selective others who have specifically asked to receive our prayer announcements.

The reason for this somewhat limited procedure is the weight and obligation that our prayer requests carry for our members. Once a prayer request is sent out, the recipients are expected and obligated, before God, to actually pray for the injured or sick person and his or her immediate family. It is therefore important that the sick person [or a converted family member] does not make such a request lightly; that the ministry weighs the request carefully; and that the members receiving the request come before God in prayer to ask for healing of the sick person.

Should We Seek Out a Particular Minister for Anointing Because He May Have the "Gift of Healing"?

The short answer is: Absolutely not. Some may erroneously believe that they must seek out a particular minister to be anointed, thinking perhaps that God will only heal through that minister—or that they may have a "better chance" of being healed, as that minister is perceived as having the "gift of healing." However, God commands us to ask the "elders" of His Church to anoint us with oil, when we are sick, and the **PRAYER** of **FAITH** shall lift us up. It is **GOD** who heals us. In looking at a particular man for

such anointing is tantamount to placing our trust in man, rather than in God.

We need to remember that God warns us that some will arise to perform miracles and signs- while perhaps even claiming to be true ministers within the body of Christ-but they will DECEIVE many (Matthew 24:11, 24). If a "minister" claims-or allows such a claim to be made about him, without rejecting it-that he has a special gift of healing and that members must come to HIM to be anointed and be healed, then such claim would dishonor God and be deceitful.

We read in 1 Corinthians 12 about all kinds of spiritual gifts, such as gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, and different kinds of tongues or languages (verses 1, 9-10). Paul says that not everyone in the Church has the same identical gifts (verse 4), but all gifts are given "to each one for the profit of all"-the entire Church (verse 7). It is not for the purpose of placing our trust in a man or looking at a man (the Samaritans looked at Simon Magus as the great power of God who bewitched them with his sorcery and magic tricks), but to give all glory to God. And God is most certainly not limited to perform miracles by having to use fragile, weak and feeble men who might be viewed as having "the gift of healing."

Rather, we read that GOD will heal us and raise us up when we ask for the "elders" of His Church to pray over us and anoint us. Christ's great commission to the Church in Mark 16:15-18 includes the promise that His ministers "will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (verse 18), without any requirement that a particular minister must have a "special gift of healing" so that God could heal the sick, while other true ministers without such a gift would not be used by God to heal.

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