

Study Leave Report

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Nepal Feb 22 - March 12th 2018.

The value and place of a short term
gospel focussed missions' trip

With reference to Luke 10:1-24

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Introduction:

Three days after returning from a two-week, gospel missions' trip to Nepal as part of my study leave, this post was shared on our team messenger page by team member, Maxine Jacobsen: "Barry (another team member), do you remember that we prayed for a young woman in Tamghas with a swelling / lump on her neck? She told us it was thyroid. She friended me on Facebook and I have been in contact with her. A few days ago I asked her how the swelling was, and she said, 'All good.' I went back to her to verify, and she repeated that her neck was 'all better'. Another healing! Thank You Jesus."

In Luke 10:17, following the short-term missions' trip Jesus commissioned, we read, *'The seventy returned with joy saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."*

Between Feb 22 and March 12th, 2018, a small team of seven from NZ, under the leadership of John Fergusson¹ went to Nepal to hold two schools of healing and two pastors' conferences, one on the terai (the Ganges plain) in Janakpur, SE Nepal, and the other in the central hill country in a small town called Tamghas.

John works with two main local contacts in Nepal, Pastor Purna Rasaili from the Kathmandu Capital Church, and Pastor Bhim Thapa on the Nepal AOG executive and a senior pastor overseeing 8-10 churches. It is through these men that invitations are made to teach schools of healing and run pastors' conferences and crusades in towns throughout Nepal.

Each school was two days in length with the specific aim of proclaiming the good news of Jesus, healing the sick, and equipping the local churches in the healing ministry of Jesus. Extensive teaching on healing by John; lots of practical "hands on" healing ministry; an opportunity to go into the local town to heal; and testimony / reporting back were the key elements. The pastors' conferences were an extension of the schools, with the specific focus on the theme of authority. It is interesting that the first command God gave humanity was to rule (not to love!) by giving him dominion over the earth and everything in it (see Genesis 1:26-28). This is very significant in terms of the healing ministry too, as the Centurion realised (Matthew 8: 5-13).

The Original focus of Study Leave:

Before going on this trip (the bulk of my 36-day study leave), I wanted to further explore the healing ministry of Jesus through the local church, being aware that the actual state of the healing ministry in the local church in NZ in no way compares to that of Jesus! We frankly do not see the quality and quantity of healings and deliverances in our churches and in the community, despite what Jesus promised, *"Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father"* (John 14:12). Francis McNutt in his seminal book, "Healing", wrote,

¹ JF Ministries, <http://www.jfm.org.nz/page5.html>

"I believe that the ministry of healing is what lifts the central doctrine of redemption and salvation from the realm of the abstract into the reality of men's lives. One of the greatest losses the church has suffered has been her full heritage of healing power"². I am keen to understand why this is the case. Have we become a church that has "a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Timothy 3:5)?

However, two surprising things happened that un-nerved me somewhat just before departure.

Firstly, in preparation for the trip, I read David Watters' book, "At the foot of the snows"³, a wonderful account of a long-term mission to Nepal by an American Christian linguist and his family who, through a 16-year ministry, translated the Scriptures into the Nepali Kham dialect. This sparked great local interest in the gospel, culminating in the establishment of a church amongst the Kham-speaking people in the middle hill country of Western Nepal. This was a pioneering work, of great sacrifice and commitment to a call.

Secondly, I was visited by a couple who had been involved in longer-term mission in Nepal, and they seemed less than excited about my up-coming trip. I sensed a prejudice against a short-term trip, as they questioned me quite searchingly about the team's possible links to local churches. As a result, I did start to have doubts as to whether there is a place for just a two-week missions' trip; what I was about to do had a sort of "hit and run" feel! Would it really be beneficial to the building of the kingdom of God?

I was not the only team member who had concerns. On the very first night in Nepal, Brienne, another team member, asked, "John, why do you come to Nepal? Why do you do these short-term trips? Is there any lasting value in them compared with longer-term mission?"

I will never forget John's reply. "It's simply because God told me to do it this way!"

That, of course, says it all. We are to be obedient to what the Lord calls us to do. Jesus said that a sign of our friendship with him would be to obey him (John 15:14).

The amended focus of Study Leave:

Whilst still keenly interested in the healing ministry of Jesus through the local Church, the incidents above changed the overall focus for me of my Study Leave. The sending out of the 70 became an important passage for me to meditate on for this trip, with its healing focus. It was a short-term missions' trip to cities and places they had probably not visited before and where Jesus was about to visit in Northern Galilee. This is significant, as even Jesus experienced a lack of acceptance amongst his own people in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-29), such that he could only perform a few healings there. He said, "*A prophet is not without honour*

² Francis MacNutt. *Healing*. Ave Maria Press. 1974. P 39

³ David E Watters. *At the Foot of the Snows*. Engage Faith Press. Seattle. 2011

except in his own country, amongst his own relatives, and in his house" (Mark 6:4). So by the 70 going out to places they were not familiar with, they would be something of an attraction, bringing good news to those in distress. *"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach a gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things"* (Romans 10: 15). So in the same way, by going on this missions' trip to Nepal, we would be going to places that would hopefully welcome foreign "prophets" bringing good news (I am using the word prophet here to mean "a proclaimer of good news.")

Therefore the focus became for me to understand and evaluate the value and place of a short term gospel focussed missions' trip.

There are at least **five principles** in the Luke 10:1-24 passage which have been helpful as a framework for this report in order to understand and evaluate this new focus.

1. The ones Jesus sent out were not as famous, or as close to Jesus, as the 12 disciples in

Luke 9:1. Luke 10:1 records that the Lord, *"appointed 70 others also and sent them two by two ..."* These are the unnamed disciples. These were not the famous 12 apostles from whom 11 would go on to be the leaders of the first century church. This is significant. So much of ministry in the church can be locked up in the trained clergy, and the expectations of the members can be for the "professionals" to do the ministry. On our team of seven, John and I were the only full-time ministers. In fact over the 11 years John has been running these missions' trips, only half a dozen of the 110 people who have gone with him have been clergy.

When John received a commission from the Lord to take the Gospel and the healing ministry to Nepal, the Lord told him to take teams. John confesses he didn't really want to, as he was content working on his own! But in retrospect he has come to see the wisdom of this strategy. He writes, "Many 'ordinary' folk who've come have consequently begun their own ministries, or taught schools of healing themselves, both here and overseas. Others have established charities, or even built schools in NZ. Still others continue to contribute to the Lord's work in Nepal through finance, prayer, or their own missions' trips."⁴

This mission strategy also has the aim of equipping the local Nepali church to heal the sick. The two-day schools of healing that we ran had about 90 at the first in Janakpur, and 150 in Tamghas. Only a few of those were pastors. John continues, "In 11 years we've been to over 35 towns and villages, taught 39 schools of healing training nearly 6,000 delegates."⁵

Each delegate receives a 9-chapter "School of Healing Manual"⁶ with some excellent, detailed, and thoughtful, Bible-based teaching. John told us that in fact the person who translated the Manual into Nepali was healed in the translation! A highlight of the schools is sending people into their local communities for two hours or so, to heal the sick. Some of

⁴ Extract from an email sent to me on March 21st 2018

⁵ Same email as above

⁶ John Fergusson. *School of Healing Manual*. JF Ministries. 2012 (3rd edition)

the testimonies we heard were so encouraging. Seeing people grasp the truth of healing and then actually putting it into practice was inspiring to witness. John adds, “Many of those Nepalis have gone on to plant their own churches, establish their own ministries in Nepal, or even run successful schools of healing themselves.”⁷ Francis McNutt writes, “*It is only when thousands of ministers are praying for the sick that people will begin to regard the ministry of healing as normal. Only then will the healer be regarded neither as an object of scorn, nor as a subject of worship.*”⁸

2.The Lord gave them a specific mission task. “*Heal the sick there and say to them, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near you’*” (Luke 10:9). John Fergusson's main focus for his short-term missions in bringing the good news of Jesus to the nation is to alleviate suffering by healing the sick, and teaching them to do the same. There are a number of sound reasons why.

i) **The healing ministry of Jesus was part of his salvation message of the kingdom of God and often a gateway to people following him.** Part of Jesus’ commission was, “*to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken hearted. To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty all who are oppressed*” (Luke 4:18-19). It is estimated that 1/5th of the Gospel accounts are attributed to Jesus’ healing ministry: 727 out of 3,779 verses deal with the healing of physical and mental illnesses and the raising of the dead⁹. Put another way, if we were to remove all the wonderful healings and deliverances of Jesus, we would have a pretty uneventful account of his 3½-year ministry, and would lose the testimony of his great compassion!

The central message of Jesus was the in-breaking of the kingdom of God / heaven. Jesus opened his ministry with these words. “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel*” (Mark 1:15). He also taught us to pray, “*Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” (Luke 11:2) and told His disciples that “*It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom*” (Luke 12:32). The kingdom of God / heaven is referred to some 82 times in the synoptic Gospels. It not only has the sense of a political or geographical realm, but carries the notion of activity – of ruling or reigning. Thus the kingdom of God means the “rule and reign of God.”¹⁰ Essentially, it means that the future rule or reign of God (heaven) is breaking into the present now. So when a person is healed in Jesus’ name through ministry, the future kingdom of God (a place of complete wholeness and freedom) has broken into the present. That is why Jesus said to the 70 after they have been healed, “*say to them, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near to you’*” (Luke 10:9). As a result of the healings many turned to follow Christ. In Luke 8:1-3, we hear of some women, “healed of evil spirits and infirmities”, who supported Jesus’ ministry. The

⁷ Same email as above

⁸ Francis MacNutt. *Power to heal*. Ave Maria Press. 1977.

⁹ Tony Cauchi. *The Voice of Healing - Healing in the Gospels*. Nov 2011.

<http://www.voiceofhealing.info/02history/gospels.html>

¹⁰ Nicky Gumbel. *Questions of Life*. Alpha International 2010. P184

Gadarene demoniac, once delivered from demons, wanted to follow Jesus, but was sent home. He went and proclaimed all that Jesus had done for him (Mark 5:18-20).

ii) In the same way in Nepal, healing is a part of Jesus' kingdom ministry of salvation and a gateway to following Christ. John told us the people there are very spiritual, but want to see a God who works! Most Nepalis have a Hindu background and in that faith they come under the powers of witch doctors, and the fear of appeasing the many gods they worship. They don't experience the healing power of Christ. They therefore don't experience his loving compassion. But when they are healed in the name of Jesus, many turn to him.

John has not only run healing schools, but also 12 crusades where he has seen many healed, and over 5,000 decisions for Christ. In our two schools of healing we had about 30 healed of various complaints and illnesses – headaches, fevers, back-aches, neck-aches, sore knees and elbows. One lady no longer needed to wear glasses. In Tamghas, the penultimate session in the healing school was sending people into the town to heal the sick. Once we had the theory, it was time to put it into practice!

My team visited a local hospital and laid hands on Krishna, the head administrator (not a Christian), suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure. After ministering to him for a short time, he exchanged cell-phone contacts with a local so he could report back after visiting his doctor. He also listened carefully to the good news of Jesus who came to save us from our sins and give us new life. Who knows how that might end up? Upon our return, we heard many testimonies of people who had ministered to the sick. Following the healing school and the pastors' conference in Tamghas, the local pastors invited JF Ministries to return to Tamghas at some stage to hold a crusade for the whole town. Healing can and has been be a gateway to the Gospel being preached in Nepal.

iii) Many get trained and released into the healing ministry of Jesus. Not only in Nepal, but also on the team. This I have noted above.

3. Jesus told those he sent out to travel light and to keep focussed on the mission. *“Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road”* (Luke 10: 4). Overseas mission in particular is full of distractions. New culture, new smells, new food, new sights and sounds, not to mention mosquitoes, insects, and unclean water!

We attended a very good orientation day, three weeks before departure, where we asked John how he coped with the rigours of the ministry in Nepal.

He said, “Sleep a lot, pray a lot, and drink a lot!”

What great advice that was! Andrew Shreeve, an itinerant evangelist and teacher, wrote “Ten Tips for Missions' Trips.” His sixth point was, *“Keep focussed on the mission. The first priority is the success of the mission. All other activities, not directly related to the success of the mission (like sight-seeing, shopping or socialising), should be prayerfully analysed and*

decided upon so as not to negatively impact the mission"¹¹. Although we did have some time for shopping towards the end, we kept to the task in hand, with daily team meetings for devotional reading of Scripture, prayer and worship. I am sure this was essential to keep us focussed on the reason we had come to Nepal.

I actually wonder if this is what we should be doing as Christians in a secular world anyway? Our priority being to love God and love people above and beyond many of the distractions of life that we can easily fall prey to!

4. The mission was a success. "Stuff" happened! We read, "*Then the 70 returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.'* And he said to them, '*I saw satan fall like fire from heaven. Behold I give you the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you*'" (Luke 10:17-19). The mission of the 70 was obviously very successful with many healed. Each member of the team to Nepal experienced people being healed under their hands. Each of us has a story or three to tell. Each of us witnessed not only healings, but at least two women were delivered of demons.

Even one of the team, Andrew Jacobsen, who had suffered severe back pain for 20 years, was healed when ministered to by two young local trainees in Tamghas. John Fergusson himself had a bad foot pain and was ministered to by a Nepali trainee and was healed. Two team members, Maxine and Brienne, had a wonderful outing into the streets of Tamghas, which resulted in the healing of three women - this was on a rest day too! Each of us will have returned with a greater measure of faith and determination to minister to the sick. A week after the trip, another member, Brian Currie, ministered to one of his foster daughters after she had severely twisted her ankle falling over a fence. She reported an immediate decrease in the pain and swelling. Two days after my own return I also ministered to a young friend who has a slipped disk. He was able to stretch further than before.

Of course not everyone we ministered to was healed instantly. Not everyone Jesus healed was instantly better. The 10 lepers were healed on the way to the priest (Luke 17:14); the blind man was healed after he went and washed his eyes at the pool of Siloam (John 9:7); Jesus prayed for a blind man twice before he could fully see (Mark 8:22-25).

I think of three Nepali men in particular, two of whom were crippled from birth down the right side, and one man paralysed down his left side from a severe motor-bike accident. Two of these, Prem and Chakra, were however greatly encouraged by the ministry and showed signs of gratitude and joy at the Lord's presence and just being loved. Some of us continue to pray for them. It would be wonderful to hear a good report from their pastor one day! I think many Christians will not minister to the sick because they think their prayers won't work. We noticed that despite not everyone being healed instantly, people were blessed by the ministry.

¹¹ Andrew Shreeve. Recorded on JF Ministries website: <http://www.jfm.org.nz/page107.html>

5. Jesus' motive for sending out the 70. Can we discern this from Luke 10? Can we also relate this to a focussed, short-term missions' trip?

Of course, a primary concern would have been the alleviation of suffering. Jesus had great compassion on the sick (Matthew 9:35-36). Whenever a person came to him for healing, he healed them. But how did Jesus react to their reports on their return? He rejoiced that the healing and deliverance ministry of the kingdom had been revealed, and had worked through the 70. Luke 10:21: In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, *"I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight."* The babes were these 70 new disciples.

The more who enter into Jesus' kingdom ministry of healing and deliverance, the more could be healed and set free from the devil's hold. As the Apostle John noted, *"for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8b). One of Jesus' main strategies in his mission to earth was to raise up people who could carry the work on. In his closing commission to the eleven disciples (Matthew 28:16-20; and Mark 16:14-20), he commanded them to teach others everything Jesus had taught them, and delivering people from demons and laying hands on the sick and healing them in Jesus' name was his heart's desire. This is how the kingdom of God would advance on earth: through the church he would leave behind. They are famous last words!

And so the sending out of the 70 was a snap shot of this – a sort of live cameo of what Jesus intended. Notice, at the end of the passage we read that Jesus actually turned to his disciples (I like to think the 12) and said about the missions' trip of the 70, *"Blessed are the eyes which see these things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you have heard and not heard it"* (Luke 10:24).

Hopefully, all who went on this trip, or have been on John's trips in the past, are better disciples of Jesus because of it; better and more confident at healing the sick, and bringing the reality and power of the kingdom of God to local communities; more determined to practice this ministry in everyday settings and through the local church, as that is what Jesus wants all his followers to do. He does not have another plan.

So I conclude that **the main reason** Jesus sent out the 70 was to not only allow them to **experience the reality of the in breaking of the Kingdom of God but to enlarge his ministry team. By encouraging people to go on short term gospel focussed missions' trips, the faith and confidence of a ministry team 'at home' would be enlarged.** This is an essential part of becoming a more effective disciple of Jesus. What he did; what his disciples did; what the early Church did; ... we are to do. That is to heal the sick and tell them *"the Kingdom of God has come near you"*. No amount of talking about an overseas mission's trip will bring change to the way our congregations practice their faith. A person needs to have the joy and thrill of experiencing mission first hand, just like those 70 did. We as leaders owe it to our people.

What learnings and actions will I be taking from this study leave experience?

Learnings:

1. That we don't pray for the sick, we minister to the sick. Jesus never seemed to have prayed for the sick! Instead he commanded healing; he touched people and they were healed; and some just touched him and they were healed; he commanded some to do something and they were healed, etc. Jesus' message was time and again manifested in healings and mighty works that were simply done on the spot. John Fergusson teaches strongly on this aspect of ministry from the Scriptures, and in all the practical's encouraged us to minister through looking into people's eyes, touch, command, and giving a simple instruction. It seems very strange at first, as we would far rather close our eyes and ask Jesus to heal the person. But ministry to the person rather than prayer about the person does make sense if we study the Scriptures carefully and believe we are to minister as Jesus did.

2. Underlying this is a great need for intimacy with the Father. Jesus' prayer and devotional life, as recorded in Scripture was very evident – early mornings, whole nights, deserted places. Jesus' private prayer life was where he would have received power, encouragement and direction from his Father in his ministry. I have heard it said that for Jesus, prayer was the work, and ministry, the prize. It is interesting to note that following the sending out of the 12 (Luke 9) and the 70 (Luke 10) Jesus was then asked by his disciples, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" Maybe they realised private prayer was the secret to "successful" kingdom ministry? Personally, I find this such a challenge, as in my own life my spirit is so often willing but my flesh is so weak. Many of the great ministers of the past and present who have had a significant kingdom impact upon the communities God called them to serve in – George Mueller, Mother Theresa, John Wesley, Kathryn Kullman, Billy Graham, Heidi Baker, and Jackie Pullinger to name a few – have testified to this great need in their own lives.

3. A growing understanding of the authority that disciples of Jesus are entrusted with.

There is much to be said about this, but in essence Jesus came to restore to humanity the original authority he had been granted (Gen 1:26-28; 2:15), but that was yielded to satan at the fall (Gen 3:1-6). That is why satan is referred to by Jesus as "*the ruler of this world*" (John 14:30) and Paul as "The god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4). So much of Jesus' ministry was exercising authority over demons and healing the sick by short command. That authority has been granted to all of Christ's followers – but this is always in communion with God the Father as he is the All-knowing One with the power to heal. Jesus himself said he only did and said what he saw and heard from his Father (John 5: 19; 12:49), so this should be the basis of our modus operandi.

* N.B. I recommend here John Fergusson's books: "School of Healing Manual, chapter 4"¹²; "Who is in Charge around Here?"¹³ and "Authority"¹⁴.

Actions:

1. To encourage and support more people in our congregation(s) to go on a short-term, gospel missions' trip that focuses on kingdom ministry. A short-term missions' trip would be a worthwhile investment into people's spiritual growth, with the added advantage of a fuller appreciation of Jesus' mission to the world. It would be worthwhile to encourage people to seriously consider going on a short term gospel focussed mission. This particular trip cost about NZ\$5,500.00, plus extras. The local church was incredibly generous in helping me to go, and I am sure could support others who might not be able to afford it. People will only really appreciate the depth and wisdom of this ministry if they experience it for themselves – no amount of reporting back can convey its significance.

2. To personally work at applying the things I am learning in my day to day life as a Christian. This includes:

a) **A re-ordering of priorities.** If I am honest, my own personal prayer life has become increasingly brief and lacking in real intimacy with the Father. Many other things seem to distract one away from this. As noted above, this seemed to be the key to Jesus' life of ministry, and something that needs developing in my own life.

b) **To be far more aware of the needs of the sick and suffering** outside the Christian community as well in it, and be more courageous and willing to minister to them, as the Spirit leads.

3. To look at starting a healing ministry at church. This would require some people in our fellowship to be willing to be a part of a praying healing community. Our church building is situated right in the middle of central Whangarei and a short, mid-week, lunchtime healing service once a week or once a month could be a possibility.

4. To ask the central training body for Presbyterian Ministers in NZ, KCML, if they might consider including John Fergusson's healing school in the curriculum for future Interns training for ministry. This practical and down to earth training course is at the heart of what Jesus himself taught and asked his disciples to teach others. It would be wonderful to have the healing ministry of Jesus brought into the centre of the life of the church in the future. We often talk about church growth, but it is interesting to note the impact of Jesus' healing ministry on his own community. "*Then great multitudes came to him having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed and many others, and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them. And so the multitude marvelled when they saw the mute speaking, the*

¹² John Fergusson. *School of Healing Manual*". JF Ministries. 2012 (3rd edition).

¹³ John Fergusson. *Who is in charge around here?* JF Ministries 2013

¹⁴ John Fergusson. *Authority*. JF Ministries. 2010

*maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel” (Matthew 15:30-31). This also was the experience of the first century church in Jerusalem. “And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of men and women, so they brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing the sick people and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed” (Acts 5:14-16). This could therefore not only be a significant medium for church growth, but more importantly it would be restoring to the church the centrality of Jesus’ mission as Saviour. “*The healing acts of Jesus were themselves the message that he had come to set men free: they were not just to prove that his message was true*”¹⁵*

I understand John Fergusson has taught in Bible Colleges before and certainly there is much to be gleaned from his knowledge, experience and insights. Just imagine if some of our new Interns, being freshly released, could bring this major aspect of Jesus’ ministry back into the centre of church life!

Concluding remarks

This is the first time I have been on a gospel centred, short-term, overseas missions’ trip. It has been an absolute privilege. I am so grateful to my own community of faith, St Andrews Whangarei, who released me, and supported me in both prayer and giving in order that I might go. I am also very grateful to the trustees of the Best travel fund that granted me a significant portion of the overseas travel costs. I hope the outcomes will enrich the PCANZ and our own community in Whangarei. There is still so much to learn and act upon in this ministry of healing.

NB – On the return home I stopped off for three days in Da Lat, Vietnam, to visit a young Vietnamese couple, whom our home group support. They are involved in the leadership of the YWAM base in Da Lat. This in itself was an incredible privilege so we can now relate to them on a much more personal level.

To God be the glory!

Rev. Lorne Campbell. March, 2018.

¹⁵ Francis MacNutt. *Healing*. Ave Maria Press. 1974. P 55

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