

A Theology of Limits in Compassionate Ministry with Emphasis on Jesus' Examples

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Limits for Individual Healthcare Missionaries

We live in a world filled with suffering and need: physical, emotional, and spiritual. The object in healthcare missions is to show compassion to this world, while being a testimony to the Gospel and a platform for planting churches. As healthcare missionaries, we train extensively for this great undertaking. And once we do start, we are quickly loaded with demands for our time, talent, and energy.

In healthcare generally and especially healthcare missions, we struggle to help everyone. Yet, we try. For how can we ignore suffering when Scripture repeatedly commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves?¹ Our hearts condemn us if we have the ability to help someone but do not do it.² We feel guilty if we leave our healthcare ministry in the midst of such hardship to do something else, or devote time with our family and friends, or just spend time for ourselves.

Seeking to treat every person with need can bring compassion fatigue: depression, exhaustion, and short-tempered attitudes that wear out our family, friends, and colleagues. Feeling overwhelmed in ministry has happened even to spiritual giants as Moses, Elijah, and Jeremiah.³ When we are serving in the

¹ Lev. 19:18; Mark 12:33; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9-10; 15:2; Gal. 5:14; Jam. 2:8

² Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give it," When you have it with you. (Prov. 3:27-28)
If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (Jam. 2:15-17)

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

³ So Moses said to the LORD, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers? Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.' I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!" (Num. 11:11-15)

But he himself [Elijah] went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"... So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." (1 Kings 19:4,10)

midst of such suffering, can we stop at some point, take a break, or even walk away? Further, Jesus sent out His disciples to “preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”⁴ He said to them, “As the Father has sent me, so send I you.”⁵ But are we called to treat everyone whom we have the ability to help? What limits can we establish, and even more, what limits does scripture indicate?

In scripture Jesus is the primary example of compassionate ministry. He showed this compassion many times while serving in the midst of tremendous need. Crowds gathered and He healed them all.⁶ *He could heal everyone with any ailment who came to Him.*⁷ Moreover, He did His ministry with just a word or a touch and could even raise the dead. So, the effectiveness of His labor was far beyond modern medicine and was befitting of Who He is.⁸

Today we can approximate some of Christ’s works, but it needs extensive training, time, energy, diagnostic services, specially equipped locations, and money. All that time, talent, and monetary investment is limited even further by our own human weaknesses.

The Son of God humbled Himself,⁹ became human, and subjected Himself to physical limitations, such as the need for food, water, and rest.¹⁰ Part of the

[Jeremiah laments] Cursed be the day in which I was born! Let the day not be blessed in which my mother bore me! Let the man be cursed Who brought news to my father, saying, “A male child has been born to you!” Making him very glad. And let that man be like the cities Which the LORD overthrew, and did not relent; Let him hear the cry in the morning And the shouting at noon, Because he did not kill me from the womb, That my mother might have been my grave, And her womb always enlarged with me. Why did I come forth from the womb to see labor and sorrow, That my days should be consumed with shame? (Jer. 20:14-18)

⁴ Luke 9:2

⁵ John 20:21

⁶ And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. (Matt. 14:14)

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. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. (Matt. 15:30-31)

⁷ And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all. (Luke 6:19)

⁸ But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. (John 5:36)

Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me... If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.” (John 10:25, 37-38)

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. (John 14:10-11)

⁹ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:5-8)

reason for His humanity was to show us how to live and serve within the limits of our basic human needs.¹¹ While physically on the earth, He commanded us to take up our cross of obedience¹² and faithfully follow Him¹³ in the responsibilities of life.¹⁴ Addressing each God-given responsibility in balance, while showing compassion, keeps us looking to His wisdom and guidance.¹⁵

Having compassion means that we see the needs of others and have strong feelings of wanting to help; but at the boundary of our calling and limits, we should not feel guilt. Even with His power, Jesus did not always treat everybody.¹⁶

¹⁰ Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. (Mark 11:12)

Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. (Matt. 21:18)

Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." (John 4:6-7)

And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. (Matt. 8:24)
[Also Mark 4:38; Luke 8:23]

¹¹ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:15-17)

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps (1 Pet. 2:21)

till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;... till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (Eph. 4:13, 15)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 3:18a)

¹² Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. (Luke 9:23)

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,... being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:5, 8)

¹³ Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. (1 Cor. 4:2)

¹⁴ To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away; A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak; A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace... I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. (Ecc. 3:1-8, 10-11a)

¹⁵ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. (Psa. 32:8)

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. (Psa. 51:6)

For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding; (Prov. 2:6)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (Jam. 1:5)

¹⁶ [Jesus left the waiting crowd in Capernaum to preach] When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick... And [the next morning] when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side... Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. (Matt. 8:16, 18, 23)

[Jesus walked past many sick and crippled to heal one man] Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water... Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." (John 5:2-3, 5-8)

From Moses to Jesus to the Apostles, we see patterns and examples of how to minister in ongoing situations of great need. Such scriptures especially show us how healthcare missionaries can limit their function in the midst of such suffering.

1. Delegate what work we can to others.

- Moses' main responsibility was not in the area of healthcare but in the social and legal interactions of the people of Israel. However, the general circumstance was the same with demands on his ability amid overwhelming need. With Jethro's advice and the Lord's provision, Moses taught others and delegated authority to them to accomplish the task.¹⁷
- Also, Jesus trained and then assigned work to others. At the very start of His ministry, He called disciples to His side and mentored them.¹⁸ Later on He sent out the Twelve¹⁹ and then the Seventy.²⁰ Part of the ministry He even gave exclusively to the disciples.²¹ Trying to meet all the needs ourselves is crushing, while training and entrusting to others is part of God's plan.²²

2. Understand that the ministry is God's.

¹⁷ And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" ... So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. *And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do...* And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace." So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. (Exo. 18:13-14, 17-20, 22-24; emphasis added)

So the LORD said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone. (Num. 11:16-17)

¹⁸ And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (Matt. 4:19)

For He taught His disciples (Mark 9:31a)

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13)

¹⁹ And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, (Mark 3:14)

²⁰ After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. (Luke 10:1)

²¹ When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) (John 4:1-2)

²² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. 2:2)

- Jesus declared that both His works and words were from His Father.²³ Our Christian service should follow His example.²⁴ Such service depends on God²⁵ and not on need that never ends in this world.²⁶ We must not be prideful²⁷ but instead recognize our own physical shortcomings and trust God to work through them.²⁸
- Starting a new healthcare ministry, serving in our current ministry, or expanding healthcare services, all must be governed by prayerful consideration of testimony and God's provision.²⁹ Modeling our dependence on God is part of our testimony,³⁰ while doing ministry and meeting need beyond God's provision is destructive to ourselves and our team.

²³ I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me... But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. (John 5:30, 36)

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. (John 14:10)

²⁴ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:6)

²⁵ To another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, (1 Cor. 12:9)

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, (Eph. 3:16)

Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; (Col. 1:11)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10)

²⁶ For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. (Mark 14:7) [Also Matt. 26:11; John 12:8]

²⁷ Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD. (Prov. 16:5a)

Hear and give ear: Do not be proud, For the LORD has spoken. (Jer. 13:15)

Do not be wise in your own opinion. (Rom. 12:16b)

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. (2 Cor. 10:12)

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (Jam.4:6)

²⁸ For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God. (Ecc. 9:1a)

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. (Rom. 12:3)

I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (1 Cor. 2:3-5)

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Cor. 12:9)

²⁹ A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, (Prov. 1:5)

He who heeds the word wisely will find good,

And whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he. (Prov. 16:20)

Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days. (Prov. 19:20)

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise. (Eph. 5:15)

³⁰ But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. (1 Cor. 7:17)

For we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor. 5:7)

- We are always challenged to “step out in faith” and “to trust God beyond ourselves.”³¹ However, missionary healthcare ministry is a team ministry. Whatever one person does impacts the rest of the group.³² So those “steps” and “trust” must be a team effort³³ because we are not just serving a community with needs; we are also serving one another.³⁴

3. Realize that healthcare missionaries have more than one area of attention.

- Preaching and teaching were Jesus’ primary focus; so, He sometimes left healing to preach. After an evening of healing by Him in Capernaum, many came the next day to see Him. However, Jesus had slipped out of

³¹ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. (Prov. 3:5-6)

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us. (Eph. 3:20)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:13)

³² For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: (Rom. 12:3-6a)

For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. (Rom. 14:7)

That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. (1 Cor. 12:25)

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” (1 Pet. 5:5)

³³ Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established. (Prov. 15:22)

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them... Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another... Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion... If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. (Rom. 12:3-6a, 9-10, 16, 18)

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many... But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased... that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. (1 Cor. 12:12-14, 18, 25)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift... but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love... Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (Eph. 4:1-7, 15-16, 29-32)

the city early. Seeing the multitudes pursuing Him, He hurriedly put His disciples in a boat, explaining that He had other places to minister.³⁵ At other times He left the multitudes to teach.³⁶ Even when we have abilities that meet physical needs, we can leave for other responsibilities.

- While not all healthcare missionaries are called to preach, we are all called to minister spiritually into the lives of others.³⁷

4. See testimony as key, not the numbers healed.

- Jesus did not just say the word and heal everyone in the nation of Israel, because the healing was for testimony. His compassion ministry was directly connected to His preaching and teaching.³⁸ He walked past "multitudes of sick and infirmed" and healed *one* paralytic³⁹ (though

³⁵ And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. (Mark 1:33-39)

Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them... And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore I am sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee. (Luke 4:40, 42-44)

³⁶ They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples. (Mark 9:30-31a ESV)

³⁷ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom. 12:6-8)

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (Eph. 4:11-13)

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. (1 Tim. 4:6)

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also... And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition. (2 Tim. 2:2, 24-25a)

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. 4:10-11)

³⁸ Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me... But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him. (John 10:25, 38)

Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very work's sake. (John 14:11)

³⁹ Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water... Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition

many came to Him later as He was teaching in the temple⁴⁰). Beside the compassion to this one person, He was giving testimony to the leaders of the nation of His power, authority, and messiahship.

- Peter's, Philip's, and Paul's healing ministries were combined with testimony.⁴¹
- Occasionally Jesus had a "healing campaign," just treating all the mass of people who came to Him with no indication that He preached to them.⁴² Sometimes He quietly healed people without seeking a broader testimony at the time.⁴³ Healthcare work can be Christian ministry.⁴⁴ But

a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"... Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked... But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. (John 5:2-3, 5-6, 8-9, 13)

⁴⁰ Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. (Matt. 21:14)

⁴¹ And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple... Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."... And all the people saw him walking and praising God... Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? (Acts 3:2, 6, 9, 11-12)

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch... And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out 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 sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed... [Peter said] Him [Jesus] God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." (Acts 5:12, 14-16, 31-32)

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. (Acts 8:5-7)

And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked... and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, (Acts 14:8-10, 15b)

⁴² When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, (Matt 8:16)

And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. (Matt. 14:14)

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. (Matt. 15:30)

And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. (Matt. 19:2)

When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. (Luke 4:40)

⁴³ And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." (Matt. 8:2-4)

Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town." (Mark 8:25-26)

Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise." Then her

Jesus primarily gave out the gospel,⁴⁵ and *missionary* healthcare is fundamentally for the purpose of Gospel presentation.⁴⁶

- Also, Jesus could have organized a self-sustaining healthcare program for the nation by the time of His death; but that was as not His primary ministry.⁴⁷ Some of us may feel called to develop healthcare systems to treat large numbers of people and to cover large areas of a country. However, it is just as valid to treat a few people in a limited program, when doing it for the testimony of Christ and His church. What God calls each of us to do can be different.⁴⁸ There is not just “one way only” to do a missionary healthcare ministry.

5. Recognize that at times we need to withdraw for rest and time with the Lord.⁴⁹

spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And He commanded that she be given something to eat. And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened. (Luke 8:52-56)

⁴⁴And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Matt. 10:42)

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ (Matt. 25:37-40)

⁴⁵ And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. (Matt 4:23-24)

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. (Matt. 9:35)

However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. (Luke 5:15)

And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, (Luke 6:17)

But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. (Luke 9:11)

⁴⁶ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matt. 9:35-38)

Then He said to them, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest... Whatever city you enter... And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ (Luke 10:2, 8a-9)

⁴⁷ For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10)

Now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Heb. 9:26b)

⁴⁸ But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. (1 Cor. 7:17)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, (Eph. 4:1)

⁴⁹ Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. (Matt. 8:18)

- *Daily* we must stop our activities to pray and meditate on His word for our self renewal.⁵⁰ In fact, Jesus often withdrew to pray.⁵¹
- The Sabbath,⁵² one day in seven, was ordained by God as a day of rest.⁵³ It was made for us to rest from daily labors, with a special time worshipping our Creator.⁵⁴
- While the Sabbath has a special meaning as part of the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel,⁵⁵ it was also made for all of us, but not as a law.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Josh. 1:8)

Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. (Psa. 1:1-3)

He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. (Psa. 23:3)

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; (Psa. 37:7a)

O LORD, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You; Incline Your ear to my cry... But to You I have cried out, O LORD, And in the morning my prayer comes before You. (Psa. 88:1-2, 13)

Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. (Prov. 8:34)

I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, (2 Tim. 1:3)

⁵¹ But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed. (Luke 5:15-16)

But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray. (Luke 5:16 ESV, emphasis added)

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. (Luke 5:16 NIV, emphasis added)

But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray. (Luke 5:16 NASB, emphasis added)

⁵² The Hebrew word for *sabbath* is thought to derive from the verb meaning *to cease, to pause*. It is commonly found in verses that command not to work on that day. [Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 405]. In the New Testament *sabbath* was transliterated into Greek and is translated as *rest*. From the earliest days of the Christian community, the seventh day of rest and congregational worship was changed to the first day of the week. This first-day change was made to honor both the Resurrection and the Day of Pentecost. [Spiros Zodhiates, *New Testament, The Complete Word Study Dictionary* (Iowa Falls: World Bible Publishers, 1992) 1268-1272]

⁵³ And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Gen. 2:2-3)

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (Exo. 20:8-11)

⁵⁴ Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed. (Exo. 23:12)

“Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. (Exo. 34:21)

But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. (Deut. 5:14)

And He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. (Mark 6:31)

And He said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. (Mark 2:27)

⁵⁵ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you... Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to

- For some, especially those serving the needs of others when everyone else is resting, we may be busy.⁵⁷ But the principle remains of a weekly rest from our daily labor.
- If one does not take a day of rest per week, then it may be from a lack of accepting our need, a lack of planning, a lack of faith, or a lack of understanding God's care and provision.⁵⁸ Or worst of all, due to pride.⁵⁹
- Sometimes Jesus and the disciples needed a break, even while people were pressing upon them seeking help.⁶⁰ He did not say "No" to those

observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.' ” (Exo. 31:12-14a, 16-17)

⁵⁶ So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths. (Col. 2:16)

⁵⁷ At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!” But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” ... And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” (Matt. 12:1-8, 10-12) [Parallel passages Mark 2:23-28 and Luke 6:1-5]

But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.” The Lord then answered him and said, “Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him. (Luke 13:14-17)

Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He answered them, saying, “Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?” And they could not answer Him regarding these things. (Luke 14:1-6)

Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? (John 7:22-23)

⁵⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.” ... So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: ‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.’ ” ... And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. Then he said to them, “This is what the LORD has said: ‘Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.’ ” So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it... Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none.” Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” So the people rested on the seventh day. (Exo. 16:4-5, 15-16, 22-24, 26-30)

⁵⁹ Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. (Prov. 16:18)

who asked Him personally for help. Instead, He constantly moved from place to place, simply making Himself unavailable. Sometimes when He slipped away, He was found out and again surrounded by crowds.⁶¹ When He left the country to purposely take a break, people still sought Him and made requests of Him.⁶²

- When we are approached personally and asked for help, we may have to say yes to maintain our testimony. However, we can withdraw and make ourselves unavailable. How far away do we need to travel? We may even have to withdraw to an area where almost no one knows us in order to have a complete break.

6. Be flexible with changing priorities.

- Priorities within healthcare are constantly changing as they are impacted by circumstances and the needs of others. Handling such frequent changes are part of our healthcare training and happened during Jesus' ministry. For example, returning from preaching His Sermon on the Mount,⁶³ Christ healed a leper and then had a request from a soldier to heal his servant. The same day He went to the synagogue where He spoke and then drove out a demon. Returning to Peter's house, He cured Peter's mother-in-law, who then fed them dinner. The rest of the day into the evening He healed multitudes who came to the house.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. (Mark 6:30-32)

⁶¹ And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. (Mark 6:31-33)

⁶² And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. (Mark 7:24)

⁶³ The following events are correlated around the unique event of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law.

⁶⁴ When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour. Now when Jesus had come into Peter's

- However, He also changed priorities from healing to preaching ministry. After the evening of Jesus healing many in Capernaum, the disciples and the city apparently expected the same ministry the next day. Instead, Jesus left the area with His disciples.⁶⁵ We need flexibility to leave healthcare ministry when we have responsibility in another aspect of our ministry.

7. Accept that compassion ministry toward some may be for another time, at someone else's hand.

- After Jesus ascended and left this earth, Peter was used to bring healing to a paralytic who had spent years at the temple gate.⁶⁶ How many times

house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

"He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses." (Matt. 8:1-17)

Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them. At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. (Mark 1:21-34)

Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region. Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them. When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ. (Luke 4:31-41)

⁶⁵ And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side... Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. (Matt. 8:18, 23)

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." (Mark 1:35-38)

Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent." And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee. (Luke 4:42-44)

⁶⁶ Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those

did Jesus pass this man? We do not know. However, healing came later in Jesus' name through Peter. This "delayed" healing brought opportunity for that apostle to preach Christ.

- The individual healthcare missionary does not have a "Christian obligation" to treat everyone in an area. Such treatment, in the providence of God, may be by someone else later. Again, a believer may have a calling to develop a system for treating everyone in an area, but it is not an *obligation* of every healthcare provider.

Limits for fixed-location healthcare ministries

Scripture shows us patterns and examples of how to serve people overwhelmed with need, while not becoming overwhelmed ourselves. One of the main ways Christ did this was to withdraw and to *change location* of His ministry. Since He could heal everyone with just a touch or word, He did not have the huge problems we have. We need many diagnostic services, surgical services, beds, twenty-four-hour intensive care nursing, rehabilitation services, and more. All this equipment cannot be easily moved and part of it is literally bolted down. Healthcare systems worldwide struggle to provide an ever-increasing range and depth of services at a *fixed location*. Moreover, a "successful" healthcare ministry brings more and more people. So, mission clinics and hospitals that provide reasonable and compassionate care are swamped.

Considering fixed-location hospitals and clinics, we can see Biblical patterns and examples for limits, many similar to those for individuals. Such principles and approaches can help reduce compassion fatigue among its healthcare providers.

1. Give more training and responsibility to others.

- As noted before, both Moses and Jesus trained and authorized people to minister on their behalf. Moreover, Moses had a personal assistant in Joshua,⁶⁷ giving him specific authority to act in Moses' stead.⁶⁸

who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." ... Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." ... So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God... So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? (Acts 3:1-4, 6, 8-9, 12)

⁶⁷ So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. (Ex. 24:13)

- Elisha had a personal assistant who served and ran ahead to perform duties.⁶⁹ In modern healthcare such a personal assistant can “run ahead,” lag behind, give immediate help with procedures, and complete paperwork. However, this last example of Elisha’s helper shows our need for careful oversight of those under us.⁷⁰
- Initially, an emphasis on training can be time and energy consuming. Moreover, for more technical positions, it may take a significant amount of time. But such an emphasis moves a ministry from being a single effort to a multiplied growth of outreach.
- Also, consider using volunteers who are properly screened, carefully oriented, and under continued oversight.

2. Limit services.

- Provide a narrower range of the types of care offered. Limiting our service so that we can participate in other needed activities is reasonable and scriptural.
- Provide services only on certain days. Jesus centered His ministry in Capernaum but did not remain there all the time. He went to other areas to minister, to pray, and to rest.
- Having a reasonable schedule in an area of ministry, which can be handled by the providers, is important.

So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, “Moses my lord, forbid them!” (Num. 11:28)

⁶⁸ And the LORD said to Moses: “Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom *is* the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. (Num. 27:18-20)
But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you will see. (Deut. 3:28)

⁶⁹ Then he said to Gehazi, “Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child.” And the mother of the child said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So he arose and followed her. Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him, saying, “The child has not awakened.” (2 Kings 4:29-31)

⁷⁰ But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, “Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him.” So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, “Is all well?” And he said, “All is well. My master has sent me, saying, ‘Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.’” So Naaman said, “Please, take two talents.” And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed them to two of his servants; and they carried them on ahead of him. When he came to the citadel, he took them from their hand, and stored them away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed. Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, “Where did you go, Gehazi?” And he said, “Your servant did not go anywhere.” (2 Kings 5:20-25)

3. Allow time for missionary staff to “withdraw” from the ministry for individual renewal.

- That is, limit their healthcare ministry scheduling. Even Jesus, the God-Man, did not minister continuously. He withdrew, prayed, rested, ate, and fellowshiped.
- And to be really “off work” in a way that is acceptable to most local populations, the provider needs to be well away from the people served, or else they will simply impose themselves and demand to be seen (even letting themselves in through the roof when desperate⁷¹).

4. Understand that individual and interpersonal conduct is a crucial part of healthcare ministry.

- The huge emphasis of scripture is on our individual faith walk with the Lord.⁷² That walk started with our salvation in Christ and continues as we take up our cross and follow Him.⁷³ This is part of the first great commandment to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind.⁷⁴
- The second huge emphasis is how we treat one another, especially other believers. By our loving treatment of one another, the world will see our testimony as followers of Christ.⁷⁵ This is part of the second great commandment to love our neighbor as ourself.⁷⁶

⁷¹ And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. (Mark 2:4)

⁷² For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” (Rom. 1:17)

⁷³ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:4)

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (Mat. 16:24)

Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. (Luke 9:23)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10)

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, (Col. 2:6)

⁷⁴ Matt. 22: 36-38

⁷⁵ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another. (Rom. 12:10)

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. (Rom. 13:8)

Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus. (Rom. 15:5)

That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. (1 Cor. 12:25)

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Gal. 5:13)

With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love... And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (Eph. 4:2, 32)

- Glorifying God is our overriding goal in life.⁷⁷ While some may consider the work of the ministry as core to glorifying God, it is instead fulfilling the royal law of love.⁷⁸
 - o We glorify God when we are fruitful.
 - o We are fruitful when we abide in Christ.
 - o We abide in Christ when we obey Him.
 - o We obey Him when we keep His commandments.
 - o His key commandment in this context of abiding is that we love one another.⁷⁹
- Trying to be a witness to others in our ministry, while ignoring our own daily faith walk and love for one another, is crippling to our testimony and destructive to the team.

5. Charge for services. Jesus gave Himself freely and ministered freely. His extremely “successful” healing ministry was swamped with crowds of people. He did not use the charging of fees as a gate to limit the crowds.

Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. (Col. 3:13)

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart. (1 Pet. 1:22)

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; (1 Pet. 3:8)

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another... And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. (1 Joh. 3:11,23)

⁷⁶ Matt. 22:39

⁷⁷ Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)

⁷⁸ And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:30-31)

“If you love Me, keep My commandments... He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (John 14:15, 21)

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom. 13:8-10)

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:9-11)

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; (Jam. 2:8)

⁷⁹ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me... By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love... This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you... These things I command you, that you love one another. (John 15:4, 8-10, 12, 17)

Instead, He slipped away from them,⁸⁰ or He used His teaching to reduce the numbers.⁸¹ Our reality is that to treat people we usually need equipment, supplies, trained professionals, and fixed locations. Funds are needed to support all these needs for treatment. So, we must charge to support the staff, facilities, and supplies consumed. However, such charging also serves as a type of gate mechanism for controlling the crowds coming to fixed location ministries.

6. **Consider a system of outlying clinics giving out preventive care and simpler care services.** This is another approach to delegating. Medical treatment today involves patient education, prevention, and delivering care sooner in the local area of need. Many problems can be handled early, with simpler care, giving resolution before the need for more sophisticated care.
7. **Consider community health education/evangelism.** This is yet another derivative of delegating: giving teaching and resultant responsibility to families and individuals. With modern understanding of the causes of illnesses, we know that many diseases can be avoided with clean water, proper sanitation, personal hygiene, and better nutrition.
8. **Recognize the difficulties of changing established healthcare ministries.**
 - If a ministry was started without a clear understanding of limits, then all the staff has a whole spectrum of views of what the individual and team limits should and should not be.
 - The larger a ship, the slower it turns in the water. So, patient approaches and persistence are needed to reach a consensus on team limits.⁸² An attitude of love must prevail with the fruit of the Spirit manifested by each team member.⁸³

⁸⁰ But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. (Luke 5:15-16)

⁸¹ These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? ... From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. (John 6:59-61, 66)

⁸² By your patience possess your souls. (Luke 21:19)

Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, (Rom. 15:5)

- We all have several individual responsibilities that require our time and include helping others.⁸⁴ Making assumptions about one another, without listening to one another,⁸⁵ can be very destructive to the individual, the team, and the whole testimony.

9. Even with set guidelines, a ministry may be overwhelmed by new circumstances from loss of help, government regulations, and surge in patient load. Depending on the consensus of the team, its capacity, the size of the increased load, and needs of individual members, changes in operation may need to be made within days, weeks, or *at most* a few months.

As missionaries in compassionate ministry, we must learn to serve wisely within the limits of our abilities, physical needs, family needs, spiritual calling, and God's provision. Stopping to consider what effect our decisions and actions have on others is an act of love, is submission to the law of love, is glorifying to God, and is crucial to ministry. To properly serve with a sound testimony, we may have to limit what we are doing. A theology of limits shows us how to do that without guilt and compassion fatigue.

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I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace... but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ. (Eph. 4:1-3, 15)

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, (Heb. 12:1-2a)

⁸³ For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (Gal. 5:13-15, 22-26)

⁸⁴ (Gal. 6:2-5)

⁸⁵ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; (Jam. 1:19)