

# BIBLE STUDIES

Healing Ministry Week  
14-21 February 2016

Healing Ministry Sunday  
14 February 2016

CMAI Day of Prayer 17 February 2016

Theme

*Compassionate Care Towards  
Mental Health*



Please write to:  
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To all respected Bishops, Pastors, CEOs of institutions and members of CMAI...

Dear Partners in the Ministry of Healing,

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ, the name which is the source of every healing!

It is my privilege to have one more opportunity to celebrate the Healing Ministry week and Sunday celebration 2016 with you all. As we look forward to celebrating the healing ministry week please find enclosed the Order of Service for the Healing Ministry Sunday that is 14 February 2016 and the Bible study booklet for the following six days.

The theme for the Healing Ministry Week 2016 is "Compassionate Care Towards Mental Health".

This year the theme focuses in an area of great interest and importance.

Those challenged with mental and emotional issues get a raw deal in our country. On many occasions they are treated as unwanted entities who have no standing in society. It is our prayer that this theme will spark some interest in our local congregation to reach out to people who are mentally disturbed/affected. May we be inspired to pass on a smile, a word of encouragement, a hug. Let us be available to those who are in need and are unable to express it. May our creator give us the wisdom to handle each challenge.

Healing Ministry Week will be celebrated from 14 – 21 February 2016. 17 February is a special day of prayer for CMAI to thank God for His faithfulness and goodness. We are grateful for the Healing Ministry Sunday offering/collections sent to CMAI by the various churches, institutions and organizations.

The Christian Medical Association of India is celebrating the Healing Ministry Week along with the National Council of Churches in India, Catholic Health Association of India and the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. This broader partnership enables many more congregations to celebrate the healing ministry.

We would like to place on record our appreciation for all those who were instrumental in and contributed to writing these Bible studies. Our grateful thanks to Rev Paul Pragasam, Dr Nitin Joseph, Ms Helena R. Joseph, Rev Job Jayaraj, Rev David Rajan and Rev. A. I. David.

We are keen to help, assist and learn how the celebrations of the Healing Ministry Week and Sunday in your congregations, institutions and health centres took place.

We would appreciate your suggestions for strengthening this partnership, so that we can continue to have meaningful celebrations in the future.

With all good wishes and prayers.

Yours in Him,



Rev Sharath C. David  
Secretary – Chaplains Section, CMAI

## RESTORED TO A SOUND MIND

*“When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind;”*

*(Mark 5:1-20)*

In today's passage we read the dramatic story of a man who had an 'unclean spirit'. In the parallel passage in Luke 8 we are told that he was 'demon-possessed'. This possession by an evil spirit drastically alters this man's behaviour. He became a challenge to society and his family. It was easier to ostracize him and we read that the man dwelt all by himself, on the fringes of society, among tombs.

A disturbed person goes through a plethora of feelings starting from denial to desperation and sometimes to suicidal attempts. Some have functional disorders like attention seeking disorders, temper tantrums in children and hysteria in adults. Others have organic diseases like mood disorders (endogenous depression and bipolar disorder), schizophrenia, etc. that occur as a result of biochemical imbalances in the brain. Many diseases also tend to run in families. A great deal of patience and understanding is needed to care for such persons.

What is encouraging from this passage is that Jesus specifically went to Gerasenes, perhaps looking out with compassion for this person who needed His help. The scriptures record that the possessed man lived in the tombs and was chained hand and foot. He had wounds on his body because he had torn the chains apart and cut himself with stones. His cry would be heard night and day. It is interesting that though Jesus had very limited time of earthly ministry He had the time and patience for that one suffering and ostracized individual. He used His authority to free this man from his sickness and restore him to sanity. It is also interesting to realize that the majority of healing by Jesus took place outside the temple and synagogues; in the market place.

The man with the possession was restored. Jesus commanded the evil spirit to leave him. Restoration brought an amazing change. He was dressed, healed and in his right mind (Mark 5: 15). To us is given the mandate to help people struggling with mental and emotional issues. Like Jesus we too must reach out to people outside the four walls of our churches. We may not all be experts in psychology but we can certainly give our time to people who are in need. Paul writes, “For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2Timothy 1:7, KJV). We do not have to be scared of people with evil spirits because we have God's power and the love that Christ demonstrated.

### Questions for discussion

1. How can we as individuals and as a church respond and bring restoration to those who are marginalized because of mental ill health?
2. To be effective in this we need to be equipped in counselling. Are we willing to invest our time and money in acquiring these skills?

### Prayer

Father, source of all health, keep us away from disturbances that unclean spirits can bring to our life. Protect us from evil. Help us to have stable minds to serve one another through your power and love. Amen.

## AM I OF SOUND MIND?

*"I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."*

Gen. 4:3-15 (NRSV)

Human beings are yet to recognise and understand a God in Christ who is Compassionate and Caring in all the aspects of human life pertaining to Body, Soul, Mind and Life in its totality. Disobedience separated man from God in the garden of Eden. The curse has been passed on to all humanity. Cain did not recognise or understand the Compassionate Love of God. Had he understood this love there would have been no blood shed or hate. A correct relationship with our creator will guide us in our relationship with ourselves and each other. A sound mind can be sustained only with His continued intervention and renewal in our lives. The world will be a better place to live where care, compassion, equality, justice, kindness, love, peace and respect for one another is shared abundantly.

We are created in none less than God's image. When people see our behaviour it must reflect our maker. Living a life contrary to His will has been our practice for generations since we are a depraved and fallen race. Never has it been recommended or taught that we should disobey God and disrespect our fellow human beings yet we abuse the relationship with God and fellow human beings; we indulge in violence in the name of God and religion and violate both God given commandments and abuse valuable manmade rules and regulations.

The feelings we harbour and nurture indicate that we too need a healing touch in order to love and accept one another as children of God. Am I mentally sound enough to understand my Creator? Do I understand His purpose in creating me in His image and likeness? The earlier we understand this, through a personal relationship with Him, the easier it is for us to be of sound mind.

Having committed our lives to Him, He will give us strength to follow the two great commandments "love God and love your neighbour as yourself". If we do not understand the plan and will of God for us, we will continue to remain as fugitives and wander without a purpose. God wants more for us. He wants us to have an abundant life starting today.

### Questions for discussion

1. What are those issues which hinders me from returning to God?
2. How can I become a channel of God's care and compassion?

### Prayer

Our heavenly Father, who is our protector, help each one of us to find value in another and respect each other for our thoughts, actions and contributions that we bring to life. Help us to be compassionate and loving at all times so that people we serve will see Your image in us. Amen

## GROUNDS OF MENTAL ILLNESS

*“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son your sins are forgiven”*

(Mark 2: 1-12)

The paralytic would have inherited the belief from the society that due to sin his illness had marred his physical body. The society to which this man belonged attached the stigma of sin to the dreaded illness. This certainly had caused guilt within the man which made the illness all the more incurable. According to their understanding, any incorrigible sickness is nothing but the anger and curse of God. Jesus understood the mental framework of the society and the person placed before him. Moreover, the compassion, care and faith of the friends stirred Jesus to address the inherent root of the sickness imbedded in the man.

How do we respond to people who are presented before us with problems that are beyond our control? Who do we blame before we treat or attend to such human beings? In our context mental illness is ascribed to black magic, witchcraft, evil spirit, God's curse, bad deeds etc. Such people are advised to go on pilgrimages, to magicians, to temples and so on. How can an arm of help and hope be extended to them?

Jesus made it a point to heal the mind of the person and said, “Son your sins are forgiven”. Therefore, the first thing Jesus did was to tell him that God is not angry with him anymore and conveyed the assurance of God's forgiveness, love and acceptance. The very fact of Jesus' mention of him as “son” implanted change in the mind of the person. This was to tell him that his relationship had been restored with God and as a result his sins were removed from him. Thus, Jesus touched the root of the problem, healing the mind which then resulted in physical healing.

It is indeed essential as people who are involved in the healing ministry to understand the socio-spiritual background of those struggling with emotional and mental challenges. As we attempt to help, let the word of Christ and His mercy become real to the one who needs healing. May Christ make the guilt disappear through His unlimited forgiveness and free us with His mercy and grace.

### Questions for discussion

1. What assistance do we provide to those whose mental health is affected due to a physical ailment?
2. How can the example set by Jesus be implemented today?

### Prayer

Father we thank you for friends who can help us when we are mentally and emotionally challenged due to physical illness. Lord thank you for your healing through forgiveness and grace. Amen.

# POWER FROM A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

*“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”*

(Philippians 4:4-13)

Five leading worldwide mental illness are depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, alcohol abuse and obsessive-compulsive disorders. In addition, few significant mental health disorder that plagues humanity include phobias, generalized anxiety and panic disorder. Many mental illnesses *can* be prevented, and the Bible provides helpful information for the same. The Bible tells us how to relieve stress and the kind of stimuli we should allow into our minds. Here are some key biblical guidelines to maintain mental health. In Philippians 4:8 the Bible tells us about right thinking. Those who consistently use positive words will practice positive thinking, a pattern crucial to mental health.

In an individual a positive outlook is known to assist recovery from surgery and improve the immune system's ability to fight disease. Stress caused by disease can be made less harmful by creating an environment of peace and happiness. Peace with oneself will bring peace to the environment.

## Care and healing

In Philippians 4:8 Paul exhorts us to develop a Christian thought life and to integrate good things into our lives ensuring peace in every situation. Since our thoughts form the basis for our behaviour, a godly thought life is also essential for the obedience to which Paul invites us in verse 9. Clearly, Paul's commitment to life was to find contentment in every situation. What we put into our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Therefore Paul encourages us to program our minds with thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. This will help us to have a holistic relationship with God, with one another and with ourselves.

We need to examine what we are feeding into our minds through television, internet, books, conversations, movies and magazines. Replace harmful input with wholesome material. It is important to read God's word, pray and ask God to help us focus on what is good and pure. It takes practice and patience. But it can be done with His strength.

## Feelings and emotions

Where do feelings and emotions come from? It is from God. When God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27), He included in the human personality the ability to think, rationalize, feel, think, react. We human beings can express feelings as God is the source of our feelings and emotions.

Paul describes a greater range of godly characteristics and emotions as featured in the fruit of His Spirit. They include “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23NIV) Paul exhorts us to be full of this Spirit and manifest the fruit of the spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

If these traits are dominant in our personality, we are less likely to suffer from mental aberrations. Such a mind will be self-controlled; it will be stable and be capable to endure the difficulties of life.

## Questions for discussion

1. Where do feelings and emotions come from?
2. How does positive thinking help us have good mental stability?

## Prayer

Father, we thank you for the mind that can think differently and overcome confusing situations through the clarity that you give us through the spirit of God. Amen

# RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH

*“Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wounds of my people?”*

(Jeremiah 8: 18-22)

The wounds of People Living with Mental Illness (PLMI) are painful, not because of the stress, anxiety, depression and other emotional burden they carry along... not because of the genetic and biological factors over which they have no control...not because of the social factors that are controlled by others...not because of the inaccessibility to health care...

**Then what does cause more pain?** The three probing questions that God raises through Jeremiah in chapter 8:22 enables us to find an answer.

**The Wounds that are Serious: Need Healing: Let me start from the third question “why then is there no healing for the wounds of my people?”** The agony of God is revealed here. God reminds his people two important truths. First that the wounds still exist, people are still alive, but with wounds. Secondly, the wounds need healing; they are healable. In 8: 11 God recognizes that the wounds are serious in nature, but can be healed, in fact need healing. Today, this comes as a reminder to us- the faith, worshipping and healing community- that God is concerned about the healing of the wounds of the people. Nevertheless the question remains 'why no healing?'

**The Healers that are not Serious: Need Sincere Engagement: The second question “Is there no physician there?”** emerges from the insensitivity of the healers. In 8: 10-11 God questions 'all' especially the religious leaders who can bring healing to the wounds of the people. The question reminds them that the wounds are serious, but why are you not recognizing the nature of the wounds? The lethargic approach of the religious community is vivid here. By asking is there no physician God reminding them that there are physicians. They need to be sincere, honest, and genuine in their involvement.

Nevertheless the question remains 'why no healing?'

**The Resources for Healing: Need to be Used: The third question “Is there no balm in Gilead?”** is the epicenter of the problem. The territory of Gilead (a mountainous region east of the Jordan River) was an important source of spices and medicinal herbs. Gen 37: 25 pictures that there were people coming from Gilead. Their camels are loaded with spices and balms. In Jer 46:11 there is a call to 'go up to Gilead and get balm.' In Jer 51: 8 the usefulness of balm is stated i.e., it can heal the pain of the wounds. The balm from Gilead has healing properties that are very effective for healing wounds and to reduce the pain.

*The agony of God is not the non-availability of balm - the healing resources - but non-usage of these resources that are available 'within'.*

There is a challenging message to the faith community of today- the mission hospitals or the local congregations. Have we realized that there are spiritual resources for the healing of the people living with mental illness? Are we not transferring the responsibility to the psychiatrist and specialist and disengaging in the process of healing by being indifferent and insensitive to mental illness? Are we not willing to walk with the PLMI in their healing process?

What are the spiritual resources that the faith community possesses? It could be recognizing that PLMI too are made wonderfully in the image of God - a loving compassionate human touch, acceptance by sitting together, accompanying them to the altar for communion, a fellowship meal or a cup of coffee under a tree, a listening ear and a willing heart, while using scriptures effectively.

Is there no balm in our community for the healing of the people living with mental illness? The Good News is "There is, in fact there are."

## Questions for discussion

What are the spiritual resources that the faith community possesses?

## Prayer

Father of all healing, health and wholeness, help us in our bankruptcy to help others find healing through your resource and fullness. Amen

## WORKING TOGETHER TO RESTORE MENTAL HEALTH

*“For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help”*

(Psalm 22:22-31)

Mental health is defined as, “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”. Currently mental health and behavioural problems is about 12% of the diseases worldwide and is expected to rise to 15% by 2020. 6.5% of the Indians suffer from some or other form of mental illness and 20% among them are children. Half a million take their lives in India every year contributing to 20% of the world suicide rate.

Mental illness is very common and least understood, often misunderstood and ignored. The prayer of the afflicted (Psalm 22) represents the multitude of those who silently go through mental pain and agony. The song also describes the emotions and feelings, troubled mind, fear, dilemma, guilt, brokenness of heart, helplessness and the afflictions. Pouring out one's heart in prayer, turning to Him in confession, trusting in His word and hope in His love and mercy, standing among people and sharing in an active worship are all very helpful and supportive spiritual and social resources to overcome mental illness. The song that begins with lamenting ends with a wise decision, “I will live for Him”.

### Our priority

Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Who are the members in the family of Jesus? The hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned are those who need our healing attention. Do we not find them all over and around us? We meet them every day. Read also Luke 14: 12 in which we find Jesus prioritizing our care and concerns.

### Be doers of the word

James speaks about insufficiency of faith without any work. What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (James 2:14-17)

Now we have a clear mandate proposed by James to show the quality and power of our faith by restoring mental health of men and women, youth and children.

### Questions for discussion

1. How to balance faith and work?
2. How will you help if you come across someone going through mental illness?
3. Why does Jesus in His parable point out that the final Judgment will be based on care giving and care-less/ living or indifferent attitude?

### Prayer

Father we thank you for taking all our stress and pressure of life on the cross. Help us to receive your strength to help those who are going through difficult times and mental stress. Amen.