

A Study Guide for:

A Time To Heal

**Offering Hope to a Wounded World
in the Name of Jesus**

By J. R. Briggs

Created By:

**The Adult Discipleship Team of
Blacksburg United Methodist Church**



Lenten Study Guide for *A Time to Heal* by J. R. Briggs

Introduction

By Brad Dulaney, Lead Pastor

We have been collectively traumatized over the past three years. As Covid slowly shifts from a pandemic to endemic in our consciousness, I keep hearing from counselors, teachers, professors, doctors and others speaking about the mental and emotional fragility of so many—including many of us who are called to serve in healing professions. The Great Resignation was fueled, in part, by people working in a stressed healthcare system who just needed to get out for their own well-being. Even clergy have been accounted among those experiencing high rates of burnout and turnover. It's been a hard time for all people—including those who are called to heal.

One of my teachers wisely points out that, “Trauma which is not transformed by grace is only transmitted to others.” Unless we allow our hurts to bathe in the healing light of God's love, we only let the pain fester until we spew it onto the people around us—often hurting the very people we should, in fact, be loving. The choice is yours: to transmit trauma, or give it the time and space to heal by God's grace. I pray your participation in this study will help you to do the latter.

I also pray it will help us, as a collective people of God, to become a community of healers. I deeply resonate with Pope Francis' statement that the mission of the Church is to serve as “a field hospital that cleans and heals wounds.” I can think of no better image to describe the work we are called to do—including going out and ministering to those in our community who are lost, lonely and hurting. I pray your participation in this study will help us become more of the “healing people who heal people.”

Lent is a season of self-reflection and repentance. I can think of no better way for us to prepare for Christ's suffering, death and resurrection than for us to do those practices which will lead to our healing—and lead us into healing with Christ in the world. I want to challenge you to open up and grow willing to expose your own pains and sorrows to other trustworthy people of grace, knowing that God honors and uses this to heal those wounds. I pray it will be the seminal effort which propels us into making real the vision of the “Courage to Heal.”

J.R. Briggs' book deeply impacted me as I read it during Lent of 2022. He articulates with vivid and imaginative detail just what it looks like for us to join God in the *sozo* gospel—to both be healed, and to offer healing to a wounded world.

I want to express my deep gratitude to the members of our Adult Discipleship Team on the Church St. campus—especially Kelly Beeken, Sondra Edmison, Susan Sumner, and Sarah Warburton, who took on the task of collaboratively creating this wonderful study guide to

support your group as it studies *A Time to Heal*, in concert with the worship series which will be offered throughout Lent. Each week covers one or two chapters of the book. There are a plethora of discussion questions to choose from. **Please do not attempt to discuss all the questions! Simply focus on those which the facilitator believes will be the most helpful for your specific group. There is one exception: I have highlighted one or two which should NOT be avoided—as they are questions which can truly open the space for inner transformation. This includes the important final “Action/Application Step” question.**

Our aim for this study is not to help you learn *about* healing; rather, it is to help you *experience* healing, and grow more capable *as a healer* in the world. May this study give us wisdom and grace to have the courage to heal—both be healed, ourselves, and to serve God’s healing mission in the world.

Live alive,
Brad Dulaney
Lead Pastor

February 26 First Sunday of Lent: Chapters One and Two

Main Scripture: John 3:14-17 “Moses lifted up the snake in the desert. In the same way, the Son of Man must also be lifted up. Then everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him.”

Themes: We are in a moment when the gospel must be presented and embodied as good news which heals.

Opening Prayer: Lord, thank you for bringing us together in the shelter of your wings. Give us the willingness to share our own wounds, the courage to reach out to a world in need of healing, and the wisdom to seek your will as we move through this study together. Amen

Opening Activity: Invite the class to answer the following: What are you expecting or hoping to get out of this study? Where have you noticed a need for healing in your life, in your community, and in our church?

Discussion Questions:

Chapter One: What Do We Do With Our Wounds?

1. How can we grieve our losses and comfort each other when we are not able to be together in the same space? What is lost when we meet on Zoom? When those moments of loss happened in the past, how do we process them and maintain our relationships in the present?
2. On page 3, Briggs writes, “Our modern culture is built around the gods of accumulation and accomplishment. Many have been wounded by these promises the gods offered but were never able to fulfill.” Can you think of examples, either biblical or modern-day, that support this statement? In what ways can we help people heal from these types of disappointments?
3. Read Isaiah 41:10, the verse the Bible app YouVersion reports as the “most read, searched, and bookmarked verse during 2020. “Don’t fear, because I am with you; don’t be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will surely help you; I will hold you with my righteous strong hand.” What does this verse offer?
4. **Briggs outlines the areas in which healing was addressed in the wake of the virus: physical; economic and financial; emotional, mental, and relational; racial; and**

spiritual. How have you personally sought healing in any of these areas? Where have you witnessed healing?

5. After exploring areas of pain in the world, Briggs asks, “What is the role of the church in a time of such pervasive loss and deep pain—and what role will the church play in the healing process?”
6. Briggs asks “How will we lead if we are ill-equipped to fulfill our calling in the world?” How do you think we can better equip ourselves? What do we need?
7. When the Pharisees challenge Jesus for hanging out with tax collectors and prostitutes, “Jesus answered them, ‘Healthy people don’t need a doctor, but sick people do.’” Luke 5:31. What kinds of metaphorical sickness did Jesus address?
8. Fred Rogers said in the wake of disaster, he followed his mother’s advice to “look for the helpers.” What kind of help do people need today?
9. Briggs notes the shifting spiritual needs of Americans, moving from how to be good, to how to find purpose and meaning, to a search for personal identity, to a search for freedom, to (post-pandemic) a “collective longing for healing.” Would you agree with these shifting spiritual needs? How has your relationship with church changed over the course of your life?
10. Can you think of old models/ways of doing things in the church that are no longer as relevant to the world in which we live today?

Chapter Two: What Is the Hope We Have—And Have to Offer?

1. Briggs asks us to consider “What is hope, and what does it look like? When I face loss, how can I experience hopeful sorrow instead of hopeless grief?”
2. In his book, *Being Mortal*, Dr. Atul Gawande writes, “I am in a profession that has succeeded because of its ability to fix. If your problem is fixable, we know just what to do. But if it’s not? The fact that we have no adequate answers to this question is trouble and has caused callousness, inhumanity, and extraordinary suffering.” What can we do as individuals in the face of “unfixable problems?” What can the church offer?
3. Ecclesiastes 7:2, 4 says, “It is better to go to a house in mourning than to a house party, because that is everyone’s destiny; and the living should take it to heart. . . .The wise heart is in the house that mourns, but the foolish heart is in the house that rejoices.” How might these verses hold truth?
4. Instead of “Why me?” or “How long, O Lord, must I suffer?” what other questions might we ask in the face of our pain?
5. Read John 3:14-17 aloud. What is the connection in Christ between saving and healing? What biblical examples of this healing mission come to mind?
6. **List some characteristics of a person who saves/heals someone else. How might they be described in our culture? Once your class has listed a number of those words, ask, “Would we use any of these words to describe ourselves or our church?”**

7. Describe a time when you have seen another person bearing their scars. How did seeing those kintsugi cracks or scars offer you hope?

Action/Application Step—Given what we've learned this week, what's one thing we could do to live more fully into what we're learning?

March 5 Second Sunday of Lent: Chapter Three

How Did Jesus Heal – and How Are We to Join Him in the Healing Process?

Main Scripture: Mark 1:40-45: A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

Themes: The healing ministry of Jesus was profoundly human and messy, involving touch; others find healing and hope in scars - both Jesus’ and our own.

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, open our eyes to the ways that you heal us spiritually, emotionally and physically. Help us to recognize Your healing process, even when it is messy and lengthy. Give us the strength to be vulnerable and open to being healed. Give us the strength and wisdom to join you in the healing of others. Amen.

Opening Activity: When and how have you experienced physical, emotional and/or spiritual healing?

Discussion Questions:

1. On page 28, Briggs describes Jesus as the “wounded healer.” Why does he refer to Jesus as the wounded healer?
2. More verses in the gospels are devoted to the healing ministry of Jesus than any other experience. Share a story of healing from the gospels that stands out to you. What about this story touches on your life or brings it to mind?
3. Mark 1:40 - 45 shares the story of Jesus healing a leper. Why was this healing so significant?
4. Throughout the gospels, we read of the healing ministry of Jesus. What are some ways that Jesus healed?
5. Jesus bears the scars of his crucifixion, yet continues to heal others. He forgave those who persecuted him. Briggs says on p.32 that, “The great irony of Christian service is we are called to bear the pain of others who wound us while simultaneously teaching people to experience healing from others.” What does that mean to you? How do you or might you live this out, practically speaking?

6. How does offering our own wounds help others find healing?
7. **Briefly review the realities must we name for ourselves as we seek to follow Christ (pgs. 32-34). Which of those realities comes more naturally to you? Which is most challenging to you? Why?**
8. On page 34 Briggs mentions that we must grieve the loss of certainty we once knew. Our world experienced upheaval during the pandemic. Are there ways you are still grieving the loss of certainty? If so, how have you been impacted by the events of the past 3 years?
9. John sends his disciples to ask Jesus, “Are you the one to come, or should we expect someone else?” (7:18) How does Jesus respond to these doubts? What does his response to John tell us about his response to our doubts?
10. Is there a time in your life when you have felt God using you in his healing work for someone else? Have you experienced God’s healing work through a family member, friend, or stranger?

Action/Application Step: Think of someone you know who needs healing. What ways might God use you to bring healing to this person?

March 12 Third Sunday of Lent: Chapter Four

How Will the Church Be the Body of Christ to a Hurting World?

Main Scripture: Luke 10:25-37: On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor? In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Themes: Listening and sharing are healing exercises rooted in faith. Shedding tears and noticing them can be prayers.

Opening Prayer: God, we pray that you will give us the courage to listen and share, so that healing may take place. Give us the courage to use our gifts to join you in healing those who are in need. Amen.

Opening Activity: How is our congregation being used by God for healing?

Discussion Questions:

1. On p. 40, Briggs says the church is called to be spiritual and emotional first responders. What does that mean?
2. Briggs shares examples of Christian compassion during times of global pain (ref. pp. 40 - 46). What examples struck you of how Christians in the past supplemented their prayers? How did they “put feet” on their prayers?
3. The gospel says that our power is found in our weakness. How does this work? How might weakness possess power?
4. Briggs says that, if the world is going to reach out to the church for healing, the church will need to look at ten specific areas (ref. pp.47-61) Which of these

comes most naturally for our church? Which might be growing edges for us, as a church?

5. Who are some of the traumatized people from the Bible?
6. Think about the story of the Good Samaritan. How is the Samaritan part of the healing process and how does he include the innkeeper as part of that process?
7. How does listening to and sharing stories have healing power?
- 8. How does exploring and naming our own trauma help us take part in the healing process of others?**
- 9. What are some everyday practices that bring healing?**
10. Name people or groups that are healers in our community? Make sure to think about faith based as well as non-faith based groups.
11. On p. 60, Briggs reminds us not to overlook younger generations as healers. Are there ways you have experienced healing through children or youth?

Action/Application Step: What are some unique gifts and passions you see within our congregation? How might they be better used for healing?

March 19 Fourth Sunday of Lent Chapter Five and Six

Main Scripture: Romans 8:5-25 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Themes: We take seriously and invest in the healing ministry of the Holy Spirit. This begins with us putting on our “oxygen masks” before trying to assist others. Our cup—even cracked and broken—can be overflowing to bless others with healing through our presence. A part of this means to remove the false mask of pride and pretense.

Additional scriptures: Psalm 51, James 5:14, Ecclesiastes 3:1-3, 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11, 28

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for bringing us together to learn more about you and how you work through us. Please help us to notice where you are at work and to make ourselves available to you in your ministry of healing. Fill us with your Spirit and use us to bless others in your name. Amen.

Opening Activity: We live in a world inundated by trauma. What kinds of traumas have you seen or experienced this week?

Chapter Five: How Can We Deepen Our Trust in the Holy Spirit To Guide Us as Healers?

Discussion Questions:

1. On pages 63-64, Briggs describes Christians as having a complicated relationship with the Holy Spirit. He says that talking about who and what the Spirit is capable of doing can be emotional, uncomfortable, defensive, and divisive. How does this description compare to your experience in discussing the Holy Spirit?
2. Do you believe in the active work of the Holy Spirit in today's world? Why or why not?
3. What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Why is being filled with the Holy Spirit important?
4. If a clean, forgiven conscience does allow for the utmost filling of the Holy Spirit, what does this imply about where the focus of our prayers should begin?
5. Is it possible to be a Christian and NOT be filled with the Holy Spirit? Use Psalm 51 and Romans 8 as guides.
6. Briggs implies that actual physical healing isn't as prevalent in our culture because of doubts we have about the willingness or ability of the Holy Spirit to heal brought on by phony faith healers and televangelists. How do you feel about this? Do you agree or disagree? Is it really more complicated than his summation?
7. **On page 69 Briggs writes that the main work of the Holy Spirit is to bring blessing and that he does this through empowering, purifying, revealing, and unifying. What evidence do you see of these works of the Holy Spirit in or around you?**
8. Prayer goes hand in hand with healing. Paul writes in Romans 8:27 that when we don't know how to pray, the Spirit intercedes for us. What are some ways to incorporate prayers into the ministry of healing even when we don't know how to pray?
9. On page 73, Briggs lists four prayers that he says lack specificity. Do you agree or disagree with his assessment? If you agree, how could these prayers be made more specific?

Action/Application Step:

1. **What can we do individually to make ourselves available to God for the ministry of healing?**
2. **What can we do as a class or a church to partner with the Holy Spirit in the ministry of healing?**

Chapter Six: How Can We Be Prepared to Be Bringers of Healing?

Discussion Questions:

1. Briggs opens with a story by Ernest Hemingway about a dad trying to reunite with his son Paco. His conclusion is that “the world is desperately longing for someone to welcome them home.” What can we do to be welcoming to everyone who has become estranged in one way or another?
2. Briggs uses the analogy of putting on an oxygen mask in order to breathe in the air of the Holy Spirit. What are some ways we can breathe in the air of the Holy Spirit before we try to be healers?
3. **In addition to picking up our oxygen mask, Briggs also talks about masks we need to take off (pg 77). What masks do you find yourself wearing? How might these be preventing you from receiving or sharing in others’ healing?**
4. Part of being healers means leaning into difficult conversations about American culture. In recent years tragic events like the murder of George Floyd and the mass shooting at Pulse, the gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida have put the spotlight on racial and LGBTQ+ trauma. In a church that is predominantly white and straight, how can we reach out to people of color and members of the LGBTQ+ community in order to be available to help them work through their traumas?
5. What does it look like to really listen to people suffering from these traumas?
6. The pandemic has exposed in greater detail the trauma of isolation, loneliness, and disconnection. A CDC report indicates that suicide rates across the country have increased by almost 30% in the last two decades. Were you already aware of this statistic? What steps can the church take to address this kind of trauma?
7. Dr Diane Langberg, a well respected Christian psychologist and leading trauma expert said, “Trauma is the mission field of our time.” These traumas are in our communities, our churches, and our families. How can we “link arms and show radical love and compassion to those who have experienced trauma?”
8. What can we do to provide life lines for children suffering from trauma?
9. What are some ways we can walk with people in their anxiety and loss?
10. How do we prioritize healing in our church ministries?
11. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul lists healing as a spiritual gift. In what ways can people who don’t have the gift of healing also participate in the ministry of healing?

Action/ Application Step: Making sure you’ve discussed at least one of the questions from numbers 6 through 11, discern together which of the ideas you have surfaced seems to have the most traction. To what course of action might the Holy Spirit be inviting your group and/or our church?

March 26 Fifth Sunday of Lent Chapter Seven

What Are the Marks of Wounded Healers?

Main Scripture: John 20:19-29 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Themes: The marks of wounded healers include bearing their scars to others in identity, solidarity and vulnerability; offering their wholehearted presence; refusing to fix people; asking courageous, compassionate questions, and ultimately trusting true healing that’s rooted in the love and power of God.

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, as we discuss the marks of a healer help us to see those marks in ourselves. Please use our own woundedness to open our eyes to the needs of others. Help us refuse to try and fix things and instead be good listeners. Amen.

Opening Activity: Do you have a birthmark, a tattoo, or a particular characteristic that “marks” who you are? Has this mark ever embarrassed you?

Discussion Questions:

1. There are eight marks of a healer mentioned in the chapter. Is there a mark that stands out to you? Why did it make an impact on how you view healing?
2. What are the marks of healers in our current context? If the world is looking for healers, what identifiable evidence exists today?

3. During the healing process, as a sign of gratitude, it might be helpful to ask, “What has this painful situation given me today?” Reflecting on your past wounds or pain, how might this question have given you life?
4. What action goes along with asking questions that might be more important than asking your questions? Wounded healers courageously and compassionately listen and ask questions. What does listening look and sound like?
5. What are examples of questions that have helped you when you were healing?
6. Wounded healers refuse to try and fix people. What signs in your actions tip you off that you are starting to try and fix others? Why do healers need to journey with people and not fix people?
7. **Briggs describes a time when he felt unprepared on what to say or do to help a group of grieving young men. When have you been called upon to respond to trauma with a healing touch? Or when has someone offered a healing touch to you?**

Action/Application Step—Given what we’ve learned this week, what’s one thing we could do to live more fully into what we’re learning?

April 2 Psalm Sunday Chapter Eight

What is the Connection Between Leadership and Healing?

Main Scripture: Psalm 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Themes: The sermon will outline a series of brief meditations on each of the following Passion passages: Luke 22:14-21, Luke 22:39-53, Luke 23:1-12, Luke 23:13-25, Luke 23:26, 32-43, Luke 23 44-49.

A leader builds trust, bears pain, and gives hope; and also possesses wisdom, courage and compassion.

Opening Prayer Lord, thank you for bringing us together to explore the need for healing in our world. Help us be both vulnerable and brave as we reach out to the world as wounded healers following the example of Christ. Amen.

Opening Activity: Over the weeks of this study, we have shared numerous actions we would like to take. Share some ways you have already done some things differently in order to receive healing, or to join Jesus Christ in the work of healing?

Discussion Questions:

1. Leadership is learning to manage tension healthily. A leader is someone who builds trust, bears pain, and gives hope. Trust and relationship are the lifeblood of leadership. Share an example of when you have sensed or seen this kind of leadership.
2. Briggs shared a story about a piano. Are there specific songs that assist you during periods of healing?
3. Bearing pain and building trust leads to giving hope. What are signs of hope?
4. **To live with tension, leaders must possess wisdom, courage, and compassion. For leaders to live in only one or two of these circles will not do. Wounded healers embrace all three. When have you found yourself being challenged to lead as a wounded healer?**
5. Christian leadership is far from easy. We must expect to be misunderstood. Discuss times/examples when Jesus was misunderstood.
6. The King James Version translates the word patience with the archaic word *longsuffering*. Discuss long suffering people in the Bible. What guidance or encouragement can you take from their story?
7. **Briefly name the three aspects Briggs outlines in “Leading in the Way of the Wounded Healer” (pp. 103-106). Which of these have you experienced? How**

do these relate to us as those who follow Jesus in the coming days of his passion and death? When are we tempted to deny him and run away from this path of following him?

Action/Application Step—Given what we've learned over the course of this Lenten season, what's one thing we could do to live more fully into what we're learning? What are our action steps as a class? What might the Spirit be inviting us to do?