

“Back to School: *Health Class*”

Welcome/Open in Prayer

Introduction

Put in its simplest form, a person is healthy when every area of his/her life is in complete balance or harmony. It’s what the Apostle Paul is talking about in his first letter to the Thessalonians when he prays this prayer for them:

I pray that God, who gives peace, will make you completely holy. And may your spirit, soul, and body be kept healthy and faultless until our Lord Jesus Christ returns. The one who chose you can be trusted, and he will do this. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

1. How much do you think about your health?
2. What are some obstacles that keep people from focusing on good health?

The Four Types of Health

1) Spiritual Health [Spirit] (Mark 2:1-12; Ephesians 2:4-5; Psalm 32:1-5)

Without a doubt, this is the most important type of health in God’s eyes. The spiritual dimension of our lives is eternal and outlasts our earthly existence. It’s why a paralytic man was brought to Jesus. Despite his obvious physical need Christ said, “My child, your sins are forgiven.” (Mark 2:5b NLT)

1. Is this a surprise to you? Were you expecting Jesus to heal the man first?

His greatest need was spiritual in nature, and the only remedy was God’s forgiveness.

2) Physical Health [Body] (Matthew 4:23-24; 9:35; Mark 6:56)

God desires for us to enjoy good physical health. That’s why Jesus spent so much of His earthly ministry healing people’s sicknesses and diseases; there is nothing wrong with longing for and asking God for good physical health.

1. Why is it difficult to ask God for healing?

3) Emotional Health [Soul/Mind] (Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 4:8; Luke 8:26-37)

We may be free of any physical infirmities and may even be right with God, but we’re still not genuinely healthy if our state of mind is disturbed by the memories of a painful experience, depression, fear, or anxiety. In order to be healthy in this area, Paul claims we need to have our “minds renewed” by God’s Spirit, and we must think in good and godly ways.

1. What does it mean to have our “minds renewed” by God’s Spirit?

4) Relational Health (Romans 12:16-18; Colossians 3:12-14)

The Kingdom of God is the kingdom of right relationships. Great Commandment → Love God + love others (Matthew 22:37-39). There is no doubt there is an interconnectedness between these various types of health: for example, physical sickness → depression; poor spiritual condition → broken relationships; emotional stress → physical sickness; estrangement → “sick to my stomach” or “pain in the neck.”

Jesus forgave people’s sins, healed the sick, cast out demons from the emotionally tormented, and encouraged His followers to live at peace with others. Salvation or healing is the way in which health is restored when any area of our lives is out of balance. Healing always comes from God.

The psalmist declares: “Praise the Lord...who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.” (Psalm 103:1,3 NIV). Exodus 15:26 tells us God is Jehovah-Rapha, “the Lord who heals you.”

1. Looking at the 4 types of health, describe a time when God healed you.

The Four Types of Healing

1) Gradual Improvement

God employs several techniques that aid in this healing progression:

A. Natural Processes

God has designed us to be healthy, so He has wired us with an incredible ability to resist sickness and promote wellness; for example, the moment a germ enters our body, our immune system goes to work; when we commit sin, our conscience makes us feel guilty; when a relationship is strained, our heart aches for reconciliation.

B. Human Methods

God is the source of all healing, but he sometimes uses human agents. God gifts some in the medical arts (e.g. Luke); He provides guidance through wise counselors; He brings reconciliation through folks willing to serve as mediators; He delivers His message of salvation through preachers and teachers.

From the earliest of times, the Lord has provided medicinal aids like the Balm of Gilead and soothing oils. To rely on human methods of healing does not necessarily demonstrate a lack of faith, but a failure to do may reveal a lack of common sense!

C. Prayer

Since God is the source of all healing, it only makes sense to call upon Him for help and relief in times of trouble. He is not the last resort, but instead should be the first resource used. Many times, prayer serves to enhance the other healing techniques just mentioned.

2) Instantaneous Cure

While most healing takes place over time, sometimes God miraculously intervenes and brings an immediate remedy.

1. Why does this type of healing make some people uncomfortable?

God is ultimately responsible; our role is simply to ask and believe. We probably won't receive a miracle unless we expect a miracle!

2. Why could it be difficult for some people to believe God still performs miracles? What would you say to that person?

3) Grace to Endure

Despite our best efforts and highest desires, sometimes God doesn't *seem* to come through. Sickness leads to death. We continue to be tormented by fear or anxiety; a relationship remains strained; a loved one continues to reject Christ. In these cases where we see no apparent or obvious improvement, God is still faithful and gives us strength and grace to keep keeping on and to cope with the situation.

It's what Paul experienced when he prayed for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed, but it wasn't (see 2 Corinthians 12:7-10). It was then that he realized that God's grace was sufficient, and the power of Christ was revealed in the apostle's weakness.

1. Discuss a time when God seemed to "not come through" with a prayer request in your life. At the time, how did it affect your faith? What blessing can you see from the experience now?

4) Resurrection

Sometimes people say that death is the ultimate healer. However that is completely untrue because only God heals. Death does not heal and, in fact, is an enemy that Jesus defeated. But through Christ's resurrection, God has transformed death and made it a door to more life, perfect wholeness, and complete health.

So while God's healing is not always experienced on this side of eternity, it awaits us in the world to come where "there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4 NLT).

Four Types of Spiritual Therapy: Types of Treatment Unique to the Christian Faith

**These all have a sacramental quality to them. They are ordinary items used by God for His extraordinary purposes.*

1) Holy Communion

The Lord's Supper is a means of grace by which the Lord gives to His followers exactly what they need – forgiveness, healing, deliverance, restoration. Martin Luther, saw so many people receive help and healing at the Lord's Table that he began to refer to Holy Communion as the "medicine of God."

2) Laying on Hands

Physical touch often times communicates healing and caring. Jesus often times employed this technique for communicating God's love to hurting people. In Hebrews 6, this practice is listed as one of the foundational teachings of the Christian faith.

3) Anointing with Oil

In biblical times, soothing oils (esp. olive) were considered to have a medicinal quality. Later, anointing with oil became a symbol of healing to Christ's followers. There is nothing magical about laying on hands and anointing with oil, but when done in faith they can be effective means of healing. Faith is expressed when the anointing is done in the sign of the Cross and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

4) Prayer

Prayer is not a human effort through which we coerce God to give us what we want. Rather, it is a way to make us more willing to receive what God already wants to do for us in Christ and through His Holy Spirit. Think of it as giving God permission to move and to act in our lives.

Are any of you in trouble? Then you should pray. Are any of you happy? Then sing songs of praise. Are any of you sick? Then send for the elders of the church to pray over you. Ask them to anoint you with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer offered by those who have faith will make you well. The Lord will heal you. If you have sinned, you will be forgiven. So admit to one another that you have sinned. Pray for one another so that you might be healed. The prayer of a godly person is powerful. It makes things happen. (James 5:13-16 NIV)

1. Discuss each of the 4 types of spiritual therapy listed. Which one has meant the most to you in your life? Which one do you need to learn more about?

Closing

Close in prayer. Thank God for the healing He has done in your life, and ask Him for any healing you need now.