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Are Christians Supposed to be Healed?

James 5:15: (NASB) and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

To have faith is to have an awesome power, for it connects you to something outside of yourself and sometimes to something within yourself that can alter your way of life. Now, depending on what you put your faith in, this altered way of life can end up leading to great advantage or to great disappointment. One thing many Christians put their faith in is the concept of miraculous healing. Today's discussion will revolve around the pointed question: Should Christians seek - or even believe in - the miraculous faith healing claims that many make and live by in the name of Christ?

Where does the idea of healing get its start in the Bible? There are 12 instances of individual "healing" in the Old Testament: --Five were healing episodes of injury or sickness God had inflicted, or allowed to be inflicted, as punishment. --Two granted the ability to bear children to women of faith - both to honor those who served God. --One was to show the greatness of the God of Israel to a non-Jew: Naaman the army general and Elisha. --One was the result of King Hezekiah with a terminal illness praying for an extension of life to serve God. --Three raised individuals from the dead - technically not healing - rather the restoring of life.

Observations of Old Testament "healing:"

- Healing was not a focus of the Old Testament.
- A prophet of God is generally associated with the healing.
- All of the healings had purpose beyond the actual healing.
- Five of the seven events that were not inflicted or allowed by God involved Elijah or Elisha.
- The other two were directly related to serving Israel: Samuel's birth and Hezekiah's life.
- In summary, healing in the Old Testament was not common. When it was done, it was very selective.

Jesus brought healing to a level never before heard of! Mark 3:7-10: With Jesus, it seemed almost as if healing poured out of him - these people who pressed against him were *not* disciples - they were simply people who wanted to be healed! Note he was not healing his believers.

There are many cultures throughout history and throughout the world that have had faith healing as a centerpiece of their societies. Does the "healing" in all of these places and circumstances come from God? We think not. What then can be the source? We will develop a suggestion as to how these things happen.

First observation: Jesus was not selective with healing; rather, he was generous!

Luke 6:17-19: Jesus healed the masses - notice it was *not* his disciples who came to be healed. Whether or not the healed had faith was not an issue.



White pill/blue pill, Eric Mead, *The Magic of the Placebo*, TedMedTalk

- *I read a study a year or so ago that really blew my mind wide open. I'm not a doctor or researcher so this to me was an astonishing thing. Turns out that if you administer a placebo in the form of a white pill that's like aspirin-shaped, just a round white pill, it has some certain measureable effect. But if you change the form that you give the placebo in, like you make a smaller pill and color it blue and stamp a letter into it, it is actually measurably more effective. Even though neither one of these things has any pharmaceutical quality - they are sugar pills. But a white pill is not as good as a blue pill.*

In the most basic sense, the placebo effect is the human mind giving itself permission to do things it did not think it could do.

Second observation: Jesus did not require great faith on the part of those healed, for his healing was an act of mercy and not some kind of reward.

Luke 17:12-19: Jesus heals ten lepers (nine based on mercy and one based on faith) - none were known to have followed him. Were the nine healed just out of mercy classified as "believers?" No, the only connection they have to Jesus is they were healed. Why was the one



who had faith singled out when he received the same healing? The one who developed faith could be blessed further than even the healing. The mercy is what gave the healing but faith built upon that healing could create something greater.

))) Aimee Semple McPherson, *Does Faith Healing Work*, History Channel

Ms. McPherson introduced a lot of the same things that happen in the context of modern Christian "faith" healing: Prayer - often rhythmic and flowery/Music of praise and worship, pumping up the emotions of the audience/"Laying on of hands" by a powerful, charismatic preacher/Includes repetition and great passion/During a Christian worship service - a large service usually with thousands - emotionally charged and energetic/Done only for the benefit of believers, as "faith" is a key component

This cannot compare with how Jesus healed.

))) Janice's depression, *Placebo, Cracking the Code*, Nicholas Humphrey

- (Nicholas Humphrey) Janice Shunfeld volunteered for an anti-depressant trial at the University of California in Los Angeles in 1997. She had no idea that she was about to contribute to a breakthrough in placebo research.
- (Janice) I saw a story in the newspaper about the study at UCLA and it prompted me immediately to call. I had been wanting some help. I had been going through such a severe battle of depression. Just crying spontaneously. It was very difficult for me to just do ordinary tasks during the day.
- (Nicholas) Janice could barely get out of bed in the morning, and she knew it was finally time to do something about it. At stake was her 12-year marriage to her husband, Perry, and her relationship with her much loved daughter, Jenna.

Third observation: Jesus healed for the glory of God and the glory of the Gospel. He even healed those who would do him harm!

Luke 22:48-51: Jesus healed Malchus who had no faith, was not asking for healing and who certainly was not a follower of Jesus. The pattern Jesus set is very different from the pattern we see in the world today. What is the one common denominator in the healings done by Jesus? *He focused on non-believers!* He focused on those who did *not* believe in order to show them God's grace.

Why did Jesus heal? He had an eternal reason for coming: 1 Timothy 2:5-6: Because Jesus' reason for coming was eternal, his reason for healing was to draw attention to the magnitude of God's plan. **All of Jesus' healing was but a foretaste of the great kingdom to come:** Acts 10:37-38

The Christian's perspective of what healing should mean to us: Isaiah 53:4-5: *The healing we should be focused on is the healing of sin by being in Christ.* Jesus prophesied a comprehensive healing that all will yet experience as a result of his sacrifice!

))) Needle better than pills, *Eric Mead, The Magic of the Placebo*, TedMedTalk

- *It turns out though, that's not even where it stops. If you have capsules they are more effective than tablets in any form. A colored capsule that's yellow on one end and red on the other is better than a white capsule. Dosage has something to do with this. One pill twice a day is not as good as three pills, I don't remember the statistic now. But the point is, these dosages have something to do with it and the form has something to do with it. And if you want the ultimate in placebo, you go to the needle. Right? A syringe with some inert couple cc's of some inert something and you inject this into a patient. Well, this is such a powerful image in their mind that it's so much stronger than the white pill. The white pill is not as good as the blue pill, is not as good as the capsule, is not as good as the needle and none of it has any real pharmaceutical quality. It's only your belief that makes it real in your body and makes a stronger effect.*

Luke 5:12-14: Here was an individual who wasn't necessarily a follower of Jesus, but he did have faith in the ability of Jesus to heal. Leprosy is a representation of sin in Scripture. What a great representation of the work of the ransom - the removal of sin as a result of Adam and the replacing it with new life in the kingdom of Christ! Jesus was showing what his work would accomplish in the long run for the entire world.

1 Corinthians 15:22: (NASB) *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.*



Healing will come to the world! Jesus gave us a glimpse of it because he was the deliverer, the Messiah.



Janice's improvement, *Placebo, Cracking the Code*, Nicholas Humphrey

- (Nurse) Here's your medication for the week. Please take it every day.
- (Nicholas) Volunteers for the antidepressant trial were split into two groups. One group was given real medication; the other a dummy, a placebo. And no one, not even the doctors, knew who was given what.
- (Nurse) And like the doctor told you, there is a 50/50 chance that you might get a placebo or you might get an active drug.
- (Nicholas) In fact, Janice guessed straight away.
- (Janice) I really felt that my spirit was lifted. It made an incredible difference in my daily life. You know, just being able to drive my daughter to school and not feel teary eyed for no reason was just such a big change, and I know that my husband noticed a big difference as well.

Revelation 21:3-4: So, Jesus performed "grace" healing, not "faith" healing. It was meant for any whom he encountered as a sign of the kingdom to come.

Did the Apostles work their healing miracles along the same guidelines? And what about placebos - does the "placebo effect" have a place in God's plan?



Janice's brain activity, *Placebo, Cracking the Code*, Nicholas Humphrey

- (Nicholas) After the eight-week study the doctors called her in to tell her the truth.
- (Janice) He said, "Well, you were on placebo," and I was very stunned. In fact in my heart inside, I didn't say this to him, I said inside, you're wrong, but outwardly I said, "Do you want to check that to be sure, because I really think I was on the medication." He said, "No, you were not. You were on the placebo."
- (Nicholas) But there was an even bigger revelation to come. Throughout the study the doctors had scanned Janice to see what was going on in her brain. And Janice's scans revealed that the fake antidepressant increased activity in an area at the front of the brain which regulates mood. It was a real surprise for the study's lead researcher.

Placebos do not always work. They are not predictable in any given area for any given individual. So, how can they be helpful? The principle of belief can be purposely accessed to help attack our issues.

Now the question - did the principle of faith play an important role in the healing the Apostles did?

This is a very early - perhaps the first - healing performed after Pentecost: Acts 3:1-13: They were surrounded by Jews - no faith in Christianity was present in the audience. The healed individual was the most obvious cripple. He had no sign of faith either, just the hope of charity. (Note, he did not have to pay the Apostles for the healing!) There was an immediate, full and miraculous response - very public and obvious.

Why did Peter and John heal this person, who had no faith? It got the crowd's attention! The purpose of the healing was a witness of God's power and mercy. It provided a captivated audience for the "public" sermon to follow, introducing Jesus as the redeemer of man!



Morris Cerullo, *Does Faith Healing Work*, History Channel

Do these examples present ANY resemblance to Jesus and the Apostles and their healing?! These sham people perform "healing" in the name of Christ, but this is not Christ's work! Jesus and the Apostles healed those who were *not* believers.

Did the Apostles ever heal those who were standing against them?

Acts 16:16-19: Paul immediately got into trouble for this public display of power - because it worked! Note Paul commanded *in the name of Jesus*, and not through his own power. With today's "healers," anyone can get so worked up with adrenalin that "the pain is gone." Of course the big question is how do you feel tomorrow and next week and next month? Why are there NO well-publicized examples of true, long lasting healing from these "healers?"

Matthew 7:19-23: We believe this is an example of practicing lawlessness in the context of spirituality. It does not follow or fit the criteria of healing in the New Testament. We were told the miracles of the gifts of the spirit would cease because they would no longer be needed



as when they first began in order to draw attention to the Gospel. The Gospel is now big enough to draw attention to itself.

The Scriptures teach us to latch onto those things of God that give us strength to choose godliness - use the placebo effect! Isaiah 26:3: This does not include a prescription drug to calm your nerves! The prescription is keeping your mind on God and His word. If we can focus on that during the turmoil in our lives, we can see the turmoil begin to affect us less. We give our mind permission, despite the difficulty, to see something differently. This is a valuable tool! Philippians 4:4-7: Let your mind open up to the peace of God. We were made in God's image and likely do not understand the fullness of that phrase. The ability to lock in spiritually is something better than a drug. It allows our minds to be refocused.

Observations of New Testament healing done by Jesus, the Apostles and Disciples:

1. Healing done by Jesus, the Apostles and Disciples was meant for the general public.
2. All healing done by Jesus, the Apostles and Disciples was in public for all to see.
3. All healing was for the purpose of drawing attention to the kingdom and the Gospel of Christ.
4. No money was required.

Paul himself bore the burden of infirmity throughout his Christian walk, even though he pleaded with Jesus for it to be removed: 2 Corinthians 12:7-9: This also gave the brotherhood an opportunity to help the Apostle Paul and be a part of his service. He had to rely on others. There is great value in the body of Christ working together.

James 5:13-15: (NASB) ¹³Is anyone among you **suffering <2553>**? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. ¹⁴Is anyone among you **sick <770>**? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is **sick <2577>**, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

Is any **suffering**: Strong's #2553 kakopatheo (kak-op-ath-eh'-o) to undergo hardship

2 Timothy 4:5: (KJV) But watch thou in all things, endure **afflictions <2553>**, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. Sufferings = afflictions, undergoing hardship. This person should pray to open up the human mind to accept the will and blessing of God.

Is anyone **sick**: Strong's #770 astheneo (as-then-eh'-o) to be feeble (in any sense)

2 Corinthians 12:10: (KJV) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am **weak <770>**, then am I strong. When anything in our lives becomes overwhelming and difficult, we feel weak and feeble. This is not just about being physically sick, but it is about being feeble in the sense that comes from everything around us.

Wearied: Strong's #2577 kamno (kam'-no); properly, to toil, i.e. (by implication) to tire (figuratively, faint, sicken)

Hebrews 12:3: (KJV) For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be **wearied <2577>** and faint in your minds. Revelation 2:3: (KJV) And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not **fainted <2577>**.

This James text really has nothing to do with physical illness; rather, it has everything to do with *spiritual* illness and being spiritually weakened by the circumstances around us. In such a state we need prayers and fellowship from our brethren. This can help heal spiritual weakness. It is in areas of spiritual sickness we should focus our belief for change! The healing of our physical maladies is not as important as our spiritual health. When we look at the way healings were done in the days of the Apostles and Jesus, there is no similarity. As a Christian, our calling is to walk through the difficulties of life - Jesus did not have those removed - because we are following his footsteps. Revelation 2:10: ...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

**So, are Christians supposed to be healed?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**