

# Healing and Faith

## Intro

I would like to share with you some interesting research about healing and faith that I came across from a couple of magazines. Their titles were: “*The Healing Power of Faith*” (Reader’s Digest, May 2001) & “*How Faith Can Heal.*” (Time Magazine Feb. 2009). In the articles of these magazines this is what medical researchers have found:

## Longer Life

“Research has shown that people who attend religious services more than once a week live, on average, 7 years longer than those who don’t.”

## Less Time in Hospital

“A Study by Duke University Medical Centre doctors Harold Koenig and David Larson found that those people who attended church weekly were not as likely to be hospitalized; and when they were, they did not spend as much times in the hospital as those who went to church less often.”

## Better Recovery

A Dartmouth Medical School study found that: “Patients comforted by faith were 3 times more likely to be alive 6 months after open-heart surgery than patients who found no comfort in religion.”

## Overall Well-Being

“In research co-conducted by epidemiologist Jeff Levin, author of *God, Faith, and Health*, older adults who considered themselves religious had fewer health problems and functioned better than the nonreligious.”

## **Spirit and Body**

There is a connection between spirit and body. Your spirit affects your body.

Dr. Reghan Foley says, “*Religion and medicine are inextricably related. We’re seeing it time and again. Everyone has spirituality, and it’s basically what gives your life meaning.*”

\*Faith and hope is crucial to medical treatment and healing.

## **Heal**

Old Testament Hebrew word for healing is *Rapha*, which means restoring to normal.

Exodus 15:26, “*For I, the LORD, am your healer.*”

Jeremiah 17:14 “*Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.*”

New Testament Greek words are

**Therapeuo**: to care for the sick, to treat, cure.

**Iaomai**: a) to heal physically

b) figuratively, to heal spiritually (Matt. 13:15; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Heb. 12:13; 1 Pet. 2:24).

**Sozo**: to save, to save from disease and its effects (Luke 8:36 demon possessed were cured).

## **Not Everyone gets healed physically**

In his book *Miracles or Magic?* Author Andre Kole says, “...Friends fervently prayed that my wife would be healed, yet despite our faith she died.”

Joni Eareckson Tada, a Christian quadriplegic and painter, had the elders of the church pray over her and anoint her with oil. She was not healed, and this led her to questioning whether she had a lack of faith.

Tim Hansel, a man whose climbing accident resulted in a painfully compressed spine, said he prayed “hundreds, if not thousands of times” for healing, yet was not healed. These people are professing Christians who prayed for healing and did not receive it. But what these believers did experience, however, was contentment in their present state, and some claim it was a result of their prayers and faith.

An 8-year-old girl, blind since she was a newborn, wrote the following poem, showing her contentment in her condition:

*Oh, what a happy soul am I, although I cannot see,  
I am resolved that in this world contented I will be.  
How many blessings I enjoy, that other people don't;  
To weep and sigh because I'm blind, I cannot, and I won't.*

The child who wrote this poem grew up to be the beloved writer of more than 8,000 hymns. Her name was Fanny Crosby. (Source: 101 Hymn Stories, pg. 167)

### **Healing is the Sovereign Work of God**

Daniel 3:17-18 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego said, “*If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if He does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.*” Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego trusted in God completely even if their lives were not spared. They knew that God is sovereign and will do as He pleases.

Joni Eareckson Tada said, “Jesus once suffered, too. And because Jesus could turn His cross into a symbol of hope and freedom, can I do any less? My wheelchair is the prison God has used to set my spirit free!”

Tim Hansel wrote of his need to be healed: “He finally healed me of the need to be healed...I had discovered a peace inside the pain. I finally came to the realization that if the Lord could use this body better the way it is, then that's the way it should be.” (Source: You Gotta Keep Dancin', pg. 123-124).

If Christians were always well and never sick, everyone would want to be a Christian for the wrong reason. Furthermore, we would never be able to show non-Christians empathy for what they may have to face.

Billy Graham said of Joni Eareckson, "Joni can touch so many lives we can't, because of the pulpit God has entrusted to her...The radiance of her own Christian faith and her deep compassion has been combined with a God-given imagination how to contact the disabled. Joni has used her condition to reach out to the paralyzed, wheelchair-bound, and the physically handicapped with the message of her Saviour, just because she is like them!

1 Peter 2:24 “*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed*” (also Isaiah 53:5). The context is that of spiritual healing from sin, not necessarily physical healing. The New Testament reference to this verse does not even mention illness. If our sicknesses were all to be healed now, we would not die, physical death is a consequence of sin, and death still takes place until it, as the last enemy, is defeated.

1 Corinthians 15:26 teaches this, “*The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*” If God has not removed physical death then he has not removed all our sicknesses.

Romans 8:22-23, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. <sup>23</sup> 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.” Notice what Scripture teaches, “the redemption of our bodies.” Our bodies will be transformed when Christ comes back for the true believers.

Our bodies will not be susceptible to sickness and death, they will be immortal. 1 Corinthians 15:52-53 says, “...in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.”

### **Spiritual Healing**

The greatest healing is not physical healing but spiritual healing. Physical healing is temporary because eventually our bodies grow old and die. Lazarus was resurrected from the dead. Now that’s an incredible healing! But you know what? He eventually died again.

But spiritual healing is the most important of all. It is healing from the most horrible deadly disease of all diseases, SIN. The word salvation in Scripture means: “deliverance from sickness.”

To me, the fact that Christians can love Christ despite having debilitating health problems is much more of a miracle than a faith healing, which only takes a moment – not a lifetime – of faith. Don’t get me wrong, miracles do happen and people are healed physically but not everyone. And it’s not because of lack of faith. We should pray for people to be healed and believe in God’s healing power. But healing is the sovereign work of God and He has the final word.

### **Conclusion**

In the end I want to say that faith and hope is crucial to medical treatment and healing. We have already noted that medical doctors have said that faith and prayer does help very much in the healing process. Those who have a strong faith in God do fair better than those who don’t.

In the fall of 2000, doctors diagnosed Pastor Ed Dobson with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), an incurable and fatal disease. The doctors gave him two to five years to live and predicted that he would spend most of that time in a disabled condition.

Shortly after he was diagnosed, Pastor Ed Dobson wanted someone to anoint him with oil and pray for healing. And he wanted someone to pray who really believed in healing. So he invited a friend, a Pentecostal pastor who had regular healing services, to come over and pray for him. Here's how Ed described what happened:

*“It was one of the most moving evenings of my entire life. He began by telling stories of people he had prayed for who were miraculously healed. He also told stories about people he had prayed for who were not healed and had passed away, receiving that ultimate and final healing. Before he prayed for me he gave me some advice.”*

***“Don't become obsessed with getting healed, Ed," he said. "If you get obsessed with getting healed, you will lose your focus. Get lost in the wonder of God, and who knows what he will do for you.”***

This is some of the best advice I have ever received .... Since that night, I've been trying to get—and stay—lost in the wonder of God. (Source: Ed Dobson, *Seeing Through the Fog*, 2012, page 110).