

Do you believe that God can heal people today?

Have you ever asked your elders to pray for you?

Would you if you were ill?

Have you ever experienced being healed by God or do you know anyone who has been healed by God?



health

extra thought and discussion

• Preventative medicine in the Bible

The Old Testament has very wise advice about food and hygiene for people living in the Middle East at the time.

- Restrictions on eating meat and fish. Generally herbivores could be eaten but carnivores and other disease-carrying animals, fish and insects should not be eaten. Meat should be slaughtered and drained properly. Carcasses found should not be eaten (Lev 11:1-47, 17:10-16, Deut 14:1-21).
- No contact with dead animals (Lev 11:29-40).
- Diagnosis, washing, treatment and isolation of those with leprosy and other infectious diseases (Lev 13:1-46, 14:1-32, Num 5:1-4).
- Treatment of cloth and other items infected by mould and fungi (Lev 13:47-59, 14:33-57).
- Care with bodily discharges (Lev 15:1-33).
- Disposal of sewage (Deut 23:12-14).
- Contamination of water supplies and other objects (Lev 11:32-40, 17:15-16).
- Washing of hands and feet (Gen 18:4, 24:32, Ex 30:17-21, John 13:1-17).
- Cooking (Ex 12:9, 16:23).

• Doctors in the Bible

Doctors are mentioned in the Bible but they do not seem to be very successful because of lack of scientific knowledge at the time (2 Chron 16:12, Mark 5:25-29). A famous doctor in the Bible is Luke who wrote Luke's gospel and Acts and who probably attended to Paul (Col 4:14).

• Medicine in the Bible

The Bible is not written as a medical textbook but references to medical practices give us a good idea of methods used.

- Poultice for boils (2 Kings 20:7).
- Balm for soothing pain (Jer 8:22, 46:11, 51:8).
- Oil for wounds and skin toning (Is 1:6, Luke 10:34).
- Myrrh as an anaesthetic (Mark 15:23).
- Wine for wounds and for the stomach (Luke 10:34, 1 Tim 5:23).
- Eye salve (Rev 3:18).
- Splints and bandages (Ezek 30:21).

• Medical science vs healing by God

- If we believe that sickness is sent by God, it would be illogical to do anything to bring healing - any medical or spiritual means of healing would be thwarting the purposes of God! If, however, we believe that illness is basically evil then medical help serves to defeat this evil to some degree.
- Man's commission from God was to subdue the earth (Gen 1:26-28) and in medicine we bring nature under our control. We expect God's help with medical treatment supported by the prayers of Christians. There are tremendous opportunities for the Christian doctor, nurse etc.
- Unfortunately medical science is imperfect - drugs have side-effects, treatments sometimes fail and doctors can make mistakes.
- There is no need to feel guilty if we need to consult a doctor - it is not an admission of defeat! But it is important to pray as well!
- Diagnostic medicine may well help us to pray more intelligently and effectively.

• By all means?

Although it is good to defeat illness and disease there are some methods which we need to treat with caution.

- Remedies, practices, therapies or techniques which have their origins in other religious systems and which have a doubtful scientific basis.
- Spiritual healing which does not include the preaching of the Christian gospel of salvation. Supernatural power is not always from God.

• Mental health

Both mental illness and demonisation occur in the Bible (1 Sam 16:14-23, Dan 4:1-37).

- We should not assume that all mental illness is demonic.
- We should not ignore the spiritual dimension of mental illness and the possibility of demonisation.
- We need wisdom in knowing the right combination of medicine, counselling, prayer and deliverance.

• Christians who are ill!

We need not feel guilty about being ill!

Paul mentions several of his friends who were ill (Phil 2:25-27, 1 Tim 5:23, 2 Tim 4:20).

Paul himself was also ill (Gal 4:13-14) and the "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7-10) may have been a recurrent illness.

health



● A good start — but soon spoilt

* Genesis 1:31 What did God say about all he had made - including human beings?

* Genesis 3:1-24 Who tempted Adam and Eve? _____

Why did life become difficult for Adam and Eve? _____

* Romans 8:19-22 What else went wrong? _____

● Why is there illness and disease?

The human race chose not to obey God, putting themselves outside his protection and making themselves vulnerable to the influence of the devil. Reasons for illness and disease include:

- The universal fallen state of the earth and of human beings — our bodies go wrong, decay and eventually die (*Genesis 3:19*).
- The general activity of the devil in the world - suffering is unevenly and unfairly distributed (*Job 2:1-10, Luke 9:42, Luke 13:16, 1 Peter 5:8*).
- The sinfulness of individuals, nations or groups of people — this is unlikely but sometimes needs to be taken into consideration (*Numbers 12:1-16, Deuteronomy 28:20-29, 1 Corinthians 11:29-30*).

● Is there a solution?

* Exodus 15:26 – an Old Testament principle
What are God's conditions for good health?

* Matt 8:16-17 – a New Testament principle
How did Jesus carry our diseases (*Isaiah 53:4-5*)?

* 1 John 3:8 Why did the Son of God come?

* Rev 21:1-4, 22:1-5 – the eternal cure



● Jesus the healer

Healing people's bodies and minds was important to Jesus. He was often surrounded by crowds and healed every disease, disability and injury quickly and completely (*Matthew 4:23-25, 8:16-17, 9:35, 11:4-5, 12:15, 14:14, 14:35-36, 15:30, 19:2*).

* **Matthew 8:1-9:34, 12:9-23** * **Luke 14:1-4, 22:49-51**

Read these passages and write down the illnesses mentioned.

What questions did Jesus ask people before he healed them?

Mark 10:51 _____

John 5:6 _____

Matt 9:28 _____

Why do you think he asked these questions? Jesus was looking for faith — faith that he could heal and faith that he would heal (*Matthew 8:1-4*).

● How Jesus healed

Jesus did not pray for people, he usually spoke a *command* or *words of assurance*. What did he say?

Matt 8:3 — to a man with leprosy _____

Matt 9:29 — to two blind men _____

Matt 12:13 — to a man with a withered hand _____

Mark 5:34 — to a woman with bleeding _____

Mark 7:34 — to a deaf and dumb man _____

Luke 7:14 — to a dead man _____

Luke 13:12 — to a bent over woman _____

John 5:8 — to a paralysed man _____

Mark 9:25 — to a boy with an evil spirit _____



The work continues

Jesus's followers healed in a similar way.

- The twelve and the seventy-two (Luke 9:1-6, Luke 10:1-20)
- Peter (Acts 3:1-10, 5:12-16, 9:32-43)
- Philip (Acts 8:4-8)
- Paul (Acts 14:8-10, 16:16-18, 19:11-12, 20:7-12, 28:7-10, Rom 15:19)
- In the church (Acts 4:29-30, 1 Cor 12:1-31)

Jesus tailored his approach to the individual. If appropriate he linked healing with forgiveness of sins. He sometimes laid hands on people or touched the afflicted part of the body. Occasionally he did unusual things such as spitting on people's eyes or tongues or making mud and putting it on their eyes (Mark 7:33, Mark 8:23, John 9:6-7)!

- Jesus healed to prove he was the Son of God.
- He healed out of compassion for those suffering.
- He healed to encourage faith.

Heartsearch

What are your reactions to a health problem?

- ignore it
- keep it to yourself
- tell everybody about it
- pray about it yourself
- ask others to pray for you
- treat it yourself
- go to the doctor

How do you cope with illness or disability?

- feel frustrated by limitations
- fight and determine to get better
- humbly accept it as the will of God
- get angry with God
- get angry with the devil
- feel near to God
- feel far away from God
- repent and put things right with God
- feel guilty
- determine to use it for the glory of God

● Coping with illness

* **Psalm 38:1-22, 41:1-13, 107:17-22** * **Isaiah 38:1-22**

Consider how these people coped with their illnesses.

● What to do when you are ill

* **2 Chronicles 16:12**

How did King Asa go wrong?

* **James 5:13-18**

What should you do if you are ill?

What two things should the elders do?

What kind of prayer is required?

What else is required (v 16)? _____

* **1 Kings 18:41-46**

How did Elijah pray for rain? _____

What can we learn about the way we should pray for healing?

● Motives for being healthy

* **Matthew 28:19-20** * **Romans 12:1** * **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

What should be our motive for wanting good health? _____

