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Constructing a Biblical Framework for Health Care: Part II Defining Biblical Health and Healing

The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.
Psalm 119:130

We have seen that there are direct parallels between physical death and our spiritual condition (spiritual death), and between physical disease and our spiritual illness (sin & separation from God). Furthermore, the healing that occurs in the physical world is but a mere shadow of what God desires and makes possible for our spiritual disease through Jesus Christ. The parallels are so great, that it seems that the presence of disease and death, health and healing, are really reflections, shadows, of the real substance, which is the Gospel.

If this is true, then providing health care to people is really a spiritual enterprise, because God is revealing Himself and working in people's lives through their disease, healing, and health. We then, as health care providers, are co-laboring with God in this process. Since God and God alone is the one Who heals, we are working with Him to provide physical healing, which itself is a spiritual exercise; moreover, we can be His ambassadors as God is revealing Himself to and working in our patients' lives.

If all this is true, it is a truly radical way of looking at health care, with profound implications. We need to look more closely at the Scriptures and see if indeed this theory holds out. If what we are saying is true, then these truths ought to be reflected in the language and culture of God's people, and more importantly, in the way Jesus lived. We have already said that healing was Jesus' primary ministry besides His preaching/teaching; healing was what He actually *did* for people. This fact alone lends credibility to our theory; we also need to look at the reasons He healed and how He went about it to see if it validates our new paradigm.

Defining Health and Healing

We will begin by looking at specific words in Scripture to see what God's definition of health and healing really is. In general, the Hebrews were a very relational and conceptual people, and their language tended to be very wholistic and integrated; one word would

contain many nuances of meaning. This allows us to look at one word and see all that is included in and related to a particular concept. The Greeks, on the other hand, were more rational and reductionistic, as we have discussed. Consequently, their language tended to have a separate word for each nuance in meaning of a particular concept. This allows us to look at what was specifically meant, what specifically happened, in a particular instance by the choice of word used to describe it.

Define each of the following words for *health* based on their use in the passages listed.

Hebrew: *shalom*

Genesis 43:26-28 (vv. 27 & 28) _____

Numbers 6:26 _____

Psalms 35:27 _____

Psalms 38:3 _____

Ezekiel 37:26 _____

Hebrew: *marpe*

Proverbs 14:30 _____

Proverbs 15:4 _____

Jeremiah 33:6 _____

Greek: *hugiano, hugies*

3 John 2 _____

Luke 15:27 _____

Luke 5:31 _____

Mark 3:5 _____

John 5:4 _____

What does the word *shalom* encompass? What does this say about the Hebrew concept of health? What does *marpe* add? What did it mean to be in good health? _____

What was the Greek concept of health? What was encompassed in their definition? _____

Define each of the following words for *heal/healing* based on their use in the passages listed.

Hebrew: *rapha*

Exodus 15:26 _____

Hosea 6:1 _____

Jeremiah 17:14 _____

What did healing mean to the Hebrews? What was encompassed in their concept of healing? What was the source of healing?

One of God's names is Jehovah-Rapha (The Lord Who Heals), which He uses of Himself when He says "For I am the Lord who heals you" (Exodus 15:26). What are some implications of this fact? _____

Greek: *therapeuo*

Matthew 4:23-24 _____

Matthew 14:14 _____

Mark 6:5 _____

Luke 9:1 _____

Greek: *iaomai*

Matthew 13:15 _____

Matthew 15:28 _____

Luke 9:2 _____

1 Peter 2:24 _____

Greek: *sozo*

Matthew 9:21-22 _____

Mark 15:29-31 _____

Luke 9:53-56 _____

Luke 17:19 _____

Titus 3:5 _____

James 5:15 _____

What are the similarities and differences between these three Greek verbs? Why did they have three separate words for healing? What do the overlapping meanings tell you about the nature of healing?

What is the difference in English between *cure* and *heal*?

Give a ***Biblical*** definition of **health**: _____

Is Biblical health possible apart from a relationship with God?
Compare and contrast the Biblical definition of health with the following passages: Romans 1:18-32, 8:7-8, Ephesians 2:1-3.

What are the implications for you as a health care provider?

Summary

- The Biblical concept of health is a very broad one, encompassing all aspects of a person – physical, mental, spiritual, social.
- Biblically, there is more to health than being disease-free. There is a sense of well-being, wholeness, integrity, completeness, peace, and prosperity. It is centered in being rightly related to God, and therefore rightly related to everything and everyone else. It is being equipped for God’s calling and purposes.
- God alone is the source of all healing, and ultimately is the source of health.
- In the Old Testament, health came from obeying God’s Laws (often public health related, but He also inflicted disease as punishment for disobedience).
- After Christ came, being right with God centered more on faith than on obedience; obedience applies in the physical realm, and mirrors the fact that faith is the method of the spiritual realm.
- Central to health is a right relationship to God (can being a child of wrath possibly lead to peace, wholeness, and health?).
- The Greek language reveals distinctions between various types of healing.
- *Therapeuo* is only used to refer to strictly curing someone of a disease; complete healing is never implied. This word is not used in conjunction with faith.

- *Iaomai* is often used when someone experiences both physical and spiritual healing due to their faith in Christ and His power to heal.
- *Sozo* means both healing and salvation, and shows how physical healing reflects spiritual healing.
- In English, diseases are *cured*, but people are *healed*. Healing encompasses the whole person, not just a physical disease process.

Material World	Spiritual Reality
Obedience	Faith
Health and wellbeing	Peace and Wholeness

Understanding Disease And Suffering

We have seen that disease and suffering are a consequence of sin, part of the curse placed upon us in the Fall of Man. How does this manifest itself in our lives? What are the sources, the causes, of disease? How is the spiritual reality manifested in the physical realm, and what are the implications for us as healers?

Look at the following verses for the Biblical sources of disease and suffering:

The Ultimate Source: Exodus 15:26, Deuteronomy 32:39, Job 5:17

The General Cause: Psalm 38:3-5, Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 _____

The Specific Cause: Deuteronomy 28:15,27-28,35; 2 Chronicles 21:12-19; Psalm 107:17, Proverbs 6:12-15 _____

The Foolish Cause: 2 Chronicles 16:12-13 _____

The Mysterious Cause I: Isaiah 6:9-10, John 12:40, Romans 9:14-24

The Gracious Cause: Isaiah 19:22, Acts 17:26-27

The Glorious Cause: Matthew 15:30-31, John 9:1-7, Galatians 4:13

The Parallel Cause: Matthew 8:14-17, Mark 2:1-12

The Mysterious Cause II: Philippians 1:29, 3:10-11; Hebrews 12:3-11,
1 Peter 1:6-9

A complete discussion of suffering is beyond the scope of this study; however, it is necessary to understand it Biblically because it is obviously central to health care; moreover, a Biblical understanding of suffering is crucial to deal with the current bioethical issues in medicine.

In addition to the verses above, examine the following verses to help you form a Biblical perspective on suffering:

Job 23:10

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

2 Corinthians 4:7-15

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Romans 8:28-39 _____

Can we know in any specific circumstance what the cause of someone's disease is? (Isaiah 55:8-9) _____

How does God redeem suffering? _____

Summary

- All disease and death is ultimately a consequence of the Fall, of sin in general.
- A specific disease or affliction may be due to a specific disease, either as a natural consequence of a sinful behavior, or as punishment from God for a specific sin.
- Disease or lack of healing may be experienced due to a failure to seek God as the source of healing.
- Whatever the cause, God is ultimately sovereign, even in allowing disease and death. His goal is His glory. This, however, remains a mystery. At the same time, He is not the author of sin, evil, or its consequences.
- God uses disease and death in order that men might seek Him and find Him. It reveals to man his need for God, his sin, and his need for forgiveness.
- God can ultimately bring good from disease and suffering, by His grace.
- Does this mean that we should seek suffering for ourselves or others, or that we should not seek to relieve the suffering of others, so that grace may abound? Of course not; however, it does mean that we have to have a different way of looking at suffering than the current culture, which sees it as a great evil, with no point or purpose, to be ended by ANY means possible. (More on this later).

Understanding the Healing Process

What are the sources of health and healing?

Exodus 15:26 _____

Deuteronomy 32:39 _____

Psalms 107:19-21 _____

Job 5:17-18 _____

Proverbs 3:7-8 _____

Proverbs 4:20-21 _____

Hosea 6:1 _____

Describe God's healing process

Colossians 1:20-21 _____

Ezekiel 36:26 _____

Romans 8:2 _____

Romans 8:6 (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:16) _____

Hebrews 6:19 (cf. Ephesians 2:12-18) _____

Hebrews 10:22 _____

1 Peter 2:9-10 _____

Proverbs 12:18 _____

Proverbs 16:24 _____

How does this fit in with your Biblical definition of health? _____

How does God's process differ from man's? Which is more
successful? _____

Summary

- Notice how complete God's healing process is, and how it fits with your Biblical definition of health.
- God does not reform our physiology or cure our disease; He transforms us, heals us from the inside out.
- God treats the root of the problem, not the symptoms.

Go back again to the diagram and complete your picture of a Biblical framework for understanding death and disease, healing and health, and the physical and spiritual realities of these.

A THEOLOGY OF HEALTH AND DISEASE



Then I saw the holy city...in the middle of its street...was the tree of life. Rev. 21,22

**Resurrection Body
Raised in incorruption**

**Resurrection Life
Worship God forever**

Heaven

Earth

Shalom — Sozo

Health & wellbeing, peace & wholeness

The Garden
Fellowship with God

Eden
No death, disease, pain,
suffering, or shame.

RESTORATION

REDEMPTION

SIN

SIN

THE FALL

THE FALL

Recovery

Reconciliation

Cure
therapeuo

Healing
iaomai

Enmity
with God

Common Grace
OBEDIENCE

Special Grace
FAITH

The curse
Gen. 3:19

DEATH

DISEASE
pain

ILLNESS
suffering

SPIRITUAL
DEATH

MATERIAL REPRESENTATION

SPIRITUAL REALITY

Hell

SYMBOL

MEANING

Hell