

HHM - 17 Why God Seems Reluctant to Answer Prayers for Healing



David Sandstrom 0:00

You're listening to the holistic health matters podcast. I'm David Sandstrom. I'm including this introduction to this episode because I don't want anyone to misunderstand my message. In this episode, I tackle the challenging topic of why God seems reluctant to answer our prayers for healing. I want to say up front that sometimes we get sick because of what we've done or our own actions. For instance, if we're staying up too late, and we're burning the midnight oil working on a project for too many nights in a row, we can wear our

immune systems down, and that can cause us to get sick. On the other hand, sometimes we get sick, and it's not anyone's fault. Sometimes we get sick because, well, this is not Eden. The human race is in a fallen state, and we live in a broken world. Sometimes the reason we get sick is through no fault of our own, but simply a part of living in this sinful, fallen, broken world. So please, don't misunderstand my message. It's my belief that we should do all the we can do all that's within our control to minimize our chances of becoming sick, and maximize our chances of enjoying vibrant health and vitality. Let's not have our actions produce a health challenge that God would prefer to spare us from. It's my contention, that the very best way to maximize our health potential is by aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body. That's what the Double HM Podcast is all about. This episode is about working on our spiritual component. And pursuing health in a spiritual fashion is all about relationships, our relationship with God, our relationship with others, and our relationship with ourselves. In this episode, we're going to focus on our relationship with God, specifically, our prayer lives. So let's jump right in. Welcome to the holistic health matters podcast where it's all about maximizing your health potential in body, mind and spirit, so that you can pursue the abundant life more effectively. I'm your host, David Sandstrom, Naturopathic Doctor, and Biblical Health Coach. And this is episode

number 17. I'm excited to record this episode today, because I have a new microphone. It should be better at capturing voice quality, and better at eliminating unwanted sounds like road noise and things like that. So I hope you enjoy the upgraded quality. A couple of episodes ago in Episode Number 14, we tackled the question Does God want us healthy? And if you listened to that episode, then you know that it's my contention that God's desire for each of us is vibrant health and vitality. If you haven't listened to that episode, I suggest you go back and listen to it. Now. I think you'll get more out of this one. If you listen to that one first. I listened to that episode myself. And I was left with the impression that there's kind of a question just hanging out there. Someone might be saying to themselves something like this. What you said in that episode, Dave made a lot of sense. And I want to agree with you. But if God really does want us healthy, then why don't we see more answered prayers for healing? Why does God seem reluctant to intervene when it comes to our prayers for healing? That's a very good question. And that's what we're going to tackle in this episode.

David Sandstrom 3:42

When I was researching for my book, I had breakfast with the head of our elder board at our church. I asked him if the elder board use the James chapter five model of anointing people with oil and praying for healing. And he said they do. And then I asked, How often do you see those prayers answered with healing? He said, sadly, not very often. They have seen that happen, but it was very rare. And I appreciated his honesty. So I set out to do some more research. And what I discovered was that our church's experience was widespread among Christian churches around the nation. So why is this true? If God wants health for us, and he does, why does he seem reluctant to answer our prayers for healing? Now, I believe God can and does perform healing miracles, and God does answer all our prayers. But sometimes his answer is no or not now. In the book of James, chapter four, verse three, we see this, "You ask and you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." God is more concerned with our spiritual condition than he is with our comfort. The principle we see operating here is this. God gives each of us free-will. He allows us to make our choices, but he doesn't exempt us from the consequences of our choices. And sometimes those consequences include compromised health. Most of us are familiar with the story of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15. The son asked for his inheritance, and he goes off and spends it on loose living. When all his

money is gone, and he's come to the end of his rope. At that point, he was experiencing the consequences of his poor choices. He comes to his senses and returns to his father who was waiting with open arms. The point I want to make here is this. His father didn't make him do anything. Even though it must have broken his heart. This father allowed his son to make his own choices. God does the same with us. The father in this parable is a picture of God the Father, God preserves our dignity. He respects our humanness, and honors our free-will. And we're not puppets on a string, that God's not playing some kind of a chess game where he's playing both sides of the board, where free-will beings capable of making our own choices, and God respects those choices, even when it causes us harm. In Romans chapter one, Paul's talking about some people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. We see a particular phrase repeated over and over in that chapter, and that is, God gave them over verse 24. Therefore, God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, verse 26, God gave them over to degrading passions. Verse 28, God gave them over to a depraved mind, just as the father of the prodigal son did. Often, I believe God is saying, I'm telling you, you're not gonna like it. But you're free to choose, because we have free will. Like it or not, the choices we make, can compromise our health.

David Sandstrom 7:16

Another way of asking the question of why is God reluctant to answer our prayers for healing is does sin cause disease? The answer to that question I'm afraid is, yes. The Bible clearly makes a connection between righteous living in physical health and well being. For instance, Psalm 38, three, "There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation. There is no health in my bones because of my sin." Proverbs three, seven and eight. "Do not be wise in your own eyes. fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your body, and refreshment to your bones." First Timothy four, eight, "For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things." Again, back to the book of Proverbs, chapter three verses one and two, "My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands for length of days, and long life in peace, they will add to you." Jesus Himself attached sinfulness to sickness. In John chapter five, he would just go through healing the man at the Bethesda pool, and this is what he says to him. "Behold, you have become well, do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." So there's, there's a connection there between righteous living and physical ailments. I believe that sometimes we're so busy putting Jesus paint on that we forget to take

the rust off. God does supply what we call his common grace. In Matthew chapter five, we see this "He causes his son to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." That's God's common grace. Aside from his common grace, God is not in the habit of blessing our unrighteousness we can't reduce God to a genie in a bottle that we let out once in a while when we need something. God is not a circus animal performing on demand. Jesus did perform healing miracles, but he did those miracles to make a point. All of his miracles were designed to illustrate his teaching. In Matthew nine, some people brought a paralyzed man to Jesus hoping that Jesus would heal him. And Jesus saw his faith and he says the paralytic, "Take courage Your sins are forgiven." And the scribes that were watching this interaction between Jesus and the paralytic said this guy's a blasphemer, who is he to forgive sins. Only God can do that. So Jesus says to the scribes, which is easier to say your sins are forgiven, or to say, get up and walk, but so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. And then he said to the paralytic, get up, pick up your bed and go home. I believe God is more interested in our spiritual condition than he is our comfort. God doesn't inflict suffering, but he does permit it. God has established a simple cause and effect relationship between our obedience and the outcomes we experience.

David Sandstrom 10:36

The key to getting our prayers answered, is aligning our desires with the will of God. That's what it means to pray in Jesus name. In John chapter 14, we see Jesus saying this, "If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." And then just a couple chapters later, in chapter 16, Jesus says, "Truly, truly I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in my name, he will give it to you." When we pray, in Jesus name, we're declaring that his will be done not ours. Jesus modeled this, this kind of prayer for us in the garden of the Gethsemane. In Luke chapter 22, Jesus knew he was facing the cross in a matter of hours. And he prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Yet not my will, but yours be done." So, in this moment of humanness, we see Jesus modeling the kind of prayer that he wants from us. This is what it means to pray in Jesus name, we submit our will to the will of God. Again, James, chapter four, verse three, you ask, and you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives. And so we clearly see that sometimes the answer to our prayers is no. God is more concerned with our spiritual condition than he is with our comfort.

David Sandstrom 12:02

But you may say, Well, what about James chapter five? Dave? Doesn't that passage teach that if we're sick, we should go to the elders of our church and pray for healing? Yes, it does. And I think pursuing a spiritual solution to our physical ailments is a great place to start. But let's read this passage carefully. James, chapter five, starting in verse 14 says, this "Is any among you sick, then you 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. And the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick." If we stopped reading right there, we could conclude, Well, there you have it. Doesn't that passage refute what you just said, Dave? Hold on a minute, we've got to be careful here. We can't just cherry pick the part of the passage we like. We've got to read the whole passage and put it in context. Let's keep reading verse 15. "And the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." So before the healing takes place, we see confession, coming into agreement with what God says about our sin. Real confession will lead to repentance. Which means to change our mind, we've been thinking one way about something. Now we think the opposite way. That's repentance. So here's the order we see in James five for answered prayer for healing. We've got to follow a certain sequence. God does his part. And we need to do ours. So we start off with confession, we move on to forgiveness, and then repentance. And then we offer up the effective prayer. And then we see the healing. That's what James five teaches. If we've read the whole passage in context, we all want to just jump right to the healing part. And God says, No, you're putting the cart before the horse. The first thing I want you to do is address your spiritual condition, then we'll talk about the healing. Let's let's have a look under the hood first. In order for our prayers to be effective, they need to be within the will of God. God always puts our spiritual condition before our comfort. That's what it means to pray in Jesus name. And that's why God seems reluctant to answer our prayers for healing. He's after our spiritual growth. Sometimes using an extreme example can help illustrate a point. So indulge me just a little bit here. Let's say there's a hypothetical guy who, Whose marriage is on the rocks. He's addicted to porn. He's had multiple affairs. He regularly visits strip clubs and he has no intention of changing any of his behavior because he believes God wants him to be happy with this warped view of the opposite sex and this misunderstanding of what proper behavior is in the context of

the marital covenant. This guy goes to the leaders of his church and ask them to anoint him with oil, and pray that God would grant him a great marriage. Do you think God would rush to answer this prayer? Or not? Because he's outside of the will of God, and God doesn't condone sinful rebellion to what he's clearly identified in His Word. Now, what if this guy had a change of heart? What if he gave up on the idea of asking the elders to pray for him? And what if he got down on his knees before God and confessed his sin, and experienced genuine contrition and repentance, which means he renounced his behavior and turned from it for good. Then he went to his wife and said something like this, sweetheart, I know what I've done is hurt you. I totally get it if you want to leave me. But I've repented before God, and he's changed my heart. I'm a new man. And if you give me a chance, I'll show you the extent of that transformation by loving you the way I should have loved you all along, then, what if he offered up his wife a chance to express the depth of the pain she's experienced? Because of what he's done. And he just listened with empathy, and compassion until she was finished. He didn't offer excuses. He just listened and heard her out. And then finally, he asked her for forgiveness. Do you think this guy was standard better chance of restoring his connection with his wife and saving his marriage? You bet he would. Here's the bottom line. We're all a little bit like this guy. Maybe not to this extreme, but we're all protocols. We all have some area of our lives that we haven't completely surrendered to God.

David Sandstrom 16:58

If we want to experience the abundant life Christ offers and the physical health and vitality God wants for us what his desire is for us, then a good place to start is to pray a prayer, something like the one we find in Psalm 139, it should sound something like this Father, search my heart and reveal to me any aspect of my life that is not pleasing you, and address that, whatever God shows you; get right with God. And then ask for the healing miracle in Jesus name, that's a much more effective spiritual approach to health and wellness. I don't want anyone to get the idea that I'm suggesting that God is somehow laughing at our calamity when we sin. That's not the case. Just like the father and the prodigal son parable. God's heart is broken when we drift from his design. Remember, as I often say, we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's design for spirit, mind and body. You may ask so where does the sickness and disease come from? Is God somehow punishing us? Absolutely not. God doesn't inflict harm on us. We simply bring it upon

ourselves. It's actually not all that complicated. When we look at our anatomy and physiology. The spiritual principle of living a righteous life overlaps into our physical component, the physical part of our being. Jesus said, he came to bring us peace. John, Chapter 14, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. God wants us to think speak and act according to His holy, loving nature. When we do it produces more fruit of spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self control. Do I have to remind anybody that love joy and peace or health promoting? Satan wants the opposite for us. Satan wants us to think speak and act according to his fallen evil nature. When we do, it produces more stress. You see, Satan's suggestions, if we act on them will always be stress producing. They'll produce more fear, anger, resentment, relational conflict and strife. All of these things are stress producing chronic stress because it releases harmful catecholamines like stress hormones, cortisol and adrenaline. And those hormones over time will take a toll on our physiology. were designed to press into stress but only temporarily. When we're living an unrighteous lifestyle. It produces chronic, relentless stress on our bodies. This leads to sickness and disease. The enemy has come to steal, kill and destroy. He is seeking someone to devour. This is literal folks. The enemy wants to steal our peace, kill our joy and destroy our health. In the future. I'm going I'll be doing a series of episodes on spiritual warfare and health. But for now, just remember this. God wants to bring us peace. Satan wants to bring us stress.

David Sandstrom 20:13

That was a mouthful. I hope I haven't offended anyone. But I really did want to be true to what the word teaches about praying for healing, and why God sometimes doesn't answer prayers as we want. So I hope I shed some light on that subject for you. If you enjoyed this episode, you're probably gonna enjoy my book that Christians guide to holistic health. It's available on Amazon. It's in paperback, Kindle, and audible. And if you know someone that you think may benefit from this episode, share it with them, or share the podcast with them. Tell them about it. I would appreciate you helping me spread the word. Don't forget, you can always go to my website David Sandstrom calm, I always post a full transcript of every episode there. You can read it online there are timestamps so you can scroll through and get to the point the part of the episode that you'd like to listen to, or you can download it for free and take it with you put it on your phone and read it later if you want. Thank you once again for

giving me some of your valuable time this week. I enjoyed serving you, and I'll talk with you next week. Till then be blessed.