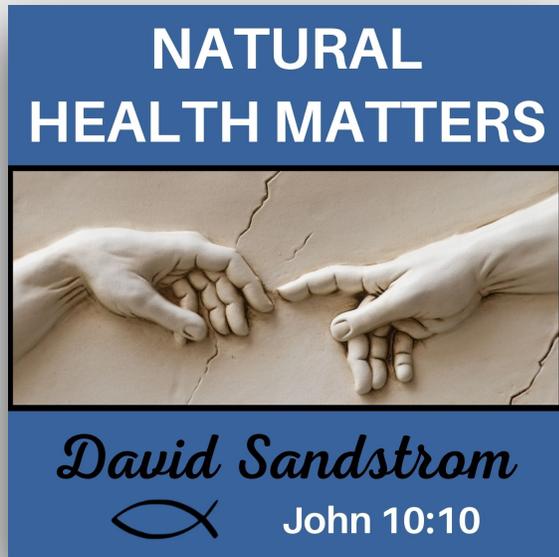


NHM - 55 Spiritual Health Part 3 - Is The Bible Good for Health



David Sandstrom 0:00

Here's a sample of what you'll hear on this episode of natural health matters. If there was a drug that could cut your risk of dying from heart disease and cancer by a third, I believe people will be taking out second mortgages in their houses to pay for it. That effect is available for free by nurturing your spirit. So, people of faith, as demonstrated by frequent church attendance, live longer, and slashed their risk of dying from either the big two heart disease or cancer. Welcome to the Natural Health Matters podcast where it's all about maximizing your health potential, 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 55.

David Sandstrom 0:49

This episode is part three in a series on the spiritual component of health, can we really turn to the Bible for health advice? Most people would agree that the Bible is an excellent resource for moral teaching, it helps us discern right from wrong, and it gives us guidelines for living in an orderly society. Not only that, it also answers the big four questions in life. Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? And where am I going? For me? Who am I is, I'm a child of the Most High God. Where did I come from? I'm created by God, and made in His image. Why am I here? I'm here to be in a loving relationship with God, as well as other people. Where am I going? When life on this earth is over, I'm going to an eternal paradise to a home prepared, especially for me. Not only that, as we're about to see, the Bible is an excellent resource for health advice. So if we're designed to be in intimate, loving relationships, if that's in our DNA, it would make sense that pursuing relationships will benefit our health. And it very much does. If we answer those four questions those big four correctly, it becomes much easier to cooperate with our natural design. That's what the spiritual component to health is all about. If you're a regular listener to this podcast, you've heard me say, we maximize our health potential by cooperating with God's natural design for spirit, mind and body. Of course, in this series, we're focusing in on the Spirit. And on this episode, I want to answer the

question is the Good Book good for health. When we cooperate with our natural design, we experience an inner peace, and that peace brings greater health and well being. Later, we're gonna go over some of the science that proves that notion. But first, let's answer the question is the good book really good for our health. Now, if you've read my book, the Christians guide to holistic health, some of what I'm about to share is going to sound familiar, because I'm going to lean heavily on the section on the spirit, and specifically the chapter entitled, is the Good Book good for health. Now, if you've read the book, don't tune out, don't turn this episode off, because there's going to be more material in this podcast than is in the book alone. And if you haven't read the book, I suggest picking up a copy cuz it's more material in the book than what is going to be shared on this episode.

David Sandstrom 3:19

So can we really consult the Bible for our health issues, to some suggesting that may sound a bit strange, but in both Old and New Testaments, were instructed to go to the church for our health issues. We find this in Leviticus chapter 13, verse two, when a man has on the skin of his body, a swelling or a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of the body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest, or to one of his sons, the priests. In fact, the entire chapter of Leviticus 13 is devoted to the church and the priest being consulted for medical issues. And of course, we have the well known passage in the book of James in the New Testament. Is anyone among us sick, 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. That's James, chapter five, verse 14. Here in the US, most of us turn to the doctor's office first with help with our health issues. Why is it that most Christians don't even consider turning to spiritual teachings when confronted with a health challenge? I would suggest that we're victims of very well funded marketing campaigns, mostly from big pharmaceutical companies.

David Sandstrom 4:38

So can we turn to the Bible? Because if you studied the Bible as I have, you'll understand that the Bible is often short on specifics. For instance, the Bible is very open ended when it comes to what we should eat. In Romans chapter 14, verse 17, we see this for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. And again, we have in First Corinthians chapter 10. All things are lawful. But not all things are profitable. eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions. It's difficult to go to the Bible and find specifics such as, should I take that job? Should I get married now? Is this the person I should marry? If we're searching for answers for those kinds of specific questions, we're better served spending some time in prayer. And that's, that's a whole nother subject. We're going to be talking about

that in future episodes. But for now, please understand that we don't get specific answers like that in the Bible. Generally, what we do get is principles for living a successful life.

David Sandstrom 5:44

Again, I'm going to repeat it. Because of God's great love for us. When he tells us to do something, we can trust that it's for our benefit. When he tells us to avoid something, it's for our protection. As parents, we know that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, Proverbs 22:15. As a result, we often give our children instructions with their protection in mind. But we may not fully explain ourselves at the time, stay away from the stove, don't run into the street, don't play with matches, don't lie, cheat or steal, you get the point. As parents, we want to spare our children the consequences of poor choices or carelessness. God is no different. As a result, we have various instructions contained in the Bible that have our health and well being in mind, even though this may not be obvious on the surface. Now, even though that's true, we do still have plenty of examples of direct teaching focused on our health and well being.

David Sandstrom 6:46

By the giving of the laws of the nation of Israel through Moses, God had their health and well being in mind. This is plainly stated in Exodus, chapter 15, verse 26, if you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all his statutes. I will put none of the diseases on you which I've put on the Egyptians, for I the LORD am your healer.

David Sandstrom 7:15

Back in the old testament days, leprosy was a serious disease with no known cure. And in the book of Leviticus, the book of law, Chapter 13, verse 46, the Israelites that had leprosy were instructed to state outside the camp. Well, that's equivalent to the modern day concept of quarantine. And this is the time of this recording is 2021. And the year 2020 taught us a lot about quarantine. While the Bible had that in mind 1000s of years ago, now, those instructions could have been perceived as burdensome and they probably were, whoever God had their health and well being in mind. The law was given through Moses, and although Moses was a Jew, he was raised as an Egyptian and was educated in all the Egyptian ways and customs Acts 7, verse 21, and 22. During that time, it was common practice in Egypt to mummified dead bodies. This involved a great deal of handling of corpses. Despite that custom, inspired by the Spirit of God, Moses instructed the Israelites to limit the handling of dead bodies. They were to bury the dead quickly, Deuteronomy 21:23. They were also to keep people that had touched a corpse separate from others, until they were appropriately cleansed with water. Numbers chapter 19 verses 11 through 13.

David Sandstrom 8:44

In the early 1800s, Vienna, Austria was a thoroughly modern city, home to Mozart, Mahler, Beethoven, and Brahms. It was also the world's leading medical center. Giving birth in Vienna, however, was an exceedingly dangerous thing to do. At the time, more than half of the women who gave birth at a hospital and were attended to by doctors died from a mysterious infection they called labor fever. That was a five times greater rate than women who gave birth and were attended to by midwives. A forward thinking doctor by the name of Ignaz Semmelweis took notice. Since no one knew anything about germs in the spread of bacteria. It was common practice for medical doctors to perform autopsies on dead bodies, and then follow up with vaginal exams on pregnant women without washing their hands. These unsuspecting and vulnerable women would often develop fatal infections as a result, Dr. Semmelweis theorized that it may have something to do with the fact that doctors performed autopsies and midwives did not. He suggested that doctors thoroughly wash and disinfect their hands with bleach after an autopsy and before performing exams on pregnant women. Although His recommendations were met with a great deal of opposition. Thorough hand washing nearly eliminated labor fever. countless lives could have been spared if the biblical recommendations for handling dead bodies and washing afterward were followed. Along the same lines. The Bible gives specific instruction for certain birds that are not to be considered food. Birds of Prey including eagles, vultures, buzzards, owls and bats were off limits according to the law of Moses. that's found in Leviticus chapter 11, verses 13 through 19. We know that these birds, although majestic, at times are essentially nature's garbage cleaners, they feed on decaying carcasses and therefore are not fit for human consumption. More biblical instructions for sanitation come in the form of protections from sewage. In Deuteronomy, chapter 23, verses 12 and 13, we find this you shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there, and you shall have a spade among your tools. It shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it, and shall turn to cover up your excrement. Now, this advice is almost identical to the modern day recommendations for campers. No one knew anything about bacteria and the spread of germs in Old Testament days. So how was it that Moses being trained in Egyptian customs was able to have such insight? The only explanation is that Moses didn't come up with those ideas on his own. Moses did what all Bible writers did. He was inspired by the Spirit of God to write what God wanted him to record. That's why in Second Peter chapter one, verse 21, we see this, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will. But men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God a similar teaching in Second Timothy chapter three verses 16 and 17. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work, acting out of love. God inspired

Moses and the other writers of the Bible to protect the Israelites and us with those instructions.

David Sandstrom 12:27

The point I'm making is this acting out of love. When he inspired the Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, God had our health and well being in mind. In our pursuit of holistic health, we do well to pay attention to biblical teaching. Parents don't always explain themselves when they give their children instructions. Likewise, the Bible doesn't say, don't handle a dead body because the decaying process produces dangerous germs and bacteria that can be harmful to your health. It likewise doesn't always explain why we are to do the things that suggests, however, when we follow God's advice out of grateful hearts, blessings follow as byproducts of our obedience. As we're going to see in this series, The Bible has a whole lot more to say about our spiritual condition and how it affects our health and well being.

David Sandstrom 13:17

By studying and following the Word of God. Although not guaranteed, we can expect to enjoy certain benefits. God straightforwardly says, do it my way, and things will work out for you. We can clearly see this principle suggested throughout Scripture. In the book of Joshua chapter one, verse eight, we find this, this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night. So that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Similar teaching in Deuteronomy, chapter eight, verse two, all these blessings will come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the Lord your God. And then a couple chapters later in Deuteronomy, chapter 30, verse 16, walk in His ways, and to keep his commandments and statutes in his judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the Lord your God may bless you. couple verses later, Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 19, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life, in order that you may live, you and your descendants. Then over in the New Testament, Galatians chapter six, verse seven, do not be deceived, God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. And finally, in the book of James chapter one, verse 22. But prove yourselves, doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

David Sandstrom 14:59

My contention is that when God tells us to do something, anything? He has our health and well being in mind. So it goes without saying that people who take their faith seriously, should live longer and enjoy better health outcomes along the way. Now, I'll bet there's somebody listening that's thinking to themselves

something like this. Well, Dave, that's an interesting theory, and you've given us some interesting history. But can you back up those assertions with modern science? I'm glad you asked. In a 2016 study in the Journal of American Medical Association. Now, the JAMA is a very well known journal, and it's probably one of the most well respected peer reviewed medical journals on the planet. In this study, nearly 75,000 women, they had this to say, finding in a large, prospective long term cohort study of us women, the nurses Health Study, there was a consistent inverse association between frequent attendance at religious services and all cause mortality, cardiovascular mortality, and cancer mortality compared with women who never attended religious services. During the 16 year follow up period, women who attended religious services more than once per week, had a 33% lower mortality rate than women who never attended services. That's pretty staggering. The number one and number two causes of death each year are heart disease and cancer. In this study showed a consistent and significant reduction from dying from either one that's worth noting. If there was a drug that could cut your risk of dying from heart disease and cancer by a third, I believe people will be taking out second mortgages in their houses to pay for it. That effect is available for free by nurturing your spirit. So people of faith, as demonstrated by frequent church attendance, live longer, and slashed their risk of dying from either the big two heart disease or cancer.

David Sandstrom 17:03

Another study published in the open journal curious in 2020, it was called the spill three study, researchers aim to explore To what extent the what they call religiosity alleviates the negative effects of stress on a variety of biological and psychological markers. One of the markers they looked at was telomere length. So you might be saying, What's a telomere telomeres are nucleotide structures at the end of each chromosome, and they're responsible for maintaining genomic stability and integrity. In other words, they help our genes create new cells more efficiently. The end result is the slowing down of the aging process. religiosity was positively associated with shorter telomere length. In other words, people of faith aged more slowly. Again, that's pretty significant. Here's what else they had to say. Remarkably, highly religious participants presented lower prevalence of diabetes, lower levels of intima Media thickness, which is a measure of plaque buildup on the inside of the artery walls, and lower levels of depression. Furthermore, multivariate analysis fully adjusted for age, gender, family status, smoking habits, and body mass index showed that religiosity was inversely associated with the development of hypertension, diabetes mellitus, and cardiovascular disease. So the terms get a little confusing when they talk about inversely related. But in other words, what they were saying was frequent church attendance will significantly reduce your risk of hypertension, high blood pressure, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. And by the way, on my website in the show notes page for this episode number 55. I'm going to be putting links

to all these articles if you feel like reading them for yourself. So embracing faith in God, and applying the principles found in the Bible, will help you to age more gracefully, live longer, slash your risk of dying from heart disease or cancer and lower your risk of developing diabetes. that's starting to sound a lot more likely abundant life to me.

David Sandstrom 19:19

Someone may be wondering right about now. What is it about faith that has all these health benefits? Well, in the Time magazine article published in 2018, here's a partial explanation. Quote, prayer has been shown to be powerful in at least one way, it triggers the relaxation response, a state of mind body rest that has been shown to decrease stress, heart rate and blood pressure, alleviate chronic disease symptoms, and even change gene expression. This state is typically linked to activities like meditation and yoga, and research suggests it can also be found through praying end quote so of course God answers prayer for healing, but not always the way we want. Now, we'll be covering that topic in the next episode of this series. But at least a partial explanation for the improved physical health benefits of faith in God is the triggering of our relaxation response. And we covered that in the last episode. So if you haven't listened to that one, yet, I suggest you go back and listen to that now, because understanding the way our body responds to stress and relaxation, and as it pertains to health is a key component to understanding the spiritual component to health. So again, if you have listened to Episode 54, I suggest you go back and listen to that one. So the direct physical benefits to our health would seem to be enough to consider the spiritual component of health more seriously. But that's not all. We're not done yet.

David Sandstrom 20:46

people of faith also improve their mental emotional state as well. For instance, we see people of faith having lower rates of depression, and a 2016 article published in the journal Annals of Behavioral Medicine. Nearly 50,000 women who attended church regularly were less likely to be depressed, and women who had less church attendance were more likely to be depressed. So if you have less depression, that probably leads to lower suicide rates. And we find that to be true as well.

David Sandstrom 21:17

In a study published in again, JAMA, Journal of American Medical Association psychiatry in 2016. This study included nearly 90,000 women aged 30 to 55, who participated in the nurses Health Study, attendance at religious services once per week or more, was associated with an approximately five fold lower rate of suicide in their conclusions and relevance, here's what they said. In this cohort of us women, frequent religious service attendance was associated with

a significantly lower rate of suicide. You know, in any observational study, researchers try to remove some of the variables that could skew the final results. For instance, people who go to church regularly are less likely to be smokers. And this could account for some of the potential health benefits to what they observe. Here's what these researchers said about their study on suicide. there was evidence that social integration, depressive symptoms, and alcohol consumptions partially mediated the association among those occasionally attending services, but not for those attending frequently. In other words, when other lifestyle factors are accounted for, some of the health benefits can be explained away. But that only applied to casual church goers, not for those more serious about their faith, as evidenced by more regular church attendance. So, in order to maximize the health benefits of nurturing our spiritual component, it takes more than just attending a church service twice a year on Christmas and Easter, for instance, it takes more commitment than that.

David Sandstrom 22:50

People of faith are also more grounded in their social lives, as evidenced by lower divorce rates. In a 2016 study published in JAMA, researchers said this data were drawn from the nurses Health Study, and the nurses Health Study, which by the way, was a very large long term study that you can draw all kinds of health implications from a large prospective cohort study that consisted of us female nurses in their 50s at study enrollment, with repeated measures of service attendance, and marital status over a 14 year follow up period, among over 66,000 initially, married nurses who were mainly Christians, frequent service attendance was associated with 50% lower risk of divorce. Among widowed women, those who attended services frequently had a 49% increased likelihood of remarriage. So, in this study, people of faith demonstrated that they have stronger social connections. Why is that important? Because the scientific evidence strongly shows that social isolation and loneliness contribute to all kinds of negative health outcomes. Now I'm going to do some future episodes on the connection between healthy marriages and healthy people. I call it vitamin M for marriage. So be on the lookout for that.

David Sandstrom 24:13

We could go on and on here, folks, the literature is loaded with all kinds of evidence to support the people of faith live healthier lives. There's a lot more evidence to support my assertion that faith in God builds health more effectively. You know, as I was doing my research for this episode, on this topic of the faith health connection, I found an interesting thing is that often researchers were quite obviously not religious people themselves, and they were visibly uncomfortable recommending that people go to church to improve their health. For instance, here's one quote and there were a lot of similar sounding statements in their conclusions. Our study findings do not imply that physicians

should prescribe religious service recommendations for their patients. So they're not recommending that you go to church. But the overwhelming amount of evidence supporting improved health outcomes with faith in God simply cannot be ignored.

David Sandstrom 25:10

Alright, that was a lot of information. This is probably a good place to hit the pause button. And we'll continue exploring this topic next week. Next week as we continue to lay the groundwork and the foundation for all this. There's a question I want to answer before we move on. And that is, if we're designed for health and God's desire for us as health, why are believers sick? That's an important question. We're going to dive into that next week. I can assure you, there's nobody out there talking about this component to our health the way I am. So if you know somebody that you think might benefit from these episodes of this series, I would appreciate you telling them about it. Tell them about the podcast, it's natural health matters. share this episode with them, share it on social media spread the word, because they're not going to find this information anywhere else, I can assure you more go to DavidSandstrom.com. in the show notes for each episode, you'll find links to all the resources that were mentioned, as well as a full transcript with timestamps that you can download for free. In addition, I always include a content upgrade with each show, which is a free download that is designed to help you go deeper with that subject. Once again, thank you for listening, and I'll talk with you next week. Be blessed