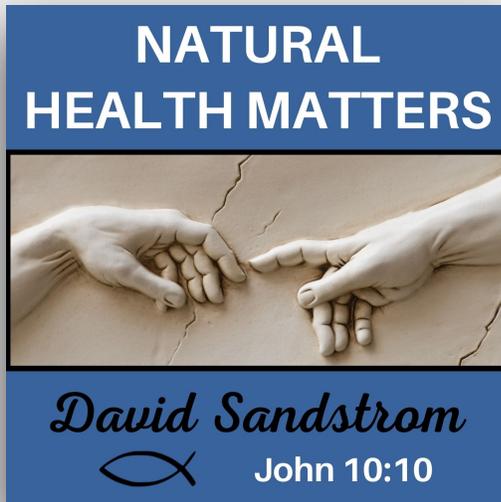


NHM - 61 Spiritual Health part 8: Wired for Relationships



David Sandstrom 0:02

Here's a sample of what you'll hear on this episode of Natural Health Matters. For now, let's just say that if we're going to be in close relationship with others, then we're gonna get hurt. Therefore, we must learn the art of forgiveness. Otherwise we'll push people away, leading to more isolation and loneliness. Living in community is going to be difficult. I like the way John Eldridge puts it in his excellent book *Waking the Dead*. Speaking of community, he says, We're like a pack of porcupines on a winter night, you come together because of the cold, and you're forced apart because of the spines.

Learning to forgive is one of the most important things we can do to strengthen our relationships. 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 61.

David Sandstrom 1:10

In this episode, we're going to be talking about the essence of what the spiritual component to health is, and that is relationships, starting with our loving relationship with God, our love relationship with one another, and the love relationship we have with ourselves. In this episode, I'm going to be leaning heavily on my book, *The Christians Guide to Holistic Health*, specifically, Chapter 36. That's called *Wired for Relationships*. Now, if you've already read the book, don't tune out because it would be an excellent review. And there's some information I share in this episode that is not in the book. If you haven't read my book, and you're enjoying this podcast, I encourage you to pick up a copy, you can go to my website, DavidSandstrom.com/book, the links on that page will take you to Amazon, that's where it's sold. It's available in paperback, Kindle, and Audible. The Bible says, It is not good for the man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable for him. From the very beginning, mankind was designed to be in relationships. The Bible is God's revelation of himself to the human race, and we should take notice that it opens and closes with weddings. In the very first chapter of the first book, we see the wedding of Adam and Eve. Likewise, in the very last chapter of the last book, we see the wedding of the lamb and his beloved. God Himself is a relational being. We see this in a statement, let us

make man in our image in our likeness. Notice the use of the plural pronouns us and our God has always enjoyed relational connectedness with himself through the Trinity. We are created in that great image, which chips off the old block were created as relational beings as well. As such, God pursues relational connectedness with us. The Bible is full of stories that illustrate God's relentless pursuit of his people. God isn't looking for subjects, he's looking for lovers. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends, john 15:13. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8. We love because he first loved us. First, john 4:19. When we enjoy the fruits of relational connectedness, we're honestly doing what we're designed to do. As a result, we promote health and well being. Adam, seem to have it all. He was the first human being, he was created and placed in the Garden of Eden. He had a paradise for living conditions and a close connected relationship with God Himself. He spoke with them face to face. However, God declared that it wasn't good that Adam be alone. This wasn't because God couldn't supply all of Adam's needs. The answer to the question, why was it not good for Adam, to be alone is twofold. First, because Adam was wired for relationships. He had emotional needs that were God-ordained to be met by other human beings. Next, and perhaps more importantly, Adam needed someone to give his love away to. If you haven't already listened to the last episode number 60. On the power of love, you might want to go back and listen to that one. Now because we take a deep dive into what it means to embrace the kind of love God offers. We can only complete God's design for love by first receiving love from him, then freely giving that love away in service to others. That's why it was not good for Adam to be alone. He needed someone to give his love away to. Modern science is confirming that this ancient biblical declaration to pursue relationships is good for our health. We find in a study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology that married people have significantly longer lifespans than single people. This was a large, long-term study. And the researchers found that lifetime single men die up to 17 years younger than married men. Women didn't fare much better. single women under the worst case scenario, die up to 15 years younger. Now, this study on lifetime cycle people is significant because it was a meta-analysis, which means it's a study of studies. It covered 60 years 95 publications, 641 risk estimates and over 500 million people. That's no small study. And furthermore, this study includes all marriages, not just good ones. In a related study published in the Harvard health news, we find this, quote, data from more than 309,000 people found that lack of strong relationships increase the risk of premature death from all causes by 50%. An effect on mortality risk roughly comparable to smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day, and greater than obesity, and physical inactivity. That's worth repeating. A lack of relational connectedness is bad for our health, and it's on par with smoking a pack of cigarettes a day, and worse for our health than obesity, and sedentary lifestyle. I'm gonna put links to these studies in the show

notes because I want you to look at them, go to my website, DavidSandstrom.com/61. And you can click on the links there and read up on these studies on your own. I encourage you to do that. Because this information is actually hard to believe I want you to read it for yourself, don't just take my word for it. It's time the health and wellness industry started recognizing the biblical encouragement to pursue relationships. In fact, it's long overdue. No one's ever going to invent a pill that cures loneliness.

David Sandstrom 7:08

It's nice to see modern science catching up with what the Bible has been teaching for 1000s of years. The Bible is full of relational wisdom. Let me share a small sampling of some of the highlights. In the greatest commandment, Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great, foremost commandment. The second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets." Matthew 22, verses 37 through 40. If you combine that passage with John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly." These two passages together can be thought of as the Bible in a nutshell. Jesus taught that if we love God, love others, and love ourselves, well, we're hitting the bullseye on biblical teaching. That's an astounding statement. In other words, if we get our relationships right, we're well on our way to living the abundant life that he promised. So relationships should be a significant part of our spiritual growth. If getting our relationships right should be our highest priority, then it follows that relational connectedness is the best measure of success in life. It's not a stretch to say that how well our relationships are working, is the best measure of our spiritual maturity. Now, you might be saying right now, hold on a minute, Dave, the best measure of spiritual maturity is our sanctification or our holiness. Yes, that's true., and embracing righteousness or holy living is part of getting our relationship right with God. Jesus said in John 14:15, if you love me, you'll do as I say, if we're in a genuine love relationship with God, then sanctification will follow. We'll be exploring this concept more in some future episodes in this series. We've got to think of God as our loving Heavenly Father. He loves us with a greater love than we can fathom. Ephesians chapter three verses 18. And 19 says this, "may you be able to comprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge."

David Sandstrom 9:35

As any loving father wants what's best for his kids, God wants what's best for us. Unlike earthly fathers, God is omniscient, all knowing. He even knows the future. He knows the outcomes our choices are going to have before we make them. Therefore, we can conclude when God tells us to do something, we can

trust that it's for our benefit. When he tells us to have avoid something gets for our protection. That's why Jesus said, "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." That's Matthew chapter 11, verses 28 to 30. Jesus said, "A new command I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." That's John chapter 13, verses 34 and 35. When God tells us to pursue relational connectedness, he doesn't say, pursue relationships because loneliness is a dangerous risk factor for premature death from all causes. He just says, do it because I said, so. It's up to us to respond the way we expect our own children to respond with trust, and obedience. The point is this. We're not designed to live our lives in isolation. At the core, we're created to be in close relationships with God, and others. By taking this command seriously, once again, we find ourselves cooperating with our design, rather than resisting it. Does that phrase sound familiar? I often talk about collaborating with our bodies designed rather than working against it. Here we're talking about maximizing our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's natural design for our spirits.

David Sandstrom 11:42

God designed us to be intimately connected to him. The spiritual component to health is all about a loving relationship with God, our love relationship with others, and our love relationship with ourselves. I hope this concept is starting to come more into focus. This is the eighth episode in this series on the spiritual model for health. And I'm just now getting the point where I believe I can sum things up. And I've given you enough background information to be able to really let this soak in. The spiritual component to health is all about relationships. I hope that statement has more meaning to you now than when we started the series.T

David Sandstrom 12:19

he Bible has more relational wisdom to share with us. Another simple yet profound teaching found in the Bible on relationships is emotional responding. We're told in Romans 12:15, e"Rjoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep." That's a simple get profound statement. We are to meet people where they are emotionally. In other words, we should respond to emotion with emotion, and respond to logic with logic. That's simple to state, but difficult to practice. For instance, maybe your spouse came home after a stressful day. And they understandably are frustrated, and they want to do a little venting on us. During these times, we're often tempted to say something like, you think that's bad, you should have seen what happened today with the kids. That's not the kind of response that strengthens relationships. A more

appropriate response would be something like, Honey, I'm sorry you had to go through that. Or it pains me to see you so frustrated, because I love you and care about you. The first response, you think that's bad, misses the mark. As far as relational connectedness goes, it takes the focus off of the one who's hurting, and puts it on ourselves. In other words, it's selfish. Again, the Bible has the wisdom to share here, we're told, "Do nothing from selfish or empty conceit. But with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves." Philippians 2:3. If we would practice this kind of selfless, others-centered caring, we could be nurturing our relationships instead of making emotional withdrawals and weakening them. You know, it sounds counterintuitive, but sometimes it's easier to weep with those who weep than it is to rejoice with those who rejoice. Why is that? So? Because of our jealousy? Sure, it's easy to celebrate with our son that just hit the game winning home run. On the other hand, how about when a co worker that's constantly showing up late gets the promotion? whe're after? Then it's a little tougher to rejoice. Or how about the neighbor that drives home with the new BMW, and we're still sporting the 10-year-old Chevy? We've got to remember that someone else's blessing doesn't take anything away from what we have. I learned this lesson back in the late 90s. When I was working for my airline, everyone ya-know believes that airline employees fly for free. That's not entirely true. In the 90s, we used to have to pay for our passes when we wanted to go somewhere. There was a \$15 fee. It was isn't that bad, but it was a fee? Well as a reward to your longevity, my company would give us free passes after 10 years of seniority. Well, when I had nine and a half years seniority, and I was looking forward to getting those free passes, the company decided to give free passes to everyone, even a new hire. And at first, it really bothered me. I said, Wait a minute, I've been waiting 10 years or nine and a half years for those passes. And these people just got hired yesterday. And they have what took me almost 10 years to get in, I realize, but wait a minute, I'm still getting the free passes that I was promised. And in fact, I was even getting them six months earlier than they told me. So really, it was a win. But it first it didn't feel that way. Someone else's blessing doesn't take anything away from me. If we genuinely value relationships, we'll let go of the comparisons, the envy, the jealousy, and celebrate with those who rejoice anyway, even when it's difficult at first, if we're going to nurture our spirits in pursuit of better health, we need to get this right.

David Sandstrom 16:05

Another relational concept we're going to cover here is forgiveness. God is big on forgiveness, it's in the Lord's Prayer. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Matthew 6:12. Why should we forgive? Because withholding forgiveness and holding on to hurts destroys our health. This is so important that I'm going to dedicate a whole episode on forgiveness in the near future. So be on the lookout for that one. It's going to be powerful. And I'd be willing to bet that someone in the Natural Nation, someone in listening audience

needs to hear that message. For now, let's just say that if we're going to be in close relationship with others, then we're going to get hurt. Therefore, we must learn the art of forgiveness. Otherwise, we'll push people away, leading to more isolation and loneliness. Living in community is going to be difficult. I like the way John Eldridge puts it in his excellent book *Waking the Dead*. Speaking of community, he says, "We're like a pack of porcupines on a winter night, you come together because of the cold, and you're forced apart because of the spines." Learning to forgive is one of the most important things we can do to strengthen our relationships. When we forgive, we find ourselves benefiting from it as well. I like what Louis Smedes he said he was a professor of theology and ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. He wrote the book *Forgive and Forget*. Here's what he says about forgiveness, quote, "To forgive, is to set the prisoner free, only to discover that the prisoner was you."

David Sandstrom 17:45

The last piece of relational wisdom we're going to touch on here is pursuing peace with everyone. In the book of Romans, we see this teaching quote, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." That's Romans 12:18. This concept is related to forgiveness, but distinctly different. They're related because they're both unilateral are one way where to forgive whether the offending party asks for forgiveness or not. In the same fashion, if there's relational discord, we should examine ourselves and see if anything we've done may be contributing to the problem. Do we have any belief, attitude or behavior that needs to be changed? It all starts with beliefs because our beliefs determine our thoughts. Our thoughts determine our actions and our actions determine our outcomes. Notice this passage says, "If possible", being relationally connected and at peace with everyone is not possible. However, the passage I just quoted says, "as far as it depends on you". This means we need to take personal responsibility for our role in the conflict. For the sake of relational peace, and our own health and well being, were encouraged to acknowledge our role and make the necessary adjustments. This may mean apologizing and seeking forgiveness, it may mean changing long held beliefs such as they meant to hurt me, or he's just a bad person. Or how about this one? That's just the way I am. We've got to remember, we all have wounds from the past that are affecting our present, and hurting people hurt people.

David Sandstrom 19:30

My wife and I have been leading marriage workshops for the last seven years. And one of the things we've learned is that it takes two to tango. Rarely is the discord entirely one person's fault. They may have heard us but we very well may have wounded them too. We all need a little grace once in a while. Maybe it's time to give ourselves permission to be human and imperfect and admit our own mistakes. That can go a long way toward relational harmony. And it'll help

bring about the health benefits of the spiritual component to health. If we've made it past the age of 4 or 5, you can bet there's someone in our lives that we can do a better job using these relational care principles with. We all need to exercise our relational care muscles. I suggest spending some time in prayer and ask God to convict us. In the areas where we've come up short. We shouldn't beat ourselves up over mistakes made in the past. Moving forward, armed with this kind of information and a desire to improve our relational connectedness. We can do better. Our friends and loved ones will notice and will be healthier for it.

David Sandstrom 20:37

So let's summarize. God is a relational being and were created in his image were chips off the old block. Adams seemed to have it all. Yet God said it was not good for Adam to be alone. The Bible teaches that we're to pursue relationships with abandon. A lack of relational connectedness has been shown to be as harmful as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day, and more destructive to health than obesity, and sedentary lifestyle. When we pursue relationships, we cooperate with our natural design. The Bible has some great wisdom to share on improving our relationships. Some of the highlights include emotional responding, forgiveness, and examining our role in disharmony. We all need to work at exercising our relational care muscles. Again, this information is based on my book *The Christians Guide to Holistic Health*, specifically the section on the spirit and chapter 36. "Wired for relationships." If you enjoyed this episode, you're really going to enjoy my book, I encourage you to go to my website, DavidSandstrom.com/book, and pick up a copy today. It's available in paperback, Kindle, and uAdule. For 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