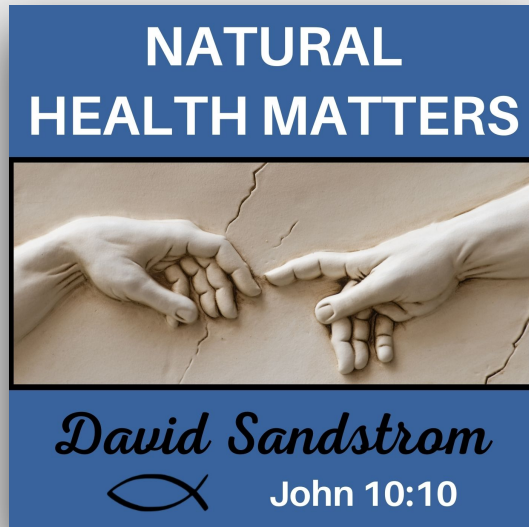


## NHM - 63 Spiritual Health part 9: Prayer & Meditation



David Sandstrom 0:00

Here's a sample of what you'll hear on this episode of Natural Health Matters. Our goal should be to get our will in alignment with the will of God. Remember, we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's designed for spirit, mind and body. We don't ask God to get in alignment with us, we get in alignment with him. So, if you want to build health by enjoying more fruit of the Spirit, love, joy and peace, put on humility. And a great place for that to start is with our prayer lives. By all means, do pray for healing.

When Jesus rose Lazarus from the dead, he did it with a prayer. But put yourself in the right frame of mind first with the right motives, as James suggests, 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 63.

David Sandstrom 1:04

Today, we're going to be talking about two crucial aspects to the spiritual component of health. And they are prayer and meditation. If you've been following along on this spiritual component series, you might be saying to yourself, Well, he's nine episodes in when's he going to talk about prayer? Well, we're going to do that today. With this episode, I'm going to be leaning heavily on my book the Christians guide to holistic health, specifically, Chapter 37 on prayer and meditation. If you find this topic interesting, you may want to pick up a copy of my book the Christians Guide to Holistic Health, it's available on Amazon in paperback, Kindle, and audible. Let's get started.

David Sandstrom 1:46

Smartphones and social media have invaded our personal space like nothing else in history, the average internet user has seven social media accounts, and 97% of people between the ages of 16 and 64 have logged into at least one social network in the last month. 78% of 18 to 24 year olds use Snapchat, and 71% visit that platform multiple times a day. We're not designed to be bombarded with this kind of 24 seven access to news and information. That kind of online access and the pseudo relationships that it brings is harmful to

our health. Research shows that excessive engagement with social media can triple our risk of having anxiety and depression. Even without social media, unplugging from the outside world, and the hectic lifestyles that most of us live with, is a necessary practice. Limiting electronics is a great start. But simply turning off notifications on our phones is not enough, we should be making the most of our downtime. If we care about our health, we've got to create some space each day to not only unplug, but to connect with God in a personal way. In previous episodes, we talked about working in as opposed to working out two effective ways of working in that cost nothing and anyone can implement immediately, our prayer and meditation. These spiritual practices can powerfully impact our personal health transformation for the better. I'm combining these two disciplines because they're two sides of the same coin. Prayer is talking to God. Meditation is listening to God. Christians throughout the centuries have known that there's something special about these two disciplines. Prayer helps us to acknowledge that we're not in control. There is something very settling deep in our spirits, knowing that God is in control, and we're not. In addition, by getting quiet and spending some time alone with God, we experience an almost immediate sense of peace and well being releasing control and the order that goes along with it are very much health promoting. As followers of Christ, we enjoy a personal relationship with God, the King of kings. Prayer, nurtures our relationship with him and transforms us from the inside out. For those of us that are married, imagine if we only talked with our spouse a few minutes once each week on Sunday mornings, we wouldn't have much of a relationship would we? The same is true with God. To have a meaningful relationship. We need to be talking with God regularly. I need to hear this message as much as anybody. I can get busy and tied up with things going on with my job and irregular sleeping patterns. And I don't have time to spend that morning time with God once in a while. But I can sense the difference throughout the day when I do. I found that the best time for me to spend time with God is in the morning before the world starts screaming for my attention. This helps to set me up for the day ahead. You may find that before going to bed is the best time to commune with God in prayer. That way, your mind will process whatever truth the Holy Spirit may have illuminated in your prayer time while you sleep. That's a good technique.

David Sandstrom 5:10

Our prayer and meditation should always be centered around the Word of God. When we pray, we're not praying to a higher power or offering up generic prayers to the universe or reciting ritualistic chants. We're sharing our hearts with the lover of our souls, our Creator, our Redeemer. God is our Heavenly Father, Romans 8:15 says, you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba, Father. He's personal, and he cares deeply about our concerns. He's always available and never gets tired of hearing from us. In fact, he craves our worship, love and attention.

David Sandstrom 5:55

Jesus modeled prayer for us. In Mark chapter one, we see Jesus preaching, healing, and casting out demons. And starting in verse 33, we see this in the whole city was gathered together at the door, that he healed many who are sick with various diseases and cast out many demons. Now, in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, he went out and departed to a solitary place. And there he prayed. And Simon, and those who were with him search for him. When they found him, they said to him, everyone is looking for you. But he said to them, let us go into the next towns, that I might preach there also, because for this purpose, I have come forth. Isn't that astounding? What a puzzling way for Jesus to behave? His ministry is taking off, people are noticing everyone wants to hear from him. And he says, Let's go somewhere else. I believe Jesus pulled away from the crowd to get alone with God the Father, so he could be refreshed and rejuvenated, and to receive guidance from God the Father, we do well to model that pattern. Should we pray for healing? Absolutely. We have a story in the same chapter from Mark one where Jesus cleansed the leper because the man with leprosy, asked to be healed. In Mark chapter one, starting in verse 39, we see this "and he, Jesus was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons. Now, a leper came to him, imploring Him, kneeling down to him and saying to him, if you are willing, you can make me clean. Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out his hand, and touched him and said to him, I am willing, be cleansed. As soon as he had spoken, immediately, the leprosy left him and he was cleansed." Again, this is excellent behavior for us to model.

David Sandstrom 8:04

I've found that our prayer lives are enhanced when we use the acronym ACTS. A stands for adoration. C is for confession, T is Thanksgiving. And finally S is supplication. The order here is important. Let's talk about and let's let's unpack them just a little bit.

David Sandstrom 8:25

A adoration. The best place to start praying is adoration or expressing our worship to God. "Let me praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he." Psalm 99:3. we can praise him for any of his attributes, we can praise Him for His love, His Majesty, his wisdom, his glory, we could acknowledge his creative power. We can express our amazement at his patience and creativity. By doing so, we're confessing that he's God and therefore in control, and we're not. God loves to hear our praises, and it puts us in the right frame of mind to humbly confess our sins to him. Do you want to draw near to God, praise Him. Psalm 22:3 says "God inhabits the praises of his people."

David Sandstrom 9:17

C is for confession. We're told, if we confess our sins, "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. For years, this first puzzled me. This seems to be saying that if we don't confess each and every one of our sins, then they aren't forgiven. Thankfully, that's not the case. If we've accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of our lives, all of our sins have been forgiven, past, present future. "As far as the east is from the west. so far has he removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12. So what can we learn from 1 John 1:9? God is interested in changing us from the inside out. God doesn't want to leave us in the state we're in. He wants to see us grow and fulfill our full potential. When we confess our sins to Him in prayer, we're coming into agreement with what he says on the matter. The prayer first 1 John 1:9 is referring to is about our personal transformation. It's not about getting our sins forgiven or performing our Christian duty. Prayer helps us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Romans 12:2. by admonishing us to confess our sins to Him in prayer. God is lovingly drawing us into His goodness. True love cannot be coerced or forced, it must be freely given. By willingly confessing our sins and agreeing with Him in prayer. We're expressing our love for God and becoming more like Him. This way, we grow in our capacity to love him, and love others.

David Sandstrom 11:02

Thanksgiving, thanking God, and expressing gratitude for all that he's done for us is our reasonable response to his great love. 1 John 4:19. We can thank him for the big thing such as His atoning death on the cross His resurrection or sending the Holy Spirit to be a comforter. We can also thank him for the relational opportunities we have such as our spouse, our families, our friends, we can thank him for providing for us, our homes, our clothes, cars, computers, we should also thank them for the not so obvious things such as our eyes, arms, legs, tastebuds, good food, beautiful sunsets, flowers, or anything else you can think of. Being grateful is an integral part of nurturing our spiritual health to maximize our physical health. In a 2015 article published in Psychology Today, the author's point out that gratitude has been shown to improve relationships, reduce pain, increase happiness, and reduce depression, enhance empathy, and reduce aggression, improve sleep, boost self esteem, and reduce the effects of trauma, including PTSD. I'm gonna put a link to that article in the show notes. Try creating a grateful journal, and write something you're grateful for each day. After a year, you'll have 365 things to be grateful for. I found this practice to be an excellent stress reducer. When I'm feeling stressed, I pull up my gratefulness journal and I start thanking God for things. It's difficult to feel grateful and stressed at the same time. I find that practice very useful.

David Sandstrom 12:47

S is for supplication. Supplication is simply asking God for things in our fast-food. I want it now culture, we can be tempted to start at this step. But doing that is to treat God like a genie in a bottle. We only allow him out to grant us some selfish wish that we may have, then we put them away and go about living our lives without him. That's arrogance. James, the brother of Jesus taught that we should ask for things but in the right frame of mind, quote, "You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives. So that you may spend it on your pleasures." James 4:3. When we present our request to God, and those requests are aligned with his will, we should rightfully expect amazing things to happen because what our prayers align with God's thoughts and desires. The answer to those prayers is all but in the bag. Although we don't know the timing, but God already wants to see those things come to pass. So wouldn't that make getting the answer we desire more likely? Sure it does. The key is getting our will in alignment with the will of God. That's literally what it means to pray in Jesus name.

David Sandstrom 14:03

Again, the timing behind the ACTS format to prayer is important. by exercising this kind of patience with our prayer lives and not starting and ending with requests, we develop humility, by starting with adoration, then moving on to confession and then Thanksgiving. And finally supplication asking for things. We demonstrate humility. The Bible says "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." James 4:6. And remember from Episode 59, we talked about the expanded definition for the word grace as God's divine influence on the human heart. receiving God's grace or his influence on our hearts is the key to nurturing our spirit. In this brings more love, joy and peace, which are all health promoting. Humility puts us in the right frame of mind to come Before God with our requests. This way, we can better make the shift from selfish requests to others centered, loving ones. We generally can't get there if we start with asking for things. Our goal should be to get our will in alignment with the will of God. Remember, we maximize our health potential by aligning our lives more fully with God's designed for spirit, mind and body. We don't ask God to get in alignment with us, we get in alignment with him. So, if you want to build health by enjoying more fruit of the Spirit, love, joy and peace, put on humility. And a great place for that to start is with our prayer lives. By all means, do pray for healing. When Jesus rose Lazarus from the dead, he did it with a prayer. But put yourself in the right frame of mind first with the right motives, as James suggests. Remember, the primary purpose of prayer is to change us from the inside out. God doesn't need our prayers. He's self sufficient. But because he's a relational being, he's chosen to partner with us in life. In order to leverage that partnership, we need to develop humble prayer lives.

David Sandstrom 16:14

Now the other side of this coin is meditation. Secular meditation with no spiritual connection to it has health benefits. It's been shown to lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety, lower cholesterol, manage chronic pain, and even increased lifespan. Spiritual meditation, acknowledging God is even more effective. With secular meditation, participants are trained to empty their minds and focus on their breath or even nothing at all. Biblical meditation is completely different. We're not emptying our minds as some cults would suggest, when scripture admonishes us to meditate, we're always instructed to meditate on God's Word and His attributes. We're told, "Cease striving and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10. We're not told, cease striving and empty your minds have any coherent thought. We're ruminating on the Word of God, and listening with the eyes and ears of our hearts. God desires to speak to us personally, and faithful followers will hear his voice. Jesus said, My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me, John 10:27. The best way to hear His voice is to spend time studying his word, and listening through meditative prayer. To similar biblical teachings on meditation are Joshua 1:8, and Proverbs 4:20 through 22. "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, then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success." And an open book of Proverbs chapter four, verses 20 through 22. We see this very similar, "My son, give attention to my words, incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your sight. Keep them in the midst of your heart, for their life to those who find them, and health to all their body. In both passages, we're encouraged to meditate deeply on the Word of God. I love the outcomes that are associated with those who practice biblical meditation. First we see prosperity and success, Joshua one eight. Next, we have life and bodily health in Proverbs 4:22. We can't name it and claim it as someone suggests, we're not guaranteed success or health. These statements are principles. They're the natural outcome of doing things God's way. They represent the concept of reaping what we've sown Galatians 6:7. They set us up for success. "Oh, how I love your law. It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever mine." Psalm 119, verses 97 and 98.

David Sandstrom 19:17

So what does all this have to do with health? Remember, God's love is others centered. As a result, his intentions toward us always have our growth and well being in mind. We're admonished over and over in Scripture to pray and meditate. I won't bore you but this lots of passages. Through prayer or meditation, we're transformed into His likeness. When we become more like Him, we exude more fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, etc. Hope you know by now, love, joy and peace, promote health. We can do that by spending some time in prayer and biblical meditation.

David Sandstrom 19:59

So let's summarize. Social media and smartphones can't create stress that we were never designed to bare. prayer and meditation are two sides of the same coin. Numerous scientific studies show that prayer and meditation are good for our health. Our prayer lives can be enhanced by using the acronym ACTS, Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. Christian meditation, that focuses on the Word of God is more effective than secular meditation that encourages the participant to empty their minds. Through prayer and meditation, were transformed into the likeness of God. This leads to more fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, etc. This fruit is health promoting.

David Sandstrom 20:50

Okay, I think that's enough for this week. If you're enjoying the podcast, especially this series, tell your friends about it. I'd really appreciate it if you would spread the word by letting people know about these this as a resource. For more go to [DavidSandstrom.com](http://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