**Biblical Response to Physical Illness**

***God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be thrown into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.***

**Psalm 46:1-4,7**

BIBLICAL RESPONSE AND HOPE IN PHYSICAL ILLNESS

1. Physical pain and illness is unavoidable and just as in trials and suffering, the important point for us is our response to pain and sickness.

Chronic pain and sickness affect us physically and spiritually.

We must \_\_LEARN\_\_ how to develop a \_\_BIBLICAL\_\_ \_FOCUS\_ and \_RESPONSE\_ to sickness and pain while pursuing medical treatment and resolution.

2. Baseline: Psalm 73:23-26, 28

Nevertheless I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand.

24 With Your counsel You will guide me, And afterward receive me to glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

26 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge,

That I may tell of all Your works.

3. We need Someone bigger, mightier, and Sovereign when we are puny:

Isaiah 40:25-31

31 Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength;

They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired,

They will walk and not become weary.

4. No amount of pain or sickness causes us to sin nor is it a rationale or justification to sin

Job 2:10 – … In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

We can’t overlook or minimize sin in ourselves or others in our compassion and giving comfort.

5. We are physical and spiritual beings (Eccl 12:7)

Man is made of two parts:

> \_\_\_BODY\_\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_MATERIAL\_\_\_\_

> \_\_\_SOUL\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_IMMATERIAL\_\_\_\_

Therefore, sickness and pain are a physical problem and a spiritual problem. It’s a physical problem because of the fall and curse

6. Pain and sickness is a spiritual problem in two ways:

> Experience of sickness and pain as a direct effect of Adam’s disobedience.

> Forces us to respond either rightly or sinfully. Always a response, but never neutral.

7. What we are up against: The \_\_\_\_FOG OF CRISIS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Really hard to hear sound theology. It’s not that they no longer believe it to be true or that they don’t need it. Rather, the fog of poor health means it’s harder to take it in at that time.

8. What we are up against: Significance tied with Loss

Sometimes physical pain isn’t the hardest part of the trial. It’s what we lose because of the pain, like the dignity of work and independence.

9. What we are up against: \_\_\_”NEW NORMAL”\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

New can be hard, especially when new doesn’t fit our definition of what we want in life. We just don’t feel like ourselves. We long for the good old days instead of seeing what God is up to with this new normal.

10. Sinful Responses:

> Get rid of this at any \_\_\_COST\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

> God is \_\_\_PUNISHING\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ me.

> God owes me an \_\_\_EASIER\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ life.

> I can’t do what God calls me to because of my condition.

Leads to feelings of fear, anxiety, anger, bitterness, self-pity, and despair making your sickness and pain worse.

11. God-Centered Responses:

> God will provide what I need to endure.

> God understands the depths of my illness.

> I don’t understand WHY, but I lean on Him.

Leads to joy, hope, perseverance and other-centeredness

1 Peter 1: 3-9 provides encouragement in all trials and suffering including pain and sickness.

12. General Principles.

A. Personal ministry, discipleship, and biblical counseling can help a person with physical illness, even though we do not have a \_\_PHYSICIAN’S\_\_\_ knowledge.

To qualify as a physical illness, a condition must show \_DAMAGE\_\_ of the tissues of the body (\_\_PATHOLOGY\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_).

B. The person’s \_\_RESPONSE\_\_ to the illness is what matters. Strength of personal ministry is in dealing with the illness from a biblical perspective rather than a medical perspective.

1. Information from the person is helpful; do good data gathering. Don’t argue about whether a disorder diagnosis is viable. Your goal is to help redirect your/his/her life.

2. What he/she \_\_THINKS\_\_\_ about what’s happening matters.

13. Shepherding and Counseling Principles

A. Adequate data gathering is essential.

1. Learn basic facts about the condition.

a. Learn how it was \_DIAGNOSED\_\_ (is there provable organic damage).

b. Understand the \_\_EFFECTS\_\_ on the person’s way of life, and how the person \_\_RESPONDS\_\_\_\_ to these effects.

c. What are the person’s \_THOUGHTS\_\_ and attitudes about the condition?

d. What are the \_\_EFFECTS\_\_ of medication? Are there any possible \_\_COMPLICATIONS\_\_\_ the person will have to deal with as a result of medications?

2. Learn about the person’s personal relationship with the Lord.

a. Don’t assume he/she has an accurate understanding of salvation. Spend time ensuring that the person understands the basics of salvation = condemnation, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

b. Does he/she see God at work in the illness?

c. What is the person’s understanding regarding the sufficiency and authority of God’s Word?- 2 Peter 2:2-4; Hebrews 4:12.

d. Does the person accept God’s sovereignty? You may need to teach him/her to rest in God’s sovereignty? - Daniel 4:35; Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 55:8-9

They must have a proper view of God’s sovereignty and their own place in God’s providence and will.

B. Give much biblical \_\_HOPE\_\_\_.

1. Hope is how pain and suffering can be relieved. Physical relief may be delayed but the ability to bear up under the pain and suffering may be strengthened.

a. Hope is based on the character of God according to how He has revealed Himself in His Word (Isaiah 46:9-13).

b. Hope grows as the person is faithful to wait with patient expectation on \_\_GOD’S\_\_ \_\_TIMING\_\_ for the fulfillment of those promises (Romans 5:3-5).

c. Hope has a \_\_FUTURE\_\_\_\_ orientation as it looks toward the reality of heaven as greater than the reality of the problem (1 Peter 1:13).

1 Peter 1:13 – Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

2. Do not \_MINIMIZE\_ or \_MAXIMIZE\_\_\_ the person’s condition.

C. Consider and evaluate biblical reasons for the sickness.

1. \_\_SIN\_ (Hebrews 12:7-11). Distant or proximate cause —fallen mankind or personal sin.

2. \_BENEFIT\_\_ to the person (James 1:2-5, 16-18, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

3. God’s \_\_GLORY\_\_\_\_\_\_ (John 9:3; Isa 64:1-2).

D. Apply appropriate biblical principles.

E. Give homework based on those principles for the person to apply.

1. Encourage the person to follow physician’s instructions for good health.

2. The main emphasis of homework needs to be on applying life to God’s Word so that the person’s response to the illness reflects growing Christ-likeness and gives God glory.

3. Homework ideas—Assign reading Job 38-42. Assign memorizing Psalm 103.

14. Biblical Victory Principles for People Regarding Illness.

A. \_\_VICTORY\_\_ can be part of illness (1 Corinthians 15:57, Romans 8:35-37).

The person must think biblically about all aspects of the illness (2 Corinthians 10:5).

1. Victory can be part of illness (1 Corinthians 15:57, Romans 8:35-37).

a. Trials, illness, and suffering are part of life, and are not prevented by a godly life (1 Peter 2:20; John 16:33).

b. God in His sovereignty controls all aspects of life (Acts 17:24-27, Job 1:21, 1 Chronicles 29:12).

c. God will never send the believer more than he can handle (Philippians 4:13, 1 Corinthians 10:13).

2. Victory means the believer is characterized by biblical principles rather than suffering.

That means the person will not be in constant relief from pain and suffering, but can know relief due to a biblical focus. (Phil. 4:6-7; 2 Cor. 1:3-5; Rom. 5:3-5)

B. Victory can come \_\_BECAUSE\_\_ of the illness (Romans 8:28-29, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18; Rom 8:18).

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 –

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

1. Focus on God’s purposes can be greater than focus on pain relief.

2. This does not mean the person will not seek relief, but when relief does not come, this focus provides a \_\_RESPONSE\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ —God’s glory.

3. Even when illness is \_TERMINAL\_\_, God is simply changing the direction of the person’s ministry, not stopping it.

4. God’s grace is sufficient and available, and is bigger than the suffering

(2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

5. Consider Job (Job 1:1 – 2:10).

C. Victory \_\_FROM\_\_\_\_\_\_ the illness.

1. There may be physical alleviation of pain and suffering (Daniel 3:16-18; Ephesians 5:20).

2. In heaven there will be no pain and suffering (Revelation 21:4).

a. Paul struggled with his desire for heaven or staying here to minister (Philippians 1:23-25).

b. Keeping dying people informed of what is happening prevents panic and helps prepare them for difficulties that lie ahead.

c. Every person will die as the result of an illness, unless they have a sudden death or the rapture occurs.

d. The ultimate end of illness may be that it is the vehicle God is using to bring the believer home to heaven.

3. If the illness is terminal, teach the person to spend time focusing on the glories of heaven (Revelation 21:3-4. 22:1-5).

4. The promise of eternity with Christ removes sting of death (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

15. Clinging to Hope in Enduring Chronic Pain and Sickness.

> Prayer: Psalm 13.

> Promises: Scripture truth, hope and promises.

> People: The Church – “One Anothers”.

16. Hope. Prepare well: (Matt. 7:24-27).

Am I taking in theology that accurately portrays the Christian life as one of conformity to Christ or one of conforming God to whatever I want?

In what ways can I gain wisdom in applying biblical truth so that all that head knowledge doesn’t just stay there?

How can I cultivate relationships that will steer me towards godliness?

In what ways can I start to hold God’s gifts to me more loosely?

17. Hope. Remember the purpose of trials: (1 Pet. 1:6-9; James 1:2-3, 12).

What could God be up to here?

How has God used previous trials in my life to grow me into His likeness?

Do I treasure union with Christ and growing into His likeness even above good health?

As a caregiver, rather than be bitter or complain, how can I persevere in being the tangible manifestation that God never leaves nor forsakes my loved one?

18. Hope. Hold God’s good gifts loosely (Job 1:20-22).

How can I be thankful for what I’ve lost or experience it in new ways?

How can I calibrate my affection for what I’ve lost to where it should be–something I’m very grateful for, but not something I must have?

In what ways have I found my primary identity or joy through my spouse, work, abilities, or enjoyment of something?

When my loss of independence leads me to feel a lack of dignity, how does being made in God’s image intersect with that?

19. Hope. Rest in God’s unchanging nature (Ps. 63:3).

Is God still who He says He is in this new normal? If so, how does that color my view of this new normal?

How do I balance appropriate grieving with being joyful always (1 Thess. 5:16-18)?

In what ways can God make something beautiful out of something new?