

Does God Heal Today?



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By Roderick C. Meredith

The Bible shows us that a day is coming when massive disease epidemics will ravage our world.

Doctors and hospitals will be overwhelmed with the sick and dying. Those who have not learned to trust God will have nowhere to turn.

But if you learn today to trust and obey God, you can be blessed—perhaps even more than you realize!

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Does God Heal Today?

The subject of divine healing is greatly neglected by most professing Christians. It is rarely even discussed in “mainstream” churches.

Why? The primary reason for this neglect is that a very real Satan the devil has *blinded* the vast majority of humanity—including most professing Christians! Today, many churchgoers do not really *study* the Bible. They do not look to it as the real authority in their lives. They are content to follow the teachings and traditions of men—which are all too often diametrically opposed to the Bible. Also, many have seen the “tent meetings” put on by various “evangelists” where there is a lot of whooping, hollering, and mass hysteria—and *precious little genuine healing!*

As always, we should ask, “What does the Bible actually say? Can we **prove** this matter of divine healing clearly from the inspired word of God?”

Yes. We certainly can! And the biblical proofs are more plain and pervasive than you have probably ever imagined.

But what about doctors? Should they be our main focus when we are ill? And what about the spread of HIV/AIDS, the Ebola virus, “mad cow” disease, and other maladies that doctors **cannot** cure?

If we truly *believe* Jesus’ own prophecies of **end-time** disease epidemics, *we had better be realistic about where we should put our ultimate trust!*

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Many are very quick to trust doctors: “Don’t we now have penicillin and other wonderful drugs that can cure almost anything?”

No!

Scores of top medical doctors and scientists have reported that new “supergerms” are coming along, and that antibiotics and other drugs that have been (in some cases) successfully used in the past are often not effective anymore. Note carefully these statements:

Antibiotics, the very drugs that have saved millions of lives over the last 60 years, now are failing their mission, being outsmarted by the oldest, most successful life form on the planet: bacteria. The cause is the mishandling of the very antibiotics created to cure infections. Decades of overuse in treating humans and misuse in animal food production have caused mutant bacteria to flourish, creating new generations of supergerms impervious to virtually all known antibiotic treatment. In short, our saviors have become our assassins.... “The bugs are getting better and we’re running out of drugs,” says Barry Kreiswirth, a principal investigator at Newark’s Public Health Research Institute and director of its TB Center. “I mean, everything is going in the wrong direction.... We’re going back to 1944, before penicillin, because we can’t treat these infections.... We’re just creating this monster” (“The New Plague: How Killer Germs Have Defeated Our Last Antibiotic,” *The Star-Ledger*, December 7, 2003).

Medical Advice Only *Half* Right?

Also, think about these powerful statements from Lisa Sanders, M.D., as reported in *The New York Times* (March 16, 2003):

A decade ago, I stood alongside my 99 fellow freshmen as we were welcomed into the ranks of medicine in a “white coat ceremony.” Here, on our first day of med school, we were presented with the short white coats that proclaimed us part of the mystery and the discipline of medicine. During that ceremony, the dean said something that was repeated throughout my education: half of what we teach you here is wrong—unfortunately, we don’t know which half.

At the time it was hard to believe. Within those walls, in the anatomy lab, in the lecture hall, you feel that you are being shown the secrets of how the body is put together, how it lives, how it works, how it dies. It has the feel of authority and certainty. Like math, it has a feeling of inevitability.

But now, as a practicing doctor and teacher of residents, I relive that dean's aphorism daily. Medicine is, and always has been, an evolving discipline. And this necessarily means that what we know about medicine is constantly changing; that medicine is forever putting forth, and simultaneously upending, assumptions.... This is particularly true at this moment. Virtually all of our medical therapeutic options are being questioned, evaluated and re-evaluated by researchers across the globe ("Medicine's Progress, One Setback at a Time").

Dr. Sanders admits that some of the top professors in medical school acknowledge that "half" of what they teach may be **wrong**. So in which "half" are *you* going to put your faith?

Think!

Additionally, note carefully the following facts:

- Seventy percent of doctors treating Medicare patients flunked an exam on their knowledge of prescribing for older adults (Sidney Wolfe et al., *Worst Pills, Best Pills: A Consumer's Guide to Avoiding Drug-Induced Death or Illness*, 2005, p. 7).
- "Doctors with the worst malpractice records keep treating patients: Among the nearly 100,000 doctors who made payments to resolve malpractice claims from 2001 to 2011, roughly 800 were responsible for 10% of all the dollars paid and their total payouts averaged about \$5.2 million per doctor. Yet fewer than one in five faced any sort of licensure action by their state medical boards" ("Thousands of doctors practicing despite errors, misconduct," *USA Today*, August 20, 2013).
- The costs of drug-related injuries and deaths in the U.S. are estimated at more than \$136 billion annually, with ADRs (Adverse Drug Reactions) occurring for about 5–20 percent of hospital patients (Patrick McDonnell and Michael Jacobs, "Hospital Ad-

missions Resulting from Preventable Adverse Drug Reactions,” *Annals of Pharmacotherapy*, vol. 36, September 2002).

- “In 2013, of the 43,982 drug overdose deaths in the United States, 22,767 (51.8 percent) were related to prescription medications” (“Non-Medical Prescription Opioid Use and Prescription Opioid Use Disorder: A Review,” *National Center for Biotechnology Information*, September 3, 2015).

Healing, Medicine, and Health

“Healing vs. medicine” has long been an issue of discussion in the faith community. Doctors and medicine have been attacked as evil, yet the Bible three times records Christ saying that physicians are for the sick (Matthew 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31), and Luke is called the “beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14). Medicines have been categorized as evil poisons that defile the body, and the use of natural substances as more virtuous. Yet many medicines are derived from plant substances, and their composition is merely more consistent and concentrated. People will go to a dentist, yet reject going to a doctor, even though the dentist may perform some procedures similar to what a doctor might perform.

People have been told to claim God’s promise of healing (Mark 1:40–42) and have been told that their not being healed is due to a lack of faith. God used the Apostle Paul to heal others, yet when Paul on three occasions asked God to heal him (2 Corinthians 12:8–9), God revealed that it was not His will to heal Paul—that Paul could “make it” without being healed. Paul’s infirmity was due to God’s will—not to Paul’s lack of faith.

People who died trusting God, and avoided going to doctors, have been deemed more righteous than some who took advantage of what medical science had to offer to prolong life. On the other hand, in recent years many have ceased looking to God altogether—they simply run to a doctor for treatment.

In retrospect, we see that many ideas that have circulated in the faith community have not always been consistent with the Scriptures, and seem to lack balance in their approach to the subject of healing, medicine, and health. There is a need for better understanding of these subjects and related biblical principles. *Faith* is obviously a major factor (Matthew 9:29). Where we place our *trust* is also a factor (2

Chronicles 16:12). Getting *advice* from a doctor who is knowledgeable about the human body and disease is not the same as putting *blind trust* in any medical practitioner—the Bible *does say* that there is safety in a multitude of counsel (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22).

The Bible offers several perspectives on healing. Healing is a prerogative of God. It is described as one of the *benefits* that God makes available to human beings (Psalm 103:1–5). It is also described as a *gift* from God (1 Corinthians 12:7–11). Healing is the forgiveness of sin (Mark 2:1–12). Medicines and surgeries do not heal; they merely treat symptoms—sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Divine healing is not the same as working with natural means of repairing the body. God heals in His time and according to His purpose, not according to our demands and wishes.

Healing played a dramatic role in the first-century Church to attract attention to the message being preached. Yet even the historian Edward Gibbon indicates that this dramatic manifestation of power seems to have been withdrawn at some point in time (*The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1862, p. 179). Yet Scripture indicates that God may yet again pour out this power more frequently and dramatically as we come closer to the end of the age—and closer to God.

In the broader scope, God is not only concerned with healing our bodies. He also wants us to learn how to live a way of life. If our physical problems are healed every time we make a mistake, we may not learn the vital lesson that we must learn to manage our bodies wisely and live in harmony with physical laws. When we are sick, we are not only instructed to be anointed and look to God, but to *examine* our lives and behaviors to see what we might have done wrong and *repent* of those actions (James 5:14–16). Healing is not simply a mechanism for bailing us out of problems we may have brought upon ourselves—it is important that we also learn lessons so we can teach others. While prayer has a *vital* place in restoring health, we are also told that “whatever we ask we receive from Him, *because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight*” (1 John 3:22).

Healing and the Gospel

Looking carefully at the ministry of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, it is clear that divine healing was a vital part of the preaching of the Gospel. The book of Matthew tells us how Jesus began His ministry: “And

Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people*” (Matthew 4:23).

You will notice that Jesus constantly did *three things* in His ministry:

1. Preached the Gospel
2. Healed the sick
3. Cast out demons

An incident in Peter’s home shows us more about the background of divine healing: “When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and *healed all who were sick*, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘*He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses*’” (Matthew 8:16–17). Here, Matthew explains that Jesus’ healings were to fulfill the scripture in Isaiah that shows that Jesus—the Messiah—“bore our sicknesses.” Matthew was quoting the famous passage in Isaiah 53 that clearly described the role of the coming Messiah. The Messiah was to be “despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (v. 3). The inspired Isaiah also tells us, “Yet it was our *sickness* that he was bearing, our suffering that he endured. We accounted him plagued, smitten and afflicted by God; but he was wounded because of our sins, crushed because of our iniquities. He bore the chastisement that made us whole, and by his bruises we were *healed*” (Isaiah 53:4–5, *Jewish Publication Society Tanakh*, emphasis added).

The Jewish scholars who performed the above translation *do* know how to translate the Hebrew Bible! Those scriptures correctly indicate that Jesus bore “our *sickness*.” The vast majority of scholars also acknowledge this, as can be seen in footnotes in the *New King James Version*, the *Revised Standard Version*, and other translations of the Bible. The *New International Version* renders as “infirmities” the word that the *King James Version* and *New King James Version* render as “griefs.” Scholars *know* that the word translated as “griefs” literally means “sicknesses” in Isaiah’s original Hebrew.

In Matthew 10, we find that Jesus gave His twelve leading disciples authority to heal and to cast out demons: “And when He had

called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to *heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease*" (v. 1). But many will say, "Wasn't this just for the twelve original Apostles, and *not* for us today?"

No! In Luke 10:1–9, we read that Jesus gave "seventy others" this same authority to heal! Notice: "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. *And heal the sick* there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (vv. 8–9). And at the very **end** of His human life, Jesus gave a basic instruction for *all* of His faithful servants down through time. He commanded, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.... And these **signs** will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; *they will lay hands on the sick*, and they will recover" (Mark 16:15, 17–18).

A "Sign" of the True Church

One of the "signs" of the *true* Church of God is divine healing! This was manifested throughout the ministry of Jesus, the original Apostles, and the "seventy others." Later, we find that the Apostle Paul, called to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, frequently healed people. Acts 14 recounts an incident in which Paul, seeing that a crippled man "had **faith** to be healed, said with a loud voice, 'Stand up straight on your feet!' And he leaped and walked" (vv. 9–10).

In Acts 8:1–7, we read that God's Church was scattered from Jerusalem, and that the disciples traveled throughout Palestine preaching and teaching Christ's message. One of them, Philip, had only recently been ordained as a *deacon* (Acts 6:5). No doubt because he had a great deal of **faith**—as did his fellow deacon, Stephen (v. 8)—Philip was used to **heal** the sick, *cast out demons*, and perform *miracles*. Notice: "And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were **healed**" (Acts 8:6–7).

The above is clear biblical **proof** that others—*not just the Apostles*—were used to heal the sick and cast out demons. Of course, it was through the power of Jesus Christ and in His "name"—*His authority*—

that these miracles were performed. God's word tells us, "Jesus Christ is the **same** yesterday, today, and **forever**" (Hebrews 13:8). That power to heal is available to God's *faithful ministers* today just as it was to **all** of the Apostles, the "seventy others," and the other faithful servants of God during the apostolic age and ever since—those who have **faith** in the word of God!

Notice this revealing incident that took place near the end of Paul's ministry—and near the **end** of the apostolic age: "And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he *laid his hands* on him and **healed** him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed" (Acts 28:8–9). Note that Paul "laid his hands" on Publius' father as he healed him. This was a regular practice of God's true servants and indicates, among other things, that God works *through* human instruments.

We find that even Jesus "laid His hands" on sick people to heal them (Mark 6:5), and that when the Twelve Apostles were sent out on a local mission, "they cast out many demons, and *anointed with oil* many who were sick, and healed them" (v. 13). It is important to note that the disciples "anointed with oil" the sick people. The oil itself did not heal; it was a "symbol" of the Holy Spirit—a reminder that through the **power** of the Holy Spirit, healing would take place.

The Apostles, like all faithful ministers since, *prayed* for the sick, *laid hands* on them, and also *anointed them with oil*. Sometimes *dramatic* miracles of healing occurred when God's servants just *commanded* the healing to take place, but standard procedure for the Apostles and elders included the "laying on of hands" and "anointing with oil." The Apostle James gave an instruction clearly meant for *all time*: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14–15).

Why do *professing ministers of Jesus Christ* not practice *this* today? Why are so few professing Christians being *supernaturally healed*?

Mankind Is Confused

Satan the devil has thoroughly **blinded** the vast majority of humanity—including many of you who are reading this! God's inspired word

describes Satan as “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who **deceives the whole world**” (Revelation 12:9). Later, God tells us that at Christ’s return to earth, Satan will be cast into the bottomless pit, “so that he should deceive the nations no more” (Revelation 20:3).

As the “prince of the power of the air”—the invisible **ruler** over this earth (Ephesians 2:2)—Satan has influenced human society, and even most churches, to think of God as “unreal,” as “far away,” and **not** as a powerful Personality who can and does *intervene in human affairs* regularly! Satan is *glad* to have us think of the Creator God as a vague, far-away entity, for if we *knew* that God is a very real, dynamic, and **powerful** Spirit Being—who, **if** we have faith, could and does directly *help* us, *bless* us, and **heal** us of *every sickness* and of *every disease*—then we might actually begin to genuinely worship and **obey** Him, and **do what God says!** But this is the very *last thing* that Satan wants.

Satan the devil wants to keep human beings **blinded** to the reality of God so that we will not truly serve and obey Him, and therefore will not be counted worthy to become kings and priests in Christ’s soon-coming Kingdom and to **replace** Satan and his demons in ruling over this earth (1 Corinthians 6:2–3; Revelation 2:26–27; 5:10).

Satan has influenced mankind to seek a **different way** of deliverance from sickness rather than looking to God. He has influenced man in this aspect of life—as in *every* aspect—to look to his *own* devices and his *own* human reasoning instead of seeking God’s will and *His solutions*.

Leaving God Out

The story of King Asa is told in 2 Chronicles 14–16. We find that God sent a prophet to tell this basically good king of Judah, “The LORD is with you while you are with Him. If you **seek** Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chronicles 15:2). Note that God is not automatically “with you” all the time. He is “with” His servants “while you are with Him,” and says that “if you seek Him, He will be found by you.”

How many professing “Christians” truly **seek** God’s will regarding healing? The *truth* is that most have never been taught about it or even *thought* about it!

King Asa obviously did not consider that God was in the picture either! For although God had blessed him and delivered him in many ways, when Asa became seriously ill, “he did **not** seek the LORD, but the

physicians” (2 Chronicles 16:12). The result? “So Asa rested with his fathers; he **died** in the forty-first year of his reign” (2 Chronicles 16:13).

The key point to remember is that Asa **left God out** of the picture completely. In his sickness, Asa seemed to forget totally that the great Creator God, who had delivered him before, could do **anything** and certainly could heal “*all kinds* of sickness and *all kinds* of disease” (Matthew 4:23). So Asa **died** as a comparatively young man.

Then we read the story of Ahaziah, the king of Israel during the time of Elijah the prophet. Ahaziah had every reason to know that God was real and that He was the Healer, for Elijah had performed many signs and wonders that must have come to Ahaziah’s attention.

But when Ahaziah was seriously injured, *what did he do?* He “sent messengers and said to them, ‘Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury’” (2 Kings 1:2). God’s faithful servant, Elijah, heard of this and sent word to Ahaziah: “Is it because there is **no God** in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?” Now therefore, thus says the LORD: ‘You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die’” (vv. 3–4). And verse 17 completes the rest of the story: “So Ahaziah **died** according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken.”

Obviously, much of the problem was that Ahaziah went **not** to the true God, but to Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron. It is important to note that this Baal-Zebub was also the “god of medicine.” Indications are that Baal-Zebub’s adherents were given various potions or healing medicines along with their devotion to this pagan “god.”

Most religious scholars recognize that New Testament Christians are considered spiritual Israelites or spiritual Jews (Romans 2:28–29). Note Galatians 6:16, where Paul tells the Galatian Christians, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the **Israel** of God.” If Christ were to come among us today—in *this human society*—He could rightfully ask us, “Is it because there is **no God** in the **Church** (spiritual Israel) that you are constantly going to human doctors and utterly **failing** to come to Me as your Healer?”

Fake “Healers”

Many people have been “turned off” to the concept of God’s healing because they have seen or heard about so many fake “healers.” Sadly, there are quite a number of conniving individuals who use Christ’s

name as a “cover” for all kinds of totally unbiblical ideas and concepts—including a **totally wrong** and sometimes almost *blasphemous* approach to divine healing.

Some of these false ministers hold big tent meetings or “healing services” where they yell and scream at the sick individual as though the power of their yelling can bring about the healing! Unlike Christ, who usually took the sick or infirm people *aside* from the crowd (see Matthew 9:25; Mark 7:33), these fake “healers” deliberately put on a big show—with lots of noise and singing, with people shouting “glory, glory” again and again, and other strange behavior completely contrary to that of Christ and the original Apostles.

As a young man, I personally attended several of these “healing” campaigns put on by well-known ministers. I was sincerely seeking the truth and wanting to understand. On more than one occasion, some of my college classmates and I watched closely to see where the person sat down after he was supposedly “healed.” In *every single case*, it was obvious that the individual had **not** been supernaturally healed at all!

“How could this be?” you might ask.

In one case, for instance, a man was brought on stage as the “healer” loudly told the audience that the man was “deaf”—giving the distinct impression that this man was “stone deaf”—totally unable to hear **anything**. Then the professed “healer” clapped his hands forcefully on the poor man’s forehead—almost knocking him over—and **yelled** at God to “*drive out* the deaf spirit”!

Then this evangelist **loudly** asked the man if he could now hear. When the man nodded in the affirmative, the evangelist **yelled** at the crowd that God had “healed” the man right in front of their eyes! The rinky-dink piano began playing and the crowd began yelling and singing, “When we all get to heaven...” The supposedly “deaf” man was then ushered off the stage to take his place in the crowd. I noticed carefully where he sat. Immediately after the meeting, I headed over there to talk with him.

I asked this man, “Were you *stone deaf* before you were prayed for?”

The man replied, “*Oh no!* I have just been hard of hearing for a number of years.”

Then, speaking softly, I asked, “So you have now been *healed*?” “What did you say?” he answered. “*I can’t hear you.*”

I repeated my question *loudly*, and then he was able to hear. After talking with him in this way more extensively, it became obvious that he was still **very** hard of hearing. He was definitely **not** healed! However, I did not want to hurt his “hope”—as he put it—that he was a little better. So I went elsewhere.

Meanwhile my two college friends had the *same experience* with the “healed” people they met after the meeting. One of them, a middle-aged lady, was brought on the stage in a wheelchair. The iron-lunged evangelist told the audience that she was **crippled** and “unable to walk.” Then he clapped his hands on her head and bellowed out to God, “Heal her **now!**”

Then, she was almost *lifted* out of the wheelchair by two strong men and pronounced totally “healed” by the “mighty power of God.” But my friends and I noticed that she was practically carried off the stage by these two strong-looking men, and did *not* walk on her own power!

When we questioned her later, she said she had *always* been able to walk “a little,” but that the flamboyant evangelist had said that she would be “more comfortable” if they brought her out on the stage in a wheelchair. Of course, with his powerful proclamation, the impression was given that she was *totally crippled*.

There are *many* other similar accounts I could cite from my own experience and that of others. It is truly *abominable* that wicked men will sometimes use the holy name of God to feather their own nest—and to **deceive** innocent people. This type of thing brings disgrace on the name of religion and is **not** genuine divine healing at all!

Getting Our Balance

We need to get our *balance* on this vital subject. There is much that doctors and dentists can—and often *should*—do for us. In circumstances such as traumatic injury, broken bones, internal bleeding, and severe burns, there are many procedures that are necessary and right for doctors to perform.

Mankind’s best efforts are not “all bad” in and of themselves. Highly trained physicians and other health professionals certainly do help millions of people every day. *Let us not forget this fact!* Many health care professionals are loving and sincere in their efforts to serve their fellow man. They certainly ought to be appreciated and commended for this.

Jesus Himself stated, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick” (Matthew 9:12). In this verse, Jesus indicated that physicians certainly are able to help with sickness and disease. Some religious extremists believe that doctors and medicines are intrinsically evil. If that were the case, the Son of God would not have made the above statement! And the Apostle Paul would not have written about “Luke the *beloved* physician” (Colossians 4:14).

Every true Christian needs to get his or her balance on this issue. Satan and our own human reasoning will often cause us to go from one extreme to another!

Reading the entire Bible carefully and honestly, you will find physicians among God’s people, as was Luke. Even Jesus’ parable of the “good Samaritan” shows that—in the case of injury—it is important to bind up wounds and apply wine (or another antiseptic) to prevent cuts from becoming infected (Luke 10:33–34). Pediatricians can be very helpful with prenatal care and delivery. In the past, some “holy rollers” and tent campaign “healers” have completely neglected the above passages from the inspired word of God.

However, in modern times, most of society is ignoring God and going to the *other extreme!* Today, the vast majority of “educated” humanity looks to doctors, medicines, pills, and potions **alone** as the source of healing—and the living God is left completely out of the picture. This extreme, just like the other, is absolutely wrong!

Geoffrey Bromiley’s *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* notes the following:

Those in the apostolic Church who followed the lead of Jesus and Paul regarded without disgust physicians and the development of medical science, while at the same time looking to God and praying for His deliverance from sickness and disease. For example, the good Samaritan uses natural means to cure illness (Lk. 10:34); Col. 4:14 calls Luke the beloved physician; and 1 Tim. 5:23 counsels the use of wine to counter stomach infirmities. At the same time that this understanding and appreciation of medical science grew, the Church developed its own more spiritual means of dealing with sickness and disease. The two approaches, however, were not thought to be mutually exclu-

sive; they were, rather, complementary, because sickness was no longer viewed as God's punishment of sin (1982, vol. 2, pp. 647–648).

Use *Wisdom* in Doing Your Part

God wants us to “get the facts” and to *use wisdom* in obtaining proper medical care. Medical errors are a major cause of death. “According to a 1999 report by the Institute of Medicine, as many as 98,000 Americans were dying every year because of medical mistakes. Today... a reasonable estimate is that medical mistakes now kill around 200,000 Americans every year. That would make them one of the leading causes of death in the United States” (“More Treatment, More Mistakes,” *New York Times*, July 31, 2012). The annual cost of these mistakes is estimated in the tens of billions of dollars—and that is just the financial cost. The human cost in suffering is even greater.

Worse yet, hospitals actually make more profit when their surgeons make mistakes! Why? Because “insurers pay them for the longer stays and extra care that patients need to treat surgical complications that could have been prevented” (“Hospitals Profit From Surgical Errors, Study Finds,” *New York Times*, April 16, 2013).

Many, many more quotes and statistics along this line could be included here, but this should begin to give you the idea. You need to *be careful*—as are many doctors regarding *their own* families—and not just let any doctor who comes along prescribe some “new” or dramatic treatment for your body!

It is *up to you* to make *your* decision as to when and how much to seek medical help when you are ill or injured. Frankly, many health professionals realize that the most effective use of their skills involves repairing bodily injury. When you are hit by a truck, or have broken bones or crushed internal organs, medical doctors can often help you in a dramatic way! This must be appreciated, and we must give credit where credit is due. But, overall, you do need to take great care about the type of treatment in which you involve yourself. And you must exercise wisdom even when using “natural” products such as herbs and vitamins in an attempt to “cure” diseases or ailments. Some of these products can help the body heal itself of physical infirmity. Yet, ultimately, only **God** is the true Healer.

In 1952, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote the following:

The true function of the doctor should not be to usurp **God's** prerogative as a **Healer**, but to help you to observe nature's laws by prescribing correct diet, teaching you how better to live *according to nature's laws*.... There are a few schools of 'healing' coming along today somewhat along this line, who work more with nature's laws, and not with drugs and medicines—the naturopaths, osteopaths and chiropractors, etc. These may and may not be good, largely according to the school from which they came and the ability of the man himself. There are other needed functions for certain types of doctors. Child-bearing, for instances, is *not* a sickness from which women need healing, but a natural thing ordained of God. It would seem but right that we should have obstetrical specialists.... If you break an arm, or other bone, it certainly is right to take it to a specialist and have him **set it**. He can't **heal** it, however—you should **trust God** to do that. So, you see, there *are* a number of functions which human doctors or physicians can rightly perform.

As Mr. Armstrong noted, balance is vital! An acquaintance of mine, a licensed naturopathic physician, once wrote to me:

Alternative medicine that is based upon God's laws and not greed, does play an important role in human health. It can be helpful for Christians today and in the future, as even the book of Revelation teaches, 'The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations' (22:2). However, the Bible also makes it clear that God is our Healer and we are to 'Test all things; hold fast what is good' (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Just because something is natural or alternative does not necessarily mean that it is superior or the right Christian choice. But just because something is approved by conventional medicine, that does not mean that it is superior or the right Christian choice either.

Let the Bible Be Your Guide

The Bible is the revelation of the mind of God to mankind—of the basic knowledge that mankind would otherwise be unable to learn or

to understand. The Bible reveals the “mind” of God, and true Christians are told in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” It is vital that every genuine Christian learn to “think like Jesus thinks” on the subject of healing and on every subject! Jesus Christ said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). Remember that the only “word of God” available at that time was what we today call the “Old Testament.”

Even in cases of serious injury, however, it is vital for a Bible-believing Christian to heed the lesson of Ahaziah, for genuine Christians know *there is a God in Israel!* If we feel that we must seek man’s help—to have our bones set, have our wounds stitched up, or have other repairs taken care of by a competent health care professional—we must at the *same time* ask for **God’s** intervention to cause the injury to heal properly. Even when we go to man for what our understanding tells us that man can do properly, we must *still look to God our Father* to go **above and beyond** what man can do—and ask Him to intervene directly when necessary. We should **never** leave God “out of the picture!”

As the body of Christ grows in **faith**, we should not be surprised if we experience more and more divine healings from every kind of sickness and disease, according to God’s will, for He is **not** limited! Yet Christians should not judge one another or *condemn* one another in matters of health and medical care (Matthew 7:1). Each Christian has to make up his own mind as to how far he should go with man’s devices, for *each of us* has the personal responsibility to use medical help according to *our* understanding and *our* faith—not someone else’s. And, as God’s word tells us, “whatever is not from faith is **sin**” (Romans 14:23).

End-Time Disease Epidemics

At this juncture, it is important that we fully realize *where we are heading* as a society! Everyone who truly **believes** the Bible knows that Jesus Christ directly predicted that “pestilences”—**disease epidemics**—would be one of the major signs heralding His second coming (Matthew 24:7). Today, we are at a time in history when the spreads of AIDS, the Ebola virus, and even influenza and other “superbugs” have become a growing threat to vast numbers of human beings!

So far, there is **no cure** for these diseases. Only the true **God** can heal these plagues! And human beings continue to develop ever-

more-toxic agents to destroy one another. Notice this report from the respected *Atlantic* magazine:

[There] is wide agreement that the barriers to entry for new biological creations, including ones that could kill millions of people, are decreasing. Today, there is little international enforcement of limitations on bioweapons.... A new Ebola-like pathogen with a unique genetic signature might be undetectable to the most up-to-date devices and methods.... Military leaders are fond of saying that they don't want to ever find themselves in a fair fight—they always want the advantage. In the context of biological threats, that means understanding how to weaponize Ebola even if international laws and treaties, like the Geneva Convention, prohibit the use of such weapons in the field.... Of course, a terrorist or nation-state could use the product of such research to harm innocents (“The Next Manhattan Project,” April 7, 2015).

From the U.S. government's very own National Security Council of November 2009, we read about a sobering concern that haunts the world today:

The effective dissemination of a lethal biological agent within an unprotected population could place at risk the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. The unmitigated consequences of such an event could overwhelm our public health capabilities, **potentially causing an untold number of deaths. The economic cost could exceed one trillion dollars for each such incident....** We are fortunate that biological threats have not yet resulted in a catastrophic attack or accidental release in the United States. However, we recognize that: (1) the risk is evolving in unpredictable ways; (2) advances in the enabling technologies will continue to be globally available; and (3) **the ability to exploit such advances will become increasingly accessible to those with ill intent as the barriers of technical expertise and monetary costs decline** (“National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats,” emphasis added).

So **who** will cure these deadly diseases if bioterrorists purposely spread them—further clogging our hospitals and emergency facilities with masses of frightened and desperate people? Again, we must **not** leave God out of the picture. More and more, as this age draws to a close, true Christians must learn to look to God as their ultimate Protector, Deliverer, and Healer! This is a vital part of returning to “original Christianity”—of contending earnestly “for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

What Is Divine Healing?

Many articles have come out in recent years describing how enlightened doctors and hospitals are cooperating more than ever with ministers and “prayer partners” to aid in the healing process. Some of this is probably helpful. But, sadly, most of the emphasis is on the psychosomatic benefit of people having a “positive attitude”—of being “encouraged” or “hopeful.” The emphasis is **not** on an all-powerful **God** who *directly intervenes* and supernaturally heals sickness and disease!

Yet supernatural healing is *exactly* what the Bible describes as taking place in New Testament times. Please read carefully the inspired account in Mark 2:1–12 of Jesus healing a paralytic man. “When Jesus saw their **faith**, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your **sins** are forgiven you’” (v. 5). Sensing that His hearers were hostile to this concept, Jesus said, “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house’” (vv. 9–11).

The result? “**Immediately** he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’” (v. 12).

This was **not** some “gradual” recovery that took place with the aid of doctors, drugs, and blood transfusions. *No, indeed!* God intervened and removed the **penalty** of the physical mistakes, sins, and carelessness that nearly always **cause** sickness and disease. Remember, as we saw earlier, Isaiah 53:4 tells us that Jesus has borne our **sicknesses**.

Just before Jesus was crucified, Pilate caused Him to be beaten horribly by the Roman “scourging” usually administered to a condemned man. This brutal whipping was usually done with a leather whip, into which were fastened embedded shards of glass or metal,

designed to tear the skin and induce severe bleeding and excruciating pain. Many men **died** just from this beating alone! That is why Isaiah said that “by His *stripes* we are **healed**” (v. 5).

Most professing Christians observe what they call the “Eucharist” or the “Lord’s Supper.” This service is actually a corruption of the biblical festival called “Passover.” Describing the importance of **faith** and humility as one takes the emblems of bread and wine at the Passover, the Apostle Paul warned, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep [have died]” (1 Corinthians 11:28–30).

In the Corinthian church, many were “weak” or “sickly” because they had not learned to discern the real *meaning* of the bread and wine—that our Savior suffered the terrible “scourging” that we might be **healed**. The broken bread symbolizes Christ’s body, “broken” for our physical healing. The wine symbolizes His shed blood given in payment for our *spiritual* sins!

That is **why**—as Mark 2:1–12 and Matthew 9:1–8 bring out—Jesus’ healing of the paralytic man was described as the forgiveness of “sins”! Physical *healing* and spiritual *forgiveness* are tied together in the Bible. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, **suffered** terribly so that both would be possible. God’s word also describes this principle: “Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who **forgives** all your iniquities, who **heals** all your diseases” (Psalm 103:1–3).

We cannot take the biblical Passover properly without looking to Christ as our **Healer**, for He paid the penalty of our physical carelessness and transgressions of the physical laws of health just as surely as He paid the penalty of spiritual **sin**. As Psalm 103 indicates, both physical healing and spiritual forgiveness are “benefits” offered by a loving God. But a deceived mankind has usually been persuaded to accept one of these benefits and *totally neglect* the other!

Living Faith Required

Throughout His ministry, Jesus often told individuals who wanted to be healed, “According to your **faith** let it be to you” (Matthew 9:29). When several men were so faithful and zealous that they “uncovered

the roof” of a room so the paralytic man could reach Jesus and be healed, God’s word tells us, “When Jesus saw their *faith*, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you’” (Mark 2:5)—and the man was **healed** right in front of their eyes!

As the prophesied **end** of this age draws near, we must all focus our minds on the **reality** of the great **God** who gives us life and breath. We need to **believe** His inspired word, the Holy Bible. We need to believe **Him!** We need to understand that *God is not a liar!* When He promises us something in His word, He will *back it up* by powerful **action**—*if we will truly believe Him!*

God tells us, “But without **faith** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

The above is a **strong** statement! You and I **cannot** please the true God until we learn to **believe** Him—to *rely totally* on what He says in His inspired word!

The Bible describes Abraham as the “father of all those who believe” (Romans 4:11). **Why?** Because Abraham consistently **trusted** that God was *real*, that God’s way was *right*, and that God would *do* what He **said** He would do.

In fully *trusting* that God would give him and his wife Sarah a child, even in their *extreme old age*, God’s word tells us, “And not being weak in faith, he [Abraham] did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and *being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness’*” (Romans 4:19–22).

Real **faith** is developed by walking with God—*fellowshipping* with God—as Abraham did. Then one *experiences* the fact that God does, in fact, answer prayers and bless us as we walk according to His will. Faith is developed by regularly “drinking in” God’s word and making God’s thoughts *our* thoughts. Faith comes by *studying* or “hearing” the word of God (Romans 10:17). It is developed by *constant prayer*—by fervently and heartfully communing with our Creator. As we pray to God about *all* of our needs, we should specifically ask Him to *increase our faith*, for faith is a “gift” of God (Ephesians 2:8). And, as indicated above, faith is developed by regularly

doing what God instructs us—with the attitude that God does know best and that He will *stand behind His word* and cause “all things” to work together for good (Romans 8:28) for those who truly put their **trust** in God. The *results* of actually *trusting* in God in some parts of our lives help us trust Him in other areas of our lives as well—including trusting His promise to **heal**.

As additional help to each of you in building the living **faith** we all need so much, I would heartily recommend that you call us or write us to request two very helpful and meaningful booklets: *The Real God: Proofs and Promises* and *Twelve Keys to Answered Prayer*. These booklets will be sent absolutely *free* upon your request. If you will really *study* them and *look up the* scriptural references given, they will help you become more fully aware of the **reality** of the true God and how you can receive *genuine answers* to your prayers.

Three Firsthand Examples

A number of years ago, one of my college students—a young married man—was absent one day from Freshman Bible class. Right after the class was dismissed, he met me in the lobby of the building and was obviously very anxious and worried about something. “What’s wrong?” I asked him.

“It’s my little daughter,” he blurted out. “The doctor has tested her blood and found that she has the fatal variety of spinal meningitis! He does not give her very long to live. Her fever is going up and she is having convulsions from time to time. Please come out and anoint her and pray for her!”

I quickly grabbed a nearby phone and asked my secretary to cancel my appointments for the next couple of hours. Then I got in my car and followed this young man to his home. The doctor had dropped by earlier and said that nothing could be done for the little child at this late stage.

When I arrived, the mother had been crying. The little girl lay there—still awake, but weak, with a fever above 100 degrees. Feeling deeply the seriousness of the situation, I knelt with her parents by the little girl’s bedside, anointed her forehead with a drop of oil from a little bottle of olive oil I always carry, and beseeched our God and Father to completely **heal** her, to apply the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and make her totally well—and **soon!**

Knowing that, humanly speaking, *death* was very near, I poured out my heart and prayed to God very earnestly—claiming His **promise** to heal and *beseeking Him* to have mercy on this little child whose life was really just beginning. Then, after encouraging the parents to **believe** God, I left and returned to my other duties. But I kept on praying in my mind about this matter for the rest of the day, and again in my evening prayer before going to bed.

Late the next morning, I received the call I had been waiting for! The child's mother told me that the little girl had lapsed into a deep and peaceful sleep soon after I had anointed her. Later in the day, she had awakened hungry—*genuinely hungry* for the first time in days. *The fever was gone! No more convulsions.* Then she had gone to sleep again, and slept for many hours until late the next morning.

“Now,” her mother said, “she is up, feeling good, and playing with her dolls as if nothing had ever happened.” This child had been quickly and supernaturally **healed** by the *living* Christ, who had paid the penalty of sickness and disease in her stead!

I could write at length about the woman I knew whose withered arm was *totally* healed after she received an anointed cloth (see Acts 19:11–12). I could write about a lady with breast cancer who was “given up on” by the doctors, yet was **healed** just when it seemed to be “too late.”

Also, I could write about the healing of a man who had visited Africa and had contracted a form of hepatitis C that is often fatal. Briefly, without telling the entire story, here is part of his letter expressing thanks for God's intervention:

Dear Mr. Meredith,

I have good news. As you recall, my previous blood test was unable to measure my viral load due to not enough virus. My most recent test shows that I no longer have hepatitis C. My liver enzymes are within acceptable ranges.... I thank God and pray that I can use the rest of my life to His service and glory.... I again thank you for your prayer of faith.

These are not sentimental stories; they are **facts**. I want all of you to know that I am *very aware* that many people give seemingly amazing but unprovable “testimonies” claiming that they were healed. But

the incidents cited above were *genuine* healings—the divine intervention of the God of creation in response to faithful prayer.

We Must Learn to Believe What God Says

God's word is what we should and must rely on! God tells us that “the prayer of faith **will** save the sick” (James 5:15). May God help each of you to *study* this subject in your own Bible. May He inspire you to cry out to Him for the courage and the **faith** you need to please Him. And even if you seek appropriate attention from competent health care professionals from time to time, may each of you learn to *always involve God* in the process. Learn to **grow** in understanding and in faith. Learn to have **faith** that the living God can do what man is unable to do.

Again, we must remember the prophecy Jesus Christ Himself gave when the Apostles asked Him, “And what will be the *sign* of Your coming, and of the **end of the age**?” (Matthew 24:3). Among other things, Jesus specifically stated, “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, *pestilences* [*disease epidemics*], and earthquakes in various places” (v. 7). A few precursors of these epidemics may be starting even now. And when, perhaps within the next several years, our hospitals and our doctors are absolutely *overwhelmed* with sick and dying victims with “incurable” diseases, *where will we turn*? Many professing Christians have ridiculed divine healing and the idea of really *believing* what Jesus and the Apostles taught and practiced. Will they suddenly “get religion” and turn back to the God of the Bible?

I strongly encourage those of you *whose minds God has opened* to make Him and His ways a more genuine part of your life—**now**. For when the massive disease epidemics begin to strike, accompanied at the same time by drought, famine, and the resulting starvation, those who have already learned to actually *put their trust* in the God of the Bible will be blessed indeed.

The matter of divine healing is directly tied in with our *entire belief system*. Have we learned to **trust** in the true God and His Christ as revealed in the inspired word of God? Or do we “pick and choose” *which* of Jesus’ teachings and *which* of His examples we will follow?

However, here is a word of caution: *Do not judge your brother!* As stated earlier, each of us must live according to our *own* level of understanding and our *own* faith. Any true Christian **will** involve God

in *every area* of his or her life—including healing. Any true Christian *should* “cry out” to God for healing when he or his child or loved one is sick or afflicted. Then, according to individual understanding and individual circumstances, he or she may well decide to involve the help of a doctor or other health professional. Even then, he should fervently ask the *very real* **God** to intervene above and beyond what man can do!

If you are a parent or guardian of minors, you may sometimes need to make crucial health care decisions for them. In those cases, it is especially vital that you seek God’s wisdom and exercise proper caution and care. In some countries, the secular government has enacted legislation meant to protect children’s lives, and you may face serious legal consequences if you make an “adverse” decision that goes against those laws. If you subject a child to treatments that are discredited or unproven in the eyes of secular society, or withhold treatment that licensed medical professionals deem “necessary,” you may even be declared unfit as a parent or guardian and lose custody of your children. If you feel strongly that your child should not be subjected to some medical procedure, you may wish to consult not only with other qualified and licensed medical professionals (who may share your opinion), but also with qualified legal counsel, for the good of the children under your care.

God has **not** promised exactly *when* or *how* He will heal! However, “according to your faith”—as Jesus said—and according to *whether* we have a genuine obedient relationship with God (1 John 3:22), God will intervene, bless, and deliver us from every trial—including *sickness and disease*. For **if** we truly serve and obey Him, God is our very *real* Father. And the true Gospel message brought by His Son, Jesus Christ, is literally **filled** with examples and instructions regarding *divine healing*! Any so-called “gospel” which leaves out Christ’s example and continual teaching about divine healing is *extremely incomplete*—to say the least!

Somewhere on this earth is a true Church of God that believes **all** that Jesus and the Apostles taught. It practices a **way of life** based on Jesus Christ’s foundational instruction to all humanity: “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God*” (Luke 4:4). Therefore, this true Church follows the Apostle James’ inspired biblical teaching, including James 5:14–16:

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

The Living Church of God is dedicated to restoring true Christianity—the very Way of life originally taught and practiced by Jesus Christ and the Apostles. We believe in and practice the biblical teaching mentioned above, which instructs the sick to be anointed and prayed for by the elders of the Church. We also follow the biblical example of sending out “anointed cloths” as did the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:11–12).

Over the years, we have seen *thousands* healed *according to their faith*. If you would like to request personal prayer or to receive an anointed cloth, please be sure to contact the regional office nearest you, listed at the end of this booklet.

May the great God help all of you to *understand* and to *act*. May you learn to genuinely *study* and *believe* the inspired word of God—and to *do* what it says. May God guide you to humbly *put your trust* in Him and in the living Jesus Christ when you are sick and afflicted. For, in the end, God—and He *alone*—is our ultimate Healer!

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