THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAITH AND HEALING
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The man with leprosy who came to Jesus and begged Him to heal him, said, “If you are willing, You can make me clean” (Mk 1:40). While he was not sure if Jesus was willing, he did have the faith that Jesus could heal him. This contradicts what many proponents of faith healing claim, that is, that faith does not have to do with whether we believe that God can heal, but that He will heal. Although there is an element of truth in this in that the belief that God can heal often is merely an intellectual assent, such a position overstates the case. The statement, “If You are willing” (v. 40) asks, “If it is God’s will.” This is a legitimate question since we do not always know what His will is in certain circumstances.

Luke points out that the man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked, while he listened to Paul as he was speaking, Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed” (Ac 14:8-9).

Matthew points out the tremendous faith of the centurion by quoting Jesus: “I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith” (Mt 8:8-10). In response to his faith, Jesus assured him, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would” (v. 13).

The woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, when she touched the edge of Jesus’ cloak, she said to herself, “If I only touch His cloak, I will be healed.” Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” He said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed from that moment” (9:18-22; Mk 5:34-35).

When the two blind men followed Jesus and called out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David,” Jesus asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they replied.” Then Jesus touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith will it be done to you”; and their sight was restored” (Mt 9:27-30).

When Bartimaeus, the blind man, kept asking Jesus for mercy and threw his cloak aside as he jumped to his feet when Jesus invited him to speak with Him and expressed his desire to be able to see, Jesus responded, “Go, your faith has healed you” (Mk 10:52).

It is helpful sometimes to encourage the sick person to visualize his disease on Jesus for “He took our infirmities and carried our diseases” (Mt 8:17).

Jesus was specific in his requests for a faith response and said,

- “Stretch out your hand” (Mk 3:5).
- “Get up, take your mat and go home” (Mt 9:6).
- “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk” (Jn 5:8).
Although faith plays a central role in healing, it must not be overemphasized and demanded as a right since it is not always God's will to heal.

It is true that it is God's will for His people that they are to be healthy. The Hebrew word "shalom" captures God's wholistic view of man. "Shalom" ("peace") coexists with health in a natural way. The psalmist put it,

"May The Lord give strength to His people! May the Lord bless His people with peace!"

Biblical peace is more than the absence of conflict; it includes inner tranquility, health, wholeness, integration.

God promised His people shortly after the exodus in Egypt:

"I am the Lord, your healer" (Ex 15:26).

Salvation and health are closely related. David testified that it is the Lord "who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases" (Ps 103:3). Jeremiah prays, "Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for You are the One I praise" (Jer 17:14).

WHY FAITH HEALS

We have already seen the crucial role that faith plays in supernatural healing. But faith also plays a vital role in natural healing. Why? Why does faith help prevent and heal health problems? An increasing number of medical experts believe that the answer can be traced to a number of factors. These are 12 aspects of faith that are as vital to our emotional and physical health as certain foods, nutrients, and exercise.

According to psychiatrist and prayer researcher Dale A. Matthews, M.D., associate professor of medicine at Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C., and author of The Faith Factor, this is a package of “all-natural health boosters” that complement the medicine chest of prescription drugs. Among the faith factors that Dr. Matthews and others have identified are the following:

1. Social Support--Support from friends bringing over meals when we’ve lost a loved one, to strangers who pray for us when they hear that we’re in the hospital; it’s hard to match the social support that church membership provides.
2. **Temperance**—Unlike risk factors such as immorality, drunkenness, drugs, greed, bitterness, envy, etc. that contribute to illness and disease, the Bible encourages us to treat our bodies as a “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Co 6:19) and even suggests that “physical training is of some value” (1 Ti 4:8). While the main motivation of believers should be to glorify God by growing in godliness, there is a secondary benefit—better health.

3. **Serenity**—Incredible stress marks our society as we witness an increase in relationships that falter, jobs that are lost, and the hectic way of life. Trying to keep up makes us more subject to various diseases. Studies by Herbert Benson, M.D., associate professor and president of the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Harvard Medical School, has found that forms of meditation, including prayer, dramatically reduces the damaging effects of stress. Christians can tap God’s promises from the Bible such as:

- “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb 13:5).
- “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
  (Mt. 11:28)

4. **Appreciation of Beauty**—The beauty of nature can go a long way in ministering to our minds and bodies. A full moon, snowcapped mountains, falling autumn leaves, etc. have a way of bringing relaxation. The Bible encourages us to look up and enjoy the view God has provided:

  “The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork.”
  (Ps 19:1)

5. **Worship**—Worship services, though ultimately designed to give glory to God, also minister to our senses. An ornate cathedral certainly helps to engage our senses, yet simple architecture and other factors in a worship experience such as music, etc. can still benefit us in worship.

6. **Confession and Starting Over**—Because of God’s promise of forgiveness once we confess our sins, we are encouraged to seek God to forgive us and remove our sins (1 Jn 1:9) “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps 103:12) and restore our fellowship with Him. Instead of beating ourselves up about our mistakes and sins and becoming preoccupied with our shortcomings, this enables us to move on.

7. **The power of Ritual**—According to Dr. Matthews, research shows that religious rituals in and of themselves have health benefits, whether we’re taking communion, repeating a familiar favorite prayer or Scripture, such repetition, if nothing else, provides comfort.

8. **Hope**—Doctors have talked about the placebo effect, that is, the idea that some people get better just because they believe they’re taking something that will make them better. Rather than putting hope in a pill, those with deep faith believe that God has their best interests at heart.
In spite of their circumstances they believe the promise that “. . . in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Ro 8:28). By placing our faith and hope in God our present worries pale in comparison to the wonder of God’s ultimate promises.

9. **Unity**—**In a world that often emphasize things**, questions about things of eternal significance provide opportunities to gather and communicate with one another. This need for gathering and communicating is also what makes faith a healing activity. This helps in the natural longing to identify with others, to be with people like ourselves who like what we like.

10. **Meaning**—Meaning and purpose in life bolsters our ability to live with very difficult issues. Apart from such meaning and purpose makes our trials that much harder to face.

11. **Trust**—Faith is trust that God is able to do what we cannot do. This frees us from anxiety and gives us a sense of peace.

12. **Love**—While faith does not make us immune to the pain of deep loss, it does protect us from some of the trauma when we experience God’s love on a very personal level. No matter what we have to face, we are reminded that God is near and His love will never fail. Love from others is also a source of encouragement and strength.

These 12 factors can help bring healing, but to be most effective they need to be tied to an active faith that is motivated by love for God. Although we should desire to achieve better health, our greatest desire should be to worship and serve God. Then better health becomes a byproduct of a vital love relationship with our Creator and Redeemer. As Jesus Himself put it,

“Seek first His Kingdom and righteousness, **and all these things will be given to you as well**” (Mt 6:33).