

Health and Healing ***Faith and Healing***

Lesson #6 for May 8, 2010

Scriptures: Genesis 3:8-10; Psalms 118:6; Proverbs 17:22; Matthew 6:27-34; Hebrews 13:6; 1 John 4:18.

1. This lesson focuses on hope, faith, and trust in divine power as opposed to despair, depression, fear, and how these different emotional and spiritual realities impact our health.
2. Hundreds of stories could be told about the impact that hope and trust have on health. People who from all external appearances were ready to die managed to live because they had hope. Others who seemed to be in relatively good health have died because they gave up hope.
3. That raises the fundamental question: What is the relationship between the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of our existence and the physical and health aspects?
4. What is the opposite of faith? Is it doubt? Is it fear? Is there a relationship between doubt and fear? (1 John 4:18) Do you find it to be true that love casts out all fear? Does love for God destroy all fear? Did the disciples lose all their fear after Pentecost? Before the crucifixion the disciples were focused on themselves. Afterwards, they were focused on Christ and the gospel.
5. How do you react to fear? Fear seems to be a very basic human emotion. It tends to trigger what is known as the fight or flight reaction. Multiple physiologic changes take place in the body when someone suddenly becomes afraid. We know that at least some of those changes take place because of the chemical mediators that are released by the various parts of the sympathetic nervous system and even by the adrenal glands located above our kidneys. In some cases people who could normally do a lot of things are paralyzed by fright. On other occasions, fear seems to lead to so much shaking that people even collapse. Sometimes, fear leads to seemingly superhuman strength.
6. We all recognize the protective benefits of fear. If we were not afraid of anything—even of our parent's punishment—we would probably not survive past our first few months or years.
7. At the beginning of the great depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was chosen as the new president of the United States. In his first inaugural address he said:

Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.
8. Do you agree with that comment? Does fear sometimes feed on itself? What were the factors that led to that great depression?
9. Surveys have been taken to determine what things people are afraid of. Some have suggested that the basic ingredient behind all fears is the fear of the unknown. Incredible as it may seem, when asked what they were afraid of, a select group of people stated that the number one fear on their list was public speaking. Number two was death! One witty person reasoned that this fact meant that at a funeral, more people would rather be the person in the coffin than the one giving the eulogy! Why do you suppose people are more afraid of public speaking than death itself? Is it that they have had more experience with attempts at public speaking? Like the disciples, we have the opportunity of developing a trusting relationship with the God of heaven. What impact does it have on your fears to know that even death has been conquered? Satan has been defeated and as long as we stay on God's side, we have a guaranteed eternal life?
10. What about doubt? Does it have a role in a normal person's life? Are there times when we should doubt? When a person lies to us, is it a good thing to doubt what he is saying? Keep in mind that before long, Satan will appear claiming to be Christ. Should we doubt Satan?
11. What things in your current life experiences make you doubt or fear? Be honest! Are those valid

reasons for doubt and fear?

12. What should be the difference between the response of the Christian to fearful situations as contrasted to the response of a worldly person? What are the benefits of having a trusting relationship with God? Can you think of times when a trusting relationship has kept you calm when others were petrified? How do we promote a correct attitude of faith and trust?
13. What is it about your understanding and knowledge of God that most fosters an attitude of trust and faith? The better we get to know God, the more we can trust Him.
14. While Jesus lay dead in Joseph's new tomb, the disciples were almost petrified with fear as they were gathered together behind locked doors in the upper room. A few weeks later, Peter and John stood in front of the Sanhedrin and boldly declared that those very men were responsible for the death of the Son of God! (Acts 4:1-13) Peter had denied his Lord because a maid pointed a finger at him! Then, before the Sanhedrin, he was prepared to stand firm and speak boldly to the leaders of the nation! What made the difference? What had changed in their relationship to Jesus Christ? Why were they apparently no longer afraid even of death?
15. What building blocks are most useful in establishing our faith? Reading the stories and miracles in Scripture tends to build faith. But does personal experience with God and seeing divine power working in your own life have an even greater impact on faith? Should it?
16. If we are to believe the news media, thinking, intelligent people around the world believe that we have descended from one-celled protozoa through a long chain of amazing transformations until we became intelligent apes. If you believe that theory, how does it affect the idea of faith or trust? What would you have faith in? Protozoa? Seventh-day Adventist Christians believe that God created each one of us as individuals. We believe that God takes a personal interest in each of us. We believe that Jesus came and lived and died to become a part of the human family and to claim all of us as His sisters and brothers. Paul told us that we are supposed to call God "Daddy." (Romans 8:15) If these ideas are correct, in whom should we place our faith?
17. The Bible repeatedly tells us that we are to trust in our heavenly Father who will give us peace and an everlasting hope. (Psalm 118:6; Proverbs 3:5-6; Luke 12:6-7; Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 13:6; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18) How does this relate to health? See #28 below.
18. Right now, our world is in a time of economic crisis. Many people are out of work and are very stressed. What should be the role of faith in the Christian's life in times like these? Is it reasonable for us to trust that God will help us find a job?
19. Read Malachi 3:10. If we pay a faithful tithe, can we claim this promise even when we might be out of work? Are there certain conditions that we need to meet before we can claim these promises of God? Are there times when God chooses not to answer what we think are our most trusting prayers?
20. Read John 11. Were Martha and Mary praying their most earnest prayers, and did they have adequate faith in Jesus as they prayed for their brother to be healed? Did they believe that Jesus was capable of healing him? Why did Jesus, who was working on the other side of the Jordan river, delay going to Bethany? Does this story suggest to us that sometimes, God has different answers to our prayers than the ones for which we are asking? If Jesus had rushed to the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and healed him of his disease, one of the greatest proofs of Christ's divinity prior to His resurrection would have been lost.
21. Does it take greater faith to pray and have your prayers answered miraculously or to continue to trust in God even when your prayers seemingly are not answered immediately?
22. Numerous studies have been done—some quite remarkable—to demonstrate that prayer and trust in God can, in fact, impact health. In one study a group of Christians in the United States agreed to pray for individuals they had never met and whose names they did not even know but who suffered from serious cardiac problems in Korea. There, of course, was another group

that did not receive the benefit of those Christian prayers. Those who were prayed for did considerably better than those who were not prayed for. What are we supposed to learn from that? Can we manipulate God by our prayers? Do our prayers give God permission—in the eyes of the onlooking universe—to do things that He otherwise “could not” do because of Satan’s accusations?

23. Human beings are almost always impressed by miracles. On many occasions God has used supernatural power to perform miraculous events to get people’s attention. But seldom do miracles do more than get attention. Very quickly, even the most remarkable divine interventions are apparently almost forgotten. While Moses was still up on Mount Sinai in the cloud, amidst the lightning and fire, the children of Israel were dancing drunk and naked around a fertility cult symbol at the bottom of that mountain! (Exodus 32)
24. Do Christians experience better health than non-Christians? Should they? Does trust in God have a direct impact on your health? Are Christians happier than non-Christians? (Proverbs 17:22)
25. True Christian believers will certainly agree that God has the power to relieve every sickness and to heal every patient even those who are already dead! But obviously, God does not do that. Why not? Shouldn’t believers be healed while unbelievers are allowed to die? What would that say to us about God? What would that do to our freedom and free choice? People would choose to be Christians for wrong reasons!
26. The story is told about a young boy who had a serious medical condition. While the boy lay apparently dying and almost hopeless, his teacher came to the hospital and gave him an assignment to work on for his schoolwork. In a short time, the boy responded remarkably and appeared to be getting better. When asked what made the difference, he said, “They wouldn’t give a dying boy work on adverbs and verbs, would they?” In that case, a simple act led to hope.
27. Jesus recognizes that living in this sinful world, we are very inclined to forget that He cares for us and to think that we are personally responsible for all that happens to us and eventually begin to worry and to be stressed. Is it a sin to worry? Is it a sin to be sick? (CH 37.2) Is it a sin to be stressed?
28. A very high percentage—perhaps up to 90%—of diseases that make patients see doctors in our day are stress-related. Somewhere behind them is a spiritual, mental, or emotional stress or stresses. Why do you think God made us so that there is such an interrelationship between the mental and the physical? Is it a good thing that stress causes ulcers? Did God make us like that? Is it a good thing that fear causes our stomachs to knot up? Why is it that stress partially paralyzes our immune system? Is God trying to help us realize the importance of trusting in Him? If you have the opportunity to personally experience the love and care of your heavenly Father, how does that impact fear, faith, trust, and doubt?
29. When we look at the miracles of Christ that are reported in Scripture, we notice that in some cases people were asked to express their belief—their faith—while in other cases they apparently were not. (Matthew 12:9-13; Luke 13:11-13; 14:2-4; 22:47-52) Why do you think this was?
30. On a number of occasions, Jesus suggested that the people needed to exercise faith so they could be healed. Can you think of any times when Jesus refused to heal someone because he did not have faith? If someone today with a serious illness is not healed, is that evidence that he lacks faith? Daniel’s three friends made it very clear to Nebuchadnezzar that they would trust God even if He did not protect them! (Daniel 3:16-18)
31. The Bible records the incredible story that when Jesus went back to His hometown of Nazareth, He was not “able” to perform more than just a few minor miracles because they did not believe in Him! (Matthew 13:58; Mark 6:5,6) Shouldn’t those people have known and trusted Jesus most of all? What could possibly have prevented the people who knew Jesus best from trusting

Him?

32. Review the story of Hezekiah's healing in Isaiah 38-39. We often look at this story and say that it showed remarkable faith to claim miraculous healing and then to receive it. Hezekiah was given 15 more years of life. His son, Manasseh, the most wicked king in Judah's history, began to reign at the age of 12! Would Judah have been better off if Hezekiah had died and Manasseh had not been born?
33. We must recognize that we as human beings will never fully understand all the links between our spiritual, mental, and emotional well-being and our physical well-being.
34. There are several important points that we need to be clear on as we come to the end of this lesson: 1) There is a very close connection between the physical and the mental/spiritual/emotional parts of our beings. 2) Clearly, it is God who has the power to heal and not faith itself. 3) Sometimes, God does not answer our prayers in just the way we think He should because He knows the bigger picture which we do not yet understand. (Consider the story of Job.) 4) Healing that comes through the use of modern medicine is still healing from God. It is God who makes those medicines work in our bodies. And it is God who prevents those medications on most occasions from having bad side effects.
35. How should we respond if a friend who has a serious illness—maybe even cancer—asks us to pray for him or even have him anointed? If he is not healed, is that proof that someone among those who prayed for him did not have enough faith?
36. Someday, the Devil will appear claiming to be Jesus Christ. Would it be a good thing at that time to trust everything that anyone tells us? How are we supposed to distinguish between those things which are safe to trust in and those things which are not?
37. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we need to step back from each of these situations and take the larger view. In the setting of the great controversy, we must allow God to do what He knows is best. Down near the end of this earth's history, God will have to step back from His protective role for human beings and allow Satan to have more and more control over events here on this earth. That is necessary to create and preserve an eternal record of what would happen if Satan were in charge. Do you think living through a time when Satan is mostly in charge of this earth will be a pleasant experience? Will Christians get sick? Should they expect immediate miraculous healing from God during that time? No! Will some Christians even die during that time? No doubt, in the earlier times before the close of probation, some Christians may die.
38. If we have the right kind of relationship with God because we have come to know Him well, we will be willing to allow Him to work things out as He sees best. A medical student in one of Dr. Maxwell's classes once said, "If God can use me as a pawn to checkmate the Devil, I would be happy." At times, that may result in what appears to be disastrous consequences. We should not allow such events to shake our faith. In the context of the billion plus years of life God wants to give every one of us, the fact that during our very brief existence on earth things may not always work out exactly the way we think they should must not shake our faith.

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