



Living with Pain

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What About Healing? Leader's Guide

Opening Prayer

Introduction:

What would you do if you could meet Jesus face to face? I've spent many hours imagining this, and I'm pretty sure I'm not alone. While reading the New Testament, I've longed to be one of the many sick people who came to Jesus for healing while He walked on this earth. There are numerous descriptions of Jesus' healing ministry, and as far as I can tell, He healed anyone who came to Him and received His touch. Oh, how I've envied them. I thought if only I could have lived 2,000 years ago in that small part of the world—Israel--during Jesus' three years of public ministry ... I could have been lifted from my bed of pain and--imagine!--been restored to a normal life!

But since Jesus really is God, time and location shouldn't matter. He is equally capable of healing me in this current year, in the country of the United States of America, as He was in the year 30 A.D. in Israel. In the same vein, He is equally capable of healing you. So why doesn't He heal us of all of our diseases and pain when we cry to Him now?

Jesus does heal His children now, but our understanding of healing needs to be broadened.

Read Mark 2:1-12

1. From this passage, what does Jesus do for the paralyzed man?

Jesus said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (v. 5).

He said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all (vv. 10b-12a).

2. Which of the two actions does Jesus do first?

Jesus first forgives the man's sins.

3. Which seems to be of greater value to Jesus, and, by extension, to His Father: forgiveness of sins, or physical healing?

Jesus places greater value on forgiveness of sins.

"Which is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home" (v. 9-11).

4. Would you consider forgiveness of sins to be spiritual healing?

Yes. Our deepest spiritual need is rebirth in Christ through forgiveness of sins.

5. Which type of healing has temporary value? Which has eternal value?

Physical healing has temporary value, but even those who receive it eventually die. Spiritual healing brings eternal life!

6. Is Jesus' spiritual healing available to all?

John 3:16 tells us, For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Christ died for all. This truth can comfort the chronic pain sufferer, because she has already received the greatest healing of all!

Forgiveness of sins is Jesus' first priority, and it is a type of healing, since our deepest spiritual need is rebirth in Christ through the forgiveness of our sins. Physical healing has temporary value, and we naturally long for it, but even those who receive it will eventually die. Spiritual healing, by contrast, brings eternal life! This truth can comfort us as chronic pain sufferers who know Jesus, because we have already received the greatest healing of all!

Forgiveness can also have an impact on our physical well-being. Jesus showed that He knew our sins could weigh us down and prevent physical healing. It has been important in my life to forgive and to be forgiven, to let go of anger against people and systems which have damaged me. I've also had to ask my husband and son to forgive me for the short fuse which pain can create in me. Forgiveness eases tension and stress which we hold in our bodies, which in turn affect pain and healing.

7. Is there anyone whom you need to forgive?

8. Is there anyone from whom you need to ask forgiveness?

We usually think of the New Testament as the place to read about God's healing power, but it is also recorded in the Old Testament. Over 3,000 years ago, Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, traveled to seek help for his health problems.

Read 2 Kings 5:1-15

9. What was wrong with Naaman's health?

He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper (v. 1b).

10. How did Naaman hear about God's power to heal?

Naaman's wife had a young servant girl who had been captured from Israel (v. 2).

She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy" (v. 3).

11. Contrast the faith of the king of Israel with the faith of the servant girl.

The king of Israel tore his robes in despair that the king of Aram had sent Naaman to be cured of leprosy (vv. 5-7). The servant girl believed that the Lord's prophet could and would cure Naaman (v. 3). We can't conclude, however, that God will heal every time a person believes He will.

12. Why do you think Elisha gave such simple advice for Naaman to follow?

And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean" (v. 10).

Simple advice would make it clear to Naaman that it was God's power, not the simple cure itself, that accomplished the healing.

13. Why did Naaman find it difficult to comply with such a simple request?

Naaman's pride was offended. He had expected Elisha to meet him directly rather than send a messenger (v. 11). Naaman also thought the two rivers of Damascus to be superior to the Jordan River, and he didn't want to humble himself (v. 12).

14. Was Naaman ultimately able to follow God's leading?

Yes; his servant convinced him to try. *So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God (v. 14a).*

15. What outcome did Naaman receive?

His flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean (v. 14b).

16. Why do you think God required some effort from Naaman when God could have easily healed him without it?

God wanted Naaman to step out in faith and to understand that he was relying on God's power, not his own actions. God knew this was the way to obtain an active response of Naaman's heart.

17. Was curing Naaman's leprosy God's ultimate goal, or was it having a relationship with Naaman? See verse 15. In other words, is physical healing God's highest priority?

Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and he came and stood before him. And he said, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel."

In curing Naaman, God displayed His power and revealed Himself as the only true God. God's ultimate goal for His people is that He "*desires all people to be*

saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

18. Could God be leading you to a treatment for your pain that you are hesitant to try? Ask Him to guide you as you weigh potential treatment options. Pray for the courage and the resources to follow through with what He leads you toward.

Read Psalm 23, or recite it if you have it memorized.

19. List the verbs from Psalm 23. What do they tell us about the Shepherd?

The Lord is my Shepherd; He makes, leads, restores, comforts, prepares, anoints.

The Good Shepherd is constantly attentive to His sheep. He is active and proactive on their behalf.

20. What is God's character, especially in relating to His children?

God is love. God is our Heavenly Father, the only perfect parent. God promises to work in all things for our good (Romans 8:28) and that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Joshua 1:5).

21. Can you visualize yourself being the

lamb in this Psalm? If you are hurt (suffer chronic pain), what does the Shepherd do? Does He gently pick you up and hold you tenderly, close to His heart? Does He whisper reassurances of His love and care?

Participants can take comfort in imagining the tenderness of their Shepherd toward them.

22. What else might you picture the Shepherd doing to care for you?

Possible responses might be providing supportive family or friends, a church home, medical care, prompting people to pray, providing a Stephen Minister or pastoral visitation.

Take some time this week to read God's Word about and reflect on the image of the Good Shepherd--who carries you in His arms, who tenderly bandages your wounds, and who will never leave you nor forsake you.

Closing Prayer

Closing Hymn: Say or sing "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" (*LSB #709; LW #412; TLH #431*) or "The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want" (*LSB #710; LW #416; TLH #436*).