

Sessions 3, 4, & 5 — Jesus's Healing Miracles⁹⁷: CASE STUDIES

How are we to interact with Jesus as it relates to His power to heal us? What can the stories from the gospels of Jesus's healings teach us?

Let's jump right into the stories and see what we can glean from Jesus's themselves. We will not have time to go through all of them. Below is a list of the healing miracles divided into four groups.

The Defiled and The Defective -

**Jesus healed a leper (Mark 1:40-45; Matt 8; and Luke 5:12)

**Jesus cured the paralytic (Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12)

*Jesus healed an invalid man at the pool called Bethesda (John 5:1-9)

Jesus opened the eyes of two blind men (Matt 9:27-31)

Jesus loosened the tongue of a man who could not speak (Matt 9:32-33)

Jesus restored a withered hand (Matt 12:10-13)

Jesus cured a deaf and mute man (Mark 7:31-37)

Jesus opened the eyes of a blind man (Mark 8:22-26)

**Jesus opened the eyes of a man born blind (John 9:1-38)

Jesus cured a woman who had been afflicted eighteen years (Luke 13:10-17)

Jesus cleansed ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19)

Jesus opened the eyes of two blind men, one likely was blind Bartimaeus (Matt 20:30-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43)

The Discomforted and Distressed -

Jesus healed a centurion's servant (Luke 7:1-10)

**Jesus cured a woman of an issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48)

**Jesus cured a man of dropsy (Luke 14:1-4)

Jesus restored the ear of the high priest's servant (Luke 22:50-51)

**Jesus cured the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54)

The Deranged -

Jesus cast out an unclean spirit (Mark 1:23-28)

Jesus cured two demoniacs (Matt 8:28-34)

Jesus cured a demon-possessed man (Matt 12:22)

Jesus healed a woman of Canaan (Matt 15:22-28)

Jesus cured a boy who was plagued by a demon (Matt 17:14-21)

The Dead -

**Jesus raised the widow's son from the dead (Luke 7:11-18)

⁹⁷ 37 total miracle events: 9 non-healing & 28 healing miracle events. <https://blog.adw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/37-Miracles-of-Jesus-in-Chronological-Order.pdf>

* Discussed above in Session 1.

** Discussed below.

Jesus raised the ruler's daughter from the dead (Matt 9:18-26)

**Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46)

Jesus rose from the dead (Luke 24:5-6)

Session 3: Cleansing the Defiled

Case studies of Jesus, M.D. Come see what Jesus can do. See Him heal the leper, the paralyzed, the bedridden, and the blind.

1a. The Leper

The synoptic gospels all tell the story of **Jesus healing a leper** (Mark 1:40-45; Matt 8; and Luke 5:12).

God made skin so **beautiful**, so highly functioning, a core aspect of **beauty**. **Without it**, we would all look pretty **abhorrent**. Soft, yet **tough** and **resilient**, it serves to **protect**. On the other hand, it is porous, absorptive, and even dissectible. It is able to both retain **heat** and **remove it**.

Leprosy, a most **dreaded disease**, and during the time of Christ it was **incurable**, **contagious**, and **repulsive** in appearance. It **filled** even the **bravest** with **fear**.

A symbol of the **outcast**, the marred skin, sometimes badly so, was viewed by Jew's as a **sign of God's judgment**, a **symbol of sin**.

Shunned and **ostracized** by **society**, anyone who developed **any abnormal skin lesion** would **shutter** at the sight, perhaps hiding it, delaying as long as possible the **obligatory investigation** and **pronouncement** of the **priest**.

As a physician, I have occasionally had the occasion of evaluating some **feared sign or symptom**, and **despite every reassurance**, the patient may **tremble** under the **light of examination**. For most, however, now a days, the **prospect of some skin lesion** provokes little more than a **nuisance**. However, even today, some skin lesions are noxious and even deadly, and should never be neglected.⁹⁸

To have leprosy meant to be **instantly canceled** by **culture**, unworthy to have anyone near them, unworthy even to be touched, **EVER**, the leper is the **definition of defilement**, of **ugliness**, of **putridness**. Everything that is disgustingness, that is the leper.

⁹⁸ My wife's dad lost his life due to a neglected squamous cell carcinoma on his forehead. Do not delay to have any concerning skin problem properly assessed & treated. God will help you.

As one already **dead**, he was **shut out** from the **habitations of men**.⁹⁹

If only the **defiled ones** were always the ones **perpetrating** the **original crime**. But life's **not that simple**. Sometimes the defiled ones were **simply bystanders**, contracting the disease by **mere association**, perhaps ignorantly. Sometimes they **ignored the risk** because of a **desire to care**, to help a sick friend. Most often, those who **broke a principle** of God's creation **reaped the consequences** but occasionally they personally saw **no ill results**. Somehow they **fought off the bug**. The consequences varied widely, but whether **bystander, active transgressor**, or progeny, the one with the infection, had had fabric marred, often permanently. Such corruption is not easily repaired.

Lessons in Defiling Skin Diseases: The Leper.

After the initial shock, banishment to a leper colony, and **certain depression** that followed, the leper would then spend the rest of their life **in a cycle of getting their hopes up** and then **having them dashed** until every last cent of hope was spent. Too soon they would **conclude it was hopeless**.

The data suggests that through history **millions of people have had leprosy** or some related skin defilement.

The Bible documents some examples.

I think of **Naaman's the Syrian's story** and his search for a cure from leprosy. From the most unlikely source, a **young Jewish slave girl** tells him of a **prophet in Israel** who could heal him. Bravely, Naaman, a high-ranking military official, goes to the king of Israel with a **letter** from the king of Syria. The King of Israel's response to Naaman's letter requesting Naaman's healing was **utterly tragic**.

“And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he **tore his clothes** and said, “**Am I God**, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man to me to heal him of his leprosy?” - 2 Kings 5:7

Imagine being Naaman. You have put **all your faith** in the testimony of a young slave girl. You have gone to **great lengths** to gain an audience with the king of Israel, and now suddenly the **king of Israel suspects foul play**. Thankfully, **God intervened**. Naaman met with the prophet and through the **simple remedy** of dipping in the Jordan river seven times he was healed.

I think of King Uzziah and his disobedient decision to enter the temple to burn incense on the altar of incense as told in 2 Chronicles 26 & 2 Kings 15. He had up until then sought the LORD but in a **lapse of catastrophic irreverence** he decided to do it the way he wanted and **publicly disobeyed** the laws of the LORD. When 80 priests

⁹⁹ Ellen White, Desire of Ages, p 262.

confronted Uzziah at the very moment that he had the priest's censer in his hand, he became furious, showing his intent to persist in rebellion even in the face of a **massive unified intervention**. As a result, at that very moment **God condemned him to leprosy**. And **"leprosy broke out on his forehead**, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar." - 2 Chronicles 26:19 .

Being a leper was hard. Really hard.

Leviticus 13:45-46 summarizes some of the key features of the affliction:

Now the leper on whom the sore is, his **clothes shall be torn** and **his head bare**; and he shall **cover his mustache**, and **cry, "Unclean! Unclean!"** **He shall be unclean**. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and **he shall dwell alone**; his dwelling shall be **outside the camp**.

Here is another description of the difficulty of leprosy from one commentator:

The leper...was considered **utterly unclean—physically** and **spiritually**... **Incurable** by man, many believed **God inflicted the curse of leprosy** upon people for the **sins they committed**. In fact, those with leprosy were so despised and loathed that they were not allowed to live in any community with their own people (Numbers 5:2)...Among the **sixty-one defilements** of ancient Jewish laws, **leprosy was second only to a dead body in seriousness**. A leper wasn't allowed to come within **six feet** of any other human, including his own family.¹⁰⁰

Since the days of Elisha, **no leper** had ever been **cleansed**. It was unheard of.¹⁰¹

On top of that, the leper was **not allowed** to approach the temple, nor could he be a priest (Lev 21:18).

The disease called leprosy in our modern context provides a good model to gain further insight into what the experience may have been like for lepers at the time of Christ.

Leprosy Today

Modern day leprosy or **Hansen's disease**, while much more specific than the afflictions that were originally possible in Leviticus 13, would have been included. A great deal of **stigma** still pervades the disease in many places, where the **afflicted may still be shunned** from their homes and society.

¹⁰⁰ Bible Leprosy. Got Questions. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-leprosy.html>

¹⁰¹ Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 262.

Leprosy is caused by either the intracellular acid-fast bacillus bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae* or *Mycobacterium lepromatosis*¹⁰² and comes from the same family of bacteria that causes tuberculosis. Leprosy is a **zoonosis** that has also been found in **nine-banded armadillos** in the **Southern US**, **red squirrels** in the **UK**, and a number of types of **monkey's** including sooty mangabeys and cynomolgus macaques from **West Africa**, and **chimpanzees** in the African countries of **Ivory Coast and Guinea-Bissau**.¹⁰³

Symptoms develop after a **long incubation period** ranging from **several months to 30 years, averaging 5 years**. The bacteria primarily **target the skin**, causing skin lesions and **eyebrow loss**, and the **peripheral nervous system**, causing **sensation changes** and **motor nerve damage**. The motor nerve damage can affect a number of different nerves leading to symptoms like a **facial droop or hand weakness, or foot drop**. As a result of the loss nerve function, leprosy can lead to permanent damage and severe deformity¹⁰.

Although leprosy prevalence has markedly decreased over recent decades, approximately **210,000 new human cases** are still reported every year in **South East Asia, Africa, and South America**. In the past **20 years**, a total of **16 million leprosy** cases have been recorded. Transmission is thought to occur primarily between individuals with **prolonged** and **close contact via aerosolized nasal secretions** and entry through **nasal or respiratory mucosa**¹⁰⁴, but the exact mechanism remains unclear. The role of **skin-to-skin contact** is unknown but may also cause transmission¹⁰.

Transmission also occurs from **animals to humans**. **Armadillos** are hunted for their meat in many areas in North, Central, and South America, of which regular consumption has been linked to the presence of **leprosy antibodies**¹⁰⁵. Armadillos are also used in many traditional crafts, such as the manufacture of **charangos** (a small stringed instrument). The **consumption of armadillo flesh** has been longstanding; going back as far as the sixteenth century. On top of armadillos, there is extensive evidence of close contact between **humans and red squirrels** in the medieval period, through **fur**

¹⁰² Ploemacher T, Faber WR, Menke H, Rutten V, Pieters T (2020) Reservoirs and transmission routes of leprosy; A systematic review. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis* 14(4): e0008276.

¹⁰³ Hockings, K.J., Mubemba, B., Avanzi, C. et al. Leprosy in wild chimpanzees. *Nature* 598, 652–656 (2021).

¹⁰⁴ Infectivity, the ability of a pathogen to establish an infection, is thought to be low for leprosy.

¹⁰⁵ da Silva M. B., Portela J. M., Li W., Jackson M., Gonzalez-Juarrero M., Hidalgo A. S., et al. (2018). Evidence of zoonotic leprosy in Pará, Brazilian Amazon, and risks associated with human contact or consumption of armadillos. *PLoS Negl. Trop. Dis.* 12:e0006532.

trade, pet keeping, and meat consumption. Squirrel fur was the most popular fur in the High and Late Middle Ages in Western Europe.¹⁰⁶

With some brief scriptural background, let's now look at the famous story of the healing of the leper in the gospels.

Healing of the Leper in Matt 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45 and Luke 5:12-14

Matthew 8:1-4	Mark 1:40-45	Luke 5:12-14
When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.		In a certain city
And behold	Now	Behold
A leper	A leper	Man full of leprosy
Came	Came to Him	Saw Jesus
And worshipped Him	Imploring Him	Fell on his face
Saying	Kneeling down to Him	Implored Him
“Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”	“If You are willing, You can make me clean.”	“Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”
Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him,	Then Jesus moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him,	Then He put out His hand and touched him
“I am willing; be cleansed.”	“I am willing; be cleansed.”	“I am willing; be cleansed.”
Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.	As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed	Immediately the leprosy left him
Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one;	And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once...“See that you say nothing to anyone;”	And He charged him to tell no one
“But go your way, show yourself to the priest,	“But go your way, show yourself to the priest”	“But go and show yourself to the priest,
“And offer the gift”	“And offer for your cleansing those things”	“and make an offering for your cleansing,
“That Moses commanded,”	“Which Moses commanded,”	“as a testimony to them,”

¹⁰⁶ Urban C, Blom AA, Pfrengle S, et al. One Health Approaches to Trace Mycobacterium leprae's Zoonotic Potential Through Time. Front Microbiol. 2021;12:762263. Published 2021 Oct 21.

“As a testimony to them.”	“As a testimony to them.”	“Just as Moses commanded.”
	However, he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the matter,	However, the report went around concerning Him all the more;
	So that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places;	"and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.”
	“And they came to Him from every direction.”	“So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.”

There were **many lepers in the area** when Jesus was ministering. But **none had attempted to obtain healing** from the Great Physician. There were **many barriers**. They had **little if any access**. They had to **stay away from the crowds** of people which were almost continually around Jesus. They had to **stay out of the towns and cities**.

They dared not expect Jesus **to do for them** what He had never done for any man. There was one, however, in whose heart faith began to spring up.¹⁰⁷

What steps did the leper take when he was healed by Jesus? Let’s look in more detail at the steps the leper took when He was healed by Jesus.

Learn How To Be Healed From a Leper

1. **See Jesus with believing eyes**

Earlier we looked at a passage from Acts 2:22. It showed that God used the miracles, wonders, and signs **to stir up the people about Jesus** that they might come see Him. It generated wonder, curiosity, and, as a result of the miracles, the receivers, family members, and friends were endeared to Him.

However, notice the **ironic contrast** in reading the rest of the immediate passage in Acts:

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by **lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death**; "whom **God raised up**, having **loosed the pains of death**, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. "For David says concerning Him: 'I **foresaw the LORD always before my face**, For He is **at my**

¹⁰⁷ Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 272.

right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my **heart rejoiced**, and my **tongue was glad**; Moreover **my flesh** also will **rest in hope**. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.' Acts 2:23-28

On the **one hand**, Jesus **healed vast multitudes**, on the **other hand**, He was **unlawfully**, and **shamefully betrayed** and **executed**. And because of His faithfulness, God raised him from the dead. Thus over and over **people saw Jesus**. Some saw Him and had **contempt** and **despised** Him. Others like the leper, saw Jesus, and a **wellspring of hope** gushed forward, **motivating** what was previously **unthinkable**.

Peter quoted Psalm 16 as scriptural support of his claims in Acts 2:23-28. In the quoted passage David states what it was like to **set Jesus before his face continually**. Jesus had a similar experience as an example to us:

- A) That **"He is at my right hand"** (meaning **He is close by** and **gives power and strength**, even in the midst of what appeared to be apparent overwhelming defeat)
- B) **"That I may not be shaken"** (meaning that **He would not be lose hold** of what God has directed him to possess)
- C) **"That "my heart rejoiced"** (to think that the **LORD was on his side** increasing his **power** so he could **maintain the position and success** God had ordained for him)
- D) **"My tongue was glad"** (He spoke many thankful and happy things **because of the position God put him in**)
- E) **"My flesh will rest in hope"** (**his body would find rest** due to the **hope he had** even if the result had **not yet been fully accomplished**)
- F) David then transitions from the **third person to the first person** turning his attention onto the LORD, speaking directly to Him, saying, **"For You will not leave my soul in Hades,"** thus **confirming the LORD's promise** that **even if he died and lost his life**, the LORD would not neglect to leave him there.

This passage applied initially to David, then to Jesus, but it also speaks to our experience as well.

He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. - Psalm 16:8

But we all, with **unveiled face**, **beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord**, are **being transformed** into the **same image from glory to glory**, just as by the **Spirit of the Lord...For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness**, who has **shone in our hearts** to [give] the **light of the knowledge** of the **glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**. - 2 Corinthians 3:18, 4:6

"And I, **if I am lifted up** from the earth, **will draw all** [peoples] to Myself." This He said, signifying by what death He would die. - John 12:32-33

Questions: How might **looking at Jesus face** have a **healing, cleansing effect** on you?

- **He sees** the full you, **nothing hiding**. **He knows you**. **He knows all the stuff**. **There is no reason to be afraid**. The **carnal man shrinks away** from the **naked truth of Him** seeing all. **But you will not**. Though it **crushes you**, though you **die to self**, let the **Spirit of God draw you** to Him. **He will cleanse you** of all the filth, freeing you, removing all the anxiety, the loathing, the self-hate, the cognitive distortions, the pain. The following texts come to mind:

“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a **man of unclean lips**, and I dwell in the midst of a people of **unclean lips**; for my **eyes have seen the King**, the LORD of hosts...Isa 6:5

“For our God is a **consuming fire**.” - Hebr 12:29.

“The **sight of the glory of the LORD** was like a **consuming fire** on the **top of the mountain** in the eyes of the children of Israel. - Exod 24:17

2. **Go to Jesus, cast yourself down, and completely give of yourself** to Him.

The leper “fell facedown”, “knelt before him”, fell “on his face”. Falling down, worshipping Him, “beseeching him”, he “begged him”, **he desired with a massive and very great desire for Jesus to heal him**. He was willing to put Himself in a completely submissive position, **to let Jesus know**, that He was placing Himself **completely in His hands**.

This is what we **need to learn**, how to **give ourselves completely** to Him.

Many are inquiring, “How am I to make a **surrender of myself to God?**” What you need to understand is the **true force of the will**. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice.

Faith in the leper had **sprung up**. **He laid it all down** before Jesus. It was His full free choice.

Jesus desires no forced submission. But rather,

He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us.¹⁰⁸

What did the leper give up, and what did the leper have to endure to receive the healing from Christ? Of course, the leper realized in giving himself to Jesus, that He was

¹⁰⁸ Ellen White, Steps To Christ, p 43.

necessarily giving up all that would separate him from His Savior.²³ God calls us to do the same.

Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. - Luke 14:33.

How bad do we really want it? Are we willing to lay it all down and give up everything for it if necessary? What are we really giving up? Is what we have to give up not very similar to what that leper had to give up?

3. Make a request according to His will.

“If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

“I am willing; be cleansed.”

If this is Jesus’ attitude toward the **most defiled** among us, then **this is** also His **attitude to you** too.

Summarized:

1. **Always go to Jesus** for healing. See Him. Look at Him in His face.
2. **Believe that the LORD is able** to heal you, that He knows best and His timing is always the right timing.
3. In **appreciation of His love for you, give yourself completely to Him, ready to follow Him** with all your heart, **obeying the laws** and principles that He created for our good.

As stated in the verses above, Jesus **charged the healed leper to go show himself to the priest and make an offering for his cleansing as a testimony to the priests**, just as Moses commanded.

What were the leper’s thoughts having been freed of one of the greatest of all defilements, but also now tasked with the job of presenting himself to the priests, the ruling class of Jewish society with an offering.

It’s interesting in this story how strongly Jesus urged the man. He “**strictly charged him**”. **What does this show about Jesus?**

It shows that He was **demonstrating that He respected the law of Moses**. He wished to **demonstrate to the priests** that He was **not a lawbreaker** as they had accused Him of being.

Do not think that I came to **destroy the Law or the Prophets**. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, **one jot or one tittle** will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever **does and teaches them**, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. - Matt 5:17-19.

Story of my son showing his wound to me and then showing the healed wound to me. Examine and identify the problem. Certify the resolution. There is something very therapeutic in that. The reassurance that the problem was really gone.

Since it appeared that no one ever came to the priest to certify their cleansed leprosy, the fact that it was occurring would be a substantive testimony to the priests of Christ's

He would have learned a lesson of the spiritual nature of his disease, not only the physical aspect. He would have learned that the healing of his disease required both a spiritual and a physical cure. He also would have learned something of the importance of the law of God, as it pertains to a leper.

Leviticus Protocol For A Cleansed Leper

Leviticus 13 and 14 addresses the issue of **defiling skin diseases**, that some Bible versions translate using the **word leprosy**. The main concern of the LORD appeared to be one of **infection prevention** and **reducing transmissibility**.¹⁰⁹

Leviticus 13:1 says "**The LORD spoke to Moses**", and then the next two chapters go on to prescribe the protocol for dealing with **lepers**. Considering all the directives and prescriptions in Leviticus on defiling skin diseases, **the prescription that is surprisingly absent is how to get those afflicted better**. The **ironic thing** is that the very One who outlined the priest's diagnostic protocol, the consequences to a leper, the instructions for isolation, the torn clothes, the bare head, the covered mouth, the crying of "unclean! unclean!", and so on, was the very One who **over 1300 years later** came in person and healed many lepers.

Once the leprous person was healed from his affliction they were required, according to Leviticus 14, **to show themselves to the priest** and undergo the **prescribed ritual**. This ritual involved **birds, sprinkling blood, sacrifices and running water**. Specifically, two birds were needed. **One was killed** in running water and the **other**

¹⁰⁹ Transmissibility - the ability of a disease to be passed from one person or animal to another

was dipped in a concoction of the dead bird's blood, cedar wood¹¹⁰, scarlet¹¹¹, hyssop¹¹², and water. This concoction was then sprinkled on the leper **seven times** (Lev 14:7). **One bird died, the other was saved.**

Then he washed his clothes, shaved off all his hair, and washed himself in water that he may be clean. Then he shall come into the camp but shall stay outside his tent for seven days.

On the seventh day he shall shave his hair and his eyebrows, all his hair shall he shave off. He shall wash his clothes and body in water and he shall be clean.

On the eighth day he offered a trespass offering and a wave offering. The blood will be put on his right ear, right thumb, and right big toe.

The leper was healed in stages. Compare the healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22-25 where he was also healed by Jesus in stages.

Even though the leper was already free of the disease when he showed up before the priest, **he is only cleansed from leprosy** after the sprinkling, and being pronounced clean.

Why do you think God chose to **only call the leper clean AFTER** the ritual was completed? See Leviticus 14:7.

It must be certified by the priest. It is clear from the text that the defilement of the skin disease is not just a physical manifestation. The cleansing process required a ritual that required both physical healing and also spiritual healing. Together, the physical and the spiritual healing were gathered into one, foreseeing that which the sacrifice of Christ would accomplish.

As for defiled or leprous garments, the solution was relatively simple, isolate the garment for a week. After the week, if the plague is spreading, burn the garment. If it is

¹¹⁰ Oil from cedar has a sweet fragrance, which is attractive, unlike leprosy. Cedar has both anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial properties, providing practical disease prevention and spiritually communicating the effect of a healing balm. The cedar wood may foreshadow the cross.

¹¹¹ Scarlet is a very steadfast dye suggesting permanence, used extensively in the wilderness tabernacle. Its deep red symbolizes power, prosperity, and royalty (Matt 27:28), but it also represents sinfulness (Isaiah 1:18).

¹¹² Hyssop has cleansing, medicinal, and flavoring properties. It was used on the first Passover as a paintbrush to mark the doorposts with blood, symbolically foreshadowing Christ's atonement for our sins. David in Psalm 51:7, asks for spiritual cleansing from sin, "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow." On the cross, a Roman soldier used hyssop to offer Jesus wine vinegar. Jesus, apparently accursed of God and full of defilement, took upon Himself our sin, we being purified as the hyssop symbolized.

not spreading, wash the garment, but if it is not gone after another week burn the garment. If it has faded, cut it out of the garment. If it reappears, burn the garment. We can certainly see the connection to our modern ritual of clothes washing. Isn't this why we wash our clothes? To prevent infections spreading from our clothes, which, of course, would prevent it from spreading to our bodies. As an example applicable to our modern day, one reason why fungal infections of the feet are so common is because many do a poor job of washing their shoes.

Other Modern Day Defilements

In medical history, as recently as the 1800's, ignorance of the difference between clean and unclean led to a lot of death. Discovery of germs, by Louis Pasteur, in the 1860's began to unveil the principles that God had established at the time of Moses.

Ignaz Semmelweis, the father of infection control, was a physician in the obstetric department at a hospital in Vienna, Austria in the 1840's. He noticed that women delivered by physicians and medical students had a much higher mortality rate (13-18%) than women delivered by midwives (2%)¹¹³. As he investigated the issue, he noted that since physicians did autopsies, they often handled corpses prior to attending to the women. Many of these women would develop childbed fever, which is now called puerperal fever. He did methodical experiments requiring various birth attendants to wash their hands with antiseptic solutions, and showed that both the infection and mortality rate could be drastically cut.

Amazingly, 1100 years earlier Moses had commanded the Israelites not to touch the dead, lest they be unclean for a whole seven days (Numb 19:11). Compare this with their neighbors the Egyptians who went to great lengths to embalm and mummy wrap their dead, almost certainly increasing the risk of infection.

Recently, a 7 year old boy came into my office having developed two abscesses on his wrist and finger as a result of consoling and touching his dying and dead dog. It took some effort to rid him of the infection. Attention to contact precautions around the dead and dying, can prevent transmission of infection to those who are well. Indeed, the principles of cleanliness in the law of God are still helpful today.

So, what does it mean to be clean?

Being clean doesn't just refer to that pertaining to physical health, though it does include it, as illustrated by Ralph Major:

Medical historian Ralph Major described Moses as "the greatest sanitary engineer that the world has ever seen" because "Moses recognized the great

¹¹³ Best M, Neuhauser D Ignaz Semmelweis and the birth of infection control. *BMJ Quality & Safety* 2004;13:233-234.

principle that the prevention of disease is usually simpler and invariably more far reaching than the cure of disease... His doctrines [in the book of Leviticus] could be summed up by the objects of sanitation today—**pure food, pure water, pure air, pure bodies and pure dwellings**" (A History of Medicine, vol. 1, pp. 62–64).

What a blessing it is to have sanitation in our lives!

I remember when I was in Nigeria volunteering at Jengre Seventh-day Adventist Hospital, it was a major problem to keep the people from having a bowel movement on the grounds. We worked hard to try to teach them why such a practice was problematic.

In addition to physical cleanliness where the physical characteristics of the disease are improved, spiritual, emotional, relational, and even an environmental cleansing is still needed., whether it refers to a leper or someone who has had, even in a small degree, an experience that compares to a leper, those with medical disease can find a full and complete cleansing.

For example, those with **HIV/AIDS, substance use disorder, especially IV drug users, the chronically ill, and pain patients**, among many others, to one degree or another have been like modern day lepers. They are seen in society in such a negative light that they can often experience many of the features that were emblematic of leprosy, such as shunning, isolation, & hopelessness.

Can modern day people who have had a leper-like experience cleansing in their lives?

"What is impossible with man is possible with God." - Luke 18:27 ESV

How can even the most defiled people be cleansed?

Jesus answer to the leper, when he was asked if He was willing to make him clean, is an answer to all those who have experienced a great defilement in their lives. "I am willing, be cleansed." The greater the sinner, the greater the Savior, I once heard a preacher say. According to Leviticus, the atonement included both uncleanness and our sins (Lev 16:16). Thus in the atonement performed by Christ our High Priest, He takes away all our uncleanness and all our sins.

See also what Ezekiel has to say, as He quotes the LORD:

For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do [them]. - Ezekiel 36:24-27

Notice also in the quote below how Angel Manuel Rodriguez contrasts the major aspects between clean and unclean:

“I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy” (Lev. 11:44, NIV). In the Old Testament the **unclean is a metaphor for the realm of death. The holy is what belongs to God and is a symbol of life.** The law seeks to preserve the lives of the people by keeping them away from the sphere of death, the sphere of sickness and suffering. - Angel Manuel Rodriguez <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/leviticus-11/>

So what does it mean to be clean? It means that we are healed by Jesus on both the inside and the outside.

Form groups of 2 or 3.

Choose to be one of either an **HIV/AIDS patient, substance use disorder patient (alcoholic, smoker, IV drug user).** Describe in your own words to your neighbor how you would use the principles you have learned from going through the story of the leper to present yourself to Jesus.

Healing the Defiled and Unclean During the Time of The End

Other than the actual miracle that Jesus performed for the leper, **what other causes of disease were relieved by the leper fully giving of himself to Jesus?**

Jesus also relieved numerous of his spiritual and emotional burdens. He relieved the ongoing anxiety, depression, angst, and anger that he had from being shunned from his family and the endless loneliness from isolation. He let him know that God care about him and desired his good.

Do emotional and spiritual burdens cause disease?

On top of the insult that the skin disease itself caused, if the leper had chronic stress, which he almost certainly did, it would cause its own disease over time. Chronic stress does a number of harmful things to the body. It worsens cognitive function and memory. It worsens blood pressure and increases risk of stroke and heart attack. It worsens gut health, shrinking the gut flora, allowing bad bacteria to grow up, increasing the risk of acid reflux, peptic ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, and autoimmune disease. It increases the likelihood of weight gain and all the problems that come with that. Intense stress also increases the risk of addiction as the sufferer desperately looks to find solace.

Interestingly, on the Day of Atonement not only are the transgressions and sins of the people removed but also their uncleanness, their physical and spiritual uncleanness.

"So he shall make atonement for the Holy [Place], because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness. - Leviticus 16:16

Jesus cleansed ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19)

They stood afar off, scared to come closer. But they listened to Jesus when he told them to,

"Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed."

Lesson: start now. God works as you are making an effort.

1b. The Paralytic

Jesus cured the paralytic (Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12)

When Medical Problems Are Spiritual Problems.

How often does a medical problem that clearly appears to be physical in nature include a fairly substantial spiritual problem? Would treatment attempts be effected in the same way?

What is a spiritual problem?

Broadly speaking, a spiritual problem is one of the soul or spirit. Here I am focused both on deficiencies in one's sense of meaning and purpose as well as the idea of an incongruence of one's sense of meaning and purpose as compared with their choices, actions, and habits.

Consider these examples.

Hospital admissions —

Many medical admissions to the hospital are contributed to by addictions. The big four include smoking, alcohol abuse, obesity-related, and illicit drug use. **While three of these issues** (smoking, alcohol abuse, and illicit drug use) **often involve overtly addictive behavior** where the **struggle to quit is intense** and **relapse is common**, the **causes of obesity remain complex**. Nevertheless, studies show that **more than 30% of those with obesity meet criteria for binge eating and/or bulimia nervosa**

suggesting compulsive behavior is common.¹¹⁴ Additionally, many obese individuals do not choose food that is unlikely to lead to weight gain, this despite the widespread understanding that obesity increases the risk of dying early and that it is a serious health problem facing America.¹¹⁵

I was in the hospital one day a few years ago and a debate erupted between myself and a fellow physician. **What percentage of the big four** are the underlying cause of admissions to the hospital? **I said it was no more than 70%. He said it was at least 80%.**

Doing some brief digging I found the following. The prevalence of a substance use disorder among general medical inpatients ranges between **7 and 19.3%** for **alcohol** use disorder, between **5.5 and 11.9%** for **illicit drug** use disorder, and between **16 and 29.6%** for **nicotine** use disorder.¹¹⁶ Thus a substance use disorder may range between 20 to 60% of hospital admissions depending on how you add up the above percentages. The rate of obesity in hospital admissions is uncertain as it is often left off the chart. One author noted that 9% of hospital stays were directly obesity-related in 2009.¹¹⁷ This has likely risen since then, since obesity rates continue to rise precipitously. Another way to assess obesity rates in hospitalized patients is via diabetes, since the diagnosis is more reliably added to the chart. There were 7.8 million hospitalizations of patients with type 2 diabetes in 2018 in the US,¹¹⁸ which was about 29% of hospitalizations. Since about 50% of those hospitalized with diabetes have obesity, about **14-15% of hospitalized patients have obesity.**

While the current data available don't allow for a firm conclusion, **the data suggests that the majority of hospitalizations involve some kind of bad habit.**

Quitting Addictions

Most people want to quit their bad habits but often are powerless to do so.

When it comes to smoking,

¹¹⁴ Friedman J, McClanahan S. Difficulties in detecting eating disorders in both normal and higher weight patients. CEDS, 2016.

¹¹⁵ NORC at the University of Chicago. Obesity rises to top health concern for Americans, but misperceptions persist. Issue Brief American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery. Oct 2016. <http://www.norc.org>

¹¹⁶ Serowik KL, Yonkers KA, Gilstad-Hayden K, Forray A, Zimbrea P, Martino S. Substance Use Disorder Detection Rates Among Providers of General Medical Inpatients. J Gen Intern Med. 2021;36(3):668-675.

¹¹⁷ Weiss et al. Obesity-Related Hospitalizations 2004 versus 2009. Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project. AHRQ. <https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb137.pdf>

¹¹⁸ Diabetes-Related Inpatient Stays 2018. Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project. AHRQ. <https://hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb279-Diabetes-Inpatient-Stays-2018.pdf>

Most adult cigarette smokers want to quit. **In 2015, 68.0% of adult smokers** (22.7 million) **said that they wanted to quit smoking.** More than half of adult cigarette smokers report having made a quit attempt in the past year. In 2018, 55.1% of adult smokers (21.5 million) said that they had made a quit attempt in the past year. Fewer than **one in ten adult cigarette smokers succeed in quitting** each year. In 2018, 7.5% of adult smokers (2.9 million) successfully quit smoking in the past year.¹¹⁹

As for alcohol abuse and illicit drugs,

Between **40 to 60 percent of people** who've been treated for **addiction or alcoholism relapse** within a year.¹²⁰

How great a difference would those with addiction really be helped if the addict heard and believed that their sins were truly forgiven them.

How about obesity?

In a meta-analysis of 29 long-term weight loss studies, more than half of the lost weight was regained within two years, and by five years more than 80% of lost weight was regained.¹²¹

All have the same spiritual problem.

In Mark 2, a paralytic was weighed down by a malady that by all appearances was merely physical, but as we will find out Jesus knew otherwise.

Whether it is coping with a physical malady, emotional pain, a lack of self-control, or poor judgment, there is only one physician who can ultimately help us, Jesus Christ. It is our job to bring our friends to Him.

¹¹⁹ CDC. Smoking Cessation: Fast Facts. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/smoking-cessation-fast-facts/index.html

¹²⁰ Castaneda, Ruben. Why Do Alcoholics and Addicts Relapse So Often? US News & World Report. Apr 24, 2017. <https://health.usnews.com/wellness/articles/2017-04-24/why-do-alcoholics-and-addicts-relapse-so-often>

¹²¹ Hall KD, Kahan S. Maintenance of Lost Weight and Long-Term Management of Obesity. Med Clin North Am. 2018;102(1):183-197.

Matthew 9:1-8	Mark 2:1-12	Luke 5:17-26
So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city.	And again He entered Capernaum after [some] days, and it was heard that He was in the house.	Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem.
	Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive [them], not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.	And the power of the Lord was [present] to heal them.
Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed.	Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four [men].	Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him.
	And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.	And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with [his] bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.
When Jesus saw their faith,	When Jesus saw their faith,	When He saw their faith,
He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."	He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."	He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."
And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!"	And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, "Why does this [Man] speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"	And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"	But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?"	But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts?"
"For which is easier, to say, '[Your] sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?"	"Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, '[Your] sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?"	"Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'?"

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."	"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."	"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"--He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."
And he arose and departed to his house.	Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all,	Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.
Now when the multitudes saw [it], they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men.	so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw [anything] like this!"	And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!"

The paralytic was not allowed to serve or worship in the OT sanctuary.

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron, saying: '**No man** of your descendants in [succeeding] generations, **who has [any] defect, may approach** to offer the bread of his God. 'For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred [face] or any [limb] too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or [a man] who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch. -Leviticus 21:16-20

"Christ deals first with the spiritual problem—the **forgiveness of sins**—and then the physical problem—the **physical affliction**. Most people want it the other way around, putting **greater emphasis on healing the physical ailment than fixing the spiritual problem**. Solomon gives us the answer to which is more important: "**The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?**" (Proverbs 18:14). From God's perfect perspective, **spiritual needs are always more critical than physical ones** (Mark 8:36),¹²² so in this miracle, forgiveness precedes healing.

Jesus tells the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." Seeing his friends' faith, Jesus' first words to the paralytic offer simple encouragement: "Be of good cheer." His comforting support refers directly to the forgiveness of the sufferer's sins. The paralytic, troubled by sin that had caused or was causing his suffering, now had reason for optimism. **Having our sins forgiven always brings a deep relief and joy, even if the physical affliction is**

¹²² For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? - Mark 8:36 KJV

not healed.¹²³ David's psalm on the joy of forgiveness speaks of this satisfying comfort: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Psalm 32:1-2)."¹²⁴

Jesus healing served to reassure people with physical defects. God still loves and accepts them. One could easily reason, that since people with physical defects were not allowed to serve in the OT sanctuary, and in Christ we are all priests to God, then perhaps a person with a physical defect might be kept away from Christ. This is not true at all. This story condemns such a thought.

Healing those with physical defects during the time of the end

The fact that spiritual healing is often more greatly needed than physical healing continues to exist today. One example includes the majority of irritable bowel syndrome which often causes chronic recurrent abdominal pain. Until the brain-gut dysfunctions are healed many times no relief can be obtained. This may be the case with autoimmune disease as well since up to 80 percent of autoimmune diseases initiate with uncommon emotional stress.¹²⁵

Miracles still occasionally occur

Though it is not currently frequent like it was during Jesus' ministry, miraculous healing does still occur. If there is faith and the reasons are right, then there are times when God will perform a miracle. It is up to Him. He has our best interest and the salvation of souls, ours included, to contend with.

An interesting exception to infrequent miracles is when God wished to highlight the ministry of Ellen White. Early in Ellen White's prophetic call, Otis Nickel, an Advent believer wrote to William Miller concerning the miraculous healings which attended her. He said,

"Sister Ellen has been a resident of my family much of the time for about eight months. I have never seen the least impropriety of conduct in her since our first acquaintance. God has blessed our family abundantly with spiritual things as well as temporal since we received her into our family. The Spirit of God is with her

¹²³ Compare Proverbs 15:15, "All the days of the afflicted [are] evil, But he who is of a merry heart [has] a continual feast."

¹²⁴ Collins, Martin G. The Miracles of Jesus Christ: Healing a Paralytic (Part One) Forerunner, "Bible Study," February 4, 2008. <https://www.cgg.org/index.cfm/library/biblestudy/id/1346/miracles-jesus-christ-healing-paralytic-part-one.htm>

¹²⁵ Stojanovich L. Stress and autoimmunity. Autoimmun Rev. 2010 Mar;9(5):A271-6. doi: 10.1016/j.autrev.2009.11.014. Epub 2009 Nov 27. PMID: 19931651.

and has been in a remarkable manner in healing the sick through the answer to her prayers; some cases are as remarkable as any that are recorded in the New Testament.”¹²⁶

God usual method to health

God usually will direct His children to recover health by following the laws of health. In many cases **this is adequate.** Many times God allows a person to continue with a malady despite being requested for relief. We have an individual responsibility to preserve the human organism in the best possible condition. If intemperance, or another violation of the laws of health caused the illness, it is better if health is restored by bringing the human system through thought and action back into harmony with those laws.

God wants us to **experience the healing that comes from learning to improve our own health habits.** An instant miracle would prevent us from gaining insights into how our own habits hurt our health and **would undermine the character development obtained** through that struggle. What good would it be if we **received the miraculous healing and then continued the same habits** that led us into the illness in the first place.

Honoring our bodies is a moral issue

We are called to honor our bodies before God. God doesn't make junk. The following texts underpin this message:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 - Our bodies are the temple of God that the Spirit dwells in. It's holy, don't defile it.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - As the temple of the Holy Spirit, our bodies are not our own. They are bought with a price. Therefore we need to glorify God in our bodies.

Exodus 20 - Thou shalt not kill.

2 Cor 6:16 - Don't let idols dwell in you but as the temple of the living God, through His Spirit, He will dwell in us, and walk in us. He will be your God and you shall be His people.

2 Cor 7:1 - "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Rom 12:1 - present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

Transgression of the laws of the human organism is a moral issue, and thus sinful. Any action that violates these laws violates the commandment not to kill, thus breaking God's law, the Decalogue. The message of health therefore integrates into the call to

¹²⁶ White, Arthur. Biography of Ellen White, Volume I, (Washington D.C: Review & Herald, 1981-1986), pages 76-77.

keep God's commandments, a central theme of the third angel's message (Rev 14:12).¹²⁷

DT Bourdeau said it this way,

“The Health Reform has come to us as a part of the message; being based on the laws of our being, which are very comprehensive; growing out of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus [Rev 14:12], especially the sixth commandment; making it obligatory upon us to use all proper and available means within our reach to ameliorate and preserve our health and prolong our lives; making it a sin for us to be sick, if we knowingly and carelessly bring sickness upon ourselves by a violation of the laws of health.¹²⁸

“the sixth commandment, in particular, regulates our course with regard to preserving life and health. It is one of the negative precepts, and not only prohibits the sin of destroying our lives and the lives of others, but it includes the injunction of the contrary duty, viz, to make use of all proper and available means to ameliorate and preserve health, and prolong our existence and the existence of others”.¹²⁹

“It is a **sin to be sick**; for **all sickness is the result of transgression**. **Many are suffering in consequence of the transgression of their parents**. They cannot be censured for their parents' sin; but it is nevertheless their duty to ascertain wherein their parents violated the laws of their being, which has entailed upon their offspring so miserable an inheritance; and wherein their parents' habits were wrong, they should change their course, and place themselves by correct habits in a better relation to health”.¹³⁰

God requires people to obey natural law to preserve physical health.¹³¹

Roadblocks to preserving health thus must be addressed. One roadblock is addiction.

¹²⁷ Gerard P. Damsteegt, Foundations of Seventh-day Adventist Mission, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), page 229.

¹²⁸ D.T. Bourdeau, “Advantages of God's People” Review and Herald. February 26, 1867, p. 134.

¹²⁹ D.T. Bourdeau, Sanctification or Living Holiness, Review and Herald, 1864, p 120.

¹³⁰ White, Ellen. Duty To Know Ourselves, Health Reform, August 1866, p 2.

¹³¹ White, Ellen. Testimonies, Volume 3. p 631.

The case of addiction versus disinterested benevolence

Addiction at its core is a repetitive act of self-gratification. Nothing but the selfish heart of man lives for itself.¹³² Jesus' life was different. It was His glory to give. He said, "I do nothing of Myself."¹³³ The following graphic highlights the contrast between addiction and disinterested benevolence

<u>Addiction</u>	<u>Disinterested benevolence</u>
Pathological learning	Healthy learning
x=the distress y=addictive fix z=good feeling with no true resolution $x + y = z$	a=the distress b=true fix c=uncertain feeling with true fix $a + b = c$
"This is going to make me happy and take away the pain."	"In pursuit of helping another's need somehow I became happy and the pain is gone."
Illegitimate fulfillment of a legitimate need	Legitimate fulfillment of a legitimate need
Self-consumption	Self-sacrifice/self-denial
Torment	Bliss
Wickedness	Righteousness
Terror/Fear	Love
Lie	Truth

"Although detox certainly isn't fun, its physical horrors have been seriously exaggerated—perhaps because for so long, the importance of psychology and learning in addiction was ignored...the physical symptoms are not the main problem. What makes drug withdrawal hard to take is the anxiety, the insomnia, and the sense of losing the only thing you have that makes life bearable and worth living...It's the mental and emotional symptoms—the learned connection between drugs and relief and between lack of drugs and pain—that matter."¹³⁴

Understanding Addiction

Billy's Brain

¹³² DA 20.2

¹³³ John 8:28

¹³⁴ Maia Szalavitz. *Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction*. Publisher: Picador. May 9, 2017.

Billy's life was a struggle. His relationships were suffering. He had lost jobs and was barely holding on to his current one. The addiction was wreaking havoc on his mental and physical health. He had tried a bunch of different programs but the addiction wouldn't go away even after periods of sobriety.

Billy's story could be multiplied millions of times over. The chains too often are predictable and harrowing. What to do?

Combat Addiction Myths

Myth #1: People with addictions are losers, sinners who refuse to face up to their evil ways, weaklings who can't suck it up to throw off their bad habits because they are just not trying hard enough.

—You have great value. Addiction can trouble anyone. Anyone can end up in its deceptive web but God is able to help you walk out of any trap.

—It is true that every human heart is deceptively wicked above all else.¹³⁵ But it is also true that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.¹³⁶

Myth #2: "Talking therapy" is the only effective treatment and if all people with addictions would just "work" their program, they would be cured.¹³⁷

—The most important work that is done is the **work to trust none of our desires** and inclinations and prayerfully offer every thought and every desire to Jesus. Wait on Him and ask Him to show the way forward. He will give us new thoughts in the battle that directly applies to the struggle. Consider getting an accountability partner. Throw out or avoid anything or anyone that tempts us. Learn Bible verses that will help you wage war better.

Here are a few examples:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And **lean not on your own understanding**; In all your ways acknowledge Him, **And He shall direct your paths.** - Proverbs 3:5-6

¹³⁵ Jeremiah 17:9

¹³⁶ Psalm 139:14

¹³⁷ Urschel III, Harold C, MD. Healing the Addicted Brain: The Revolutionary, Science-Based Alcoholism and Addiction Recovery Program, Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2009. 288 pp.

If then you were raised with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.¹³⁸ **Set your mind on things above**, not on things on the earth. ... Therefore **put to death your members** which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, **evil desire**, and covetousness, which is idolatry. - Colossians 3:1-2, 5

For the weapons of our warfare [are] not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**, - 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Addiction may be defined several ways. One definition is that addiction is a powerfully soothing but **illegitimate fulfillment of a legitimate need** that ultimately **yokes and binds the person** to the illegitimate fulfillment.

Addiction has also been defined as a combination of **Compulsions, loss of Control, and harmful Consequences (aka the 3 C's)**. The compulsions occur because of the addiction's ability to soothe, alleviate distress, and make a person feel good. There often is an intense love of the addiction because of this. Loss of control occurs because the compulsions don't stop. It also occurs because the fulfillment is illegitimate and based on a lie and **cannot actually fix the cause of the distress** that it is applied to. Due to the belief and execution of the lie and the powerful unending urges, the addiction often then spirals out of control. Harmful consequences then occur and can lead to a massive amount of pain often greater than the original stimulus that led to the addiction.

The problem is that addiction is not just a matter of willpower but it is a medical illness. The medical illness that is addiction must be treated like one. It is not about trying harder or talking more.¹³⁹ God is able and he will heal us if we ask Him; but His healing often comes through overcoming one craving at a time as we go through the process of healing our mind. The process that produces addiction has typically been repeated so many times that the powerful mechanisms of learning in the brain are deeply involved. Addictive learning needs to be undone.

For this reason, addiction has been characterized as a disease of "**pathological learning**". In an article on addiction and cognition¹⁴⁰, Gould quoted Steven Hyman as saying:

¹³⁸ Sitting at the right hand of God is a common phrase in the Bible referring to the place of power, where Jesus executes the overcoming process for every believer.

¹³⁹ Though counseling that involves education, combating lies, and changing behaviors can be very helpful.

¹⁴⁰ Gould TJ. Addiction and cognition. *Addict Sci Clin Pract*. 2010 Dec;5(2):4-14. PMID: 22002448; PMCID: PMC3120118.

“Addiction represents a **pathological usurpation of the neural mechanisms of learning and memory that under normal circumstances serve to shape survival behaviors** related to the pursuit of rewards and the cues that predict them.”

Addiction is therefore ultimately a **process of learned powerlessness**. The person struggling with an addiction becomes an expert of the pathologically learned process due to the countless hours spent on it.

For this reason the underlying causes, the risk factors, and, most importantly, the process to freedom must be clearly understood. Those with addiction must realize they have developed a chronic brain disease that they are powerless in their own strength to overcome.

Additionally, addiction is characterized by functional changes to brain circuits involved in reward, stress, and self-control that don't just instantly vanish once a person is through withdrawals, and is free of the stimulus for a few days, weeks or months. Those changes may actually last a long time after a person has stopped actively engaging in the addiction and the powerlessness must be unlearned.¹⁴¹

Brain changes take time,

"The mind gradually adapts to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell."¹⁴²

Dwelling on new subjects, we can tap into the power of God to help us take “every thought captive”¹⁴³ as we **watch over our hearts with all diligence**.¹⁴⁴

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life. Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech. **Look straight ahead**, and **fix your eyes on what lies before you**. **Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path**. Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil. - Proverbs 4:23-27 NLT

As we hone this practice we begin to clearly see the way we should go to gain lasting and permanent freedom,

¹⁴¹ NIDA. 2020, July 13. Drug Misuse and Addiction. Retrieved from <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drug-misuse-addiction> on December 2, 2022.

¹⁴² White, E. G. (1985) Reflecting Christ. Wisdom That Fulfills God's Purpose, May 24. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association. p. 158.

¹⁴³ 2 Corinthians 10:5

¹⁴⁴ Proverbs 4:23

And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "**This is the way, walk in it,**" - Isaiah 30:21 ESV

Many People in Addiction Will Require A Comprehensive Treatment Program

A comprehensive treatment program that includes medical, psychological, lifestyle, and spiritual treatment must be engaged in. **New habits have to be formed. New desires cultivated. Brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) levels must be raised to improve brain plasticity allowing the brain to change more quickly.** This is a personalized approach for each individual in order to properly address the disease that is hurting the brain and body.

*Risk Factors*¹⁴⁵

1. *Genetics* -- An important risk factor, certain brains are simply much more prone to addiction than other brains. **A family history of addiction** substantially increases the risk. Genes play a significant role in developing an addiction, influencing about 20% to 50% of the risk.
2. *Exposure* -- **One has to be exposed to something addictive in order to risk developing an addiction to that thing.** The exposure must have a soothing/relieving element to the person and must fail to actually solve or fix the cause of the original distress. Different things have different levels of addictive risk. For example, there were no tobacco users in Asia and Europe prior to the 1500's when they discovered the Americas where it had been used for a long time. **Easy access** to substances at home, school, or work, for example, increases risk. **Smokers are much more likely to compound more addictions than nonsmokers.**
3. *Emotional State* -- High levels of stress, emotional pain, or anxiety may lead some people to search for ways to alleviate the mental suffering in an attempt to block the turmoil. **Both the severity and persistence of certain stress hormones may be associated with a slide into addiction.** The stressors vary widely but may include stress at home, emotional trauma, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and so on.
4. *Cognitive and Psychological Factors* -- Brain injury, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, ADHD and other neurological and mental health conditions affect addiction risk.
5. *Social and Cultural Factors* -- Socioeconomic factors play a role, as well as access to education about addiction and treatment. **Lack of supervision when young** may play a role in addictive exposures.
6. **Age - Teenagers** are at the highest risk of developing an addiction, though an **addiction can be developed at any age.** For example, those using drugs or alcohol by age sixteen or earlier are 40% more likely to develop an addiction than those who do not start using drugs or alcohol until 21¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁵ Urschel III, Harold C, MD. Healing the Addicted Brain: The Revolutionary, Science-Based Alcoholism and Addiction Recovery Program, Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2009. 288 pp.

¹⁴⁶ Urschel III, Harold C, MD *ibid*.

7. **Gender - Men** are at higher risk than women.

8. **Lifestyle Factors** - Factors involving nutrition, exercise, water, sleep, sunlight, and exposure to natural environments, for example, may improve brain inflammation and stress coping, lowering the risk of addiction.

The environmental factors listed above, for example, have a significant impact on gene expression in the brain and body. This is called epigenetics. If the environmental factors are changed, this will change gene expression and the result will influence the activity of the disease in the brain.

People in recovery programs often refer to **their environments as part of what makes it difficult to stop** misusing substances. For example, if a person stops using substances, but stays in the same stressful or unhealthy living and social environments, **it may be more challenging to remain abstinent.**¹⁴⁷

Develop A Strategy

Exposure -- Adjust your environment wherever possible to reduce exposure to unhealthy triggers and increase exposure to healthy alleviators.

Emotional State -- Build skills to improve emotional resilience. Counseling with a well selected counselor can be very helpful. A number of additional resources (4) can also deepen your understanding and help you work on building better emotional habits and identifying thinking errors.

Cognitive and Psychological Factors -- Seek medical help to treat underlying mood disorders, attention deficit disorders and other medical problems that may be worsening your cognitive function. Medications may be necessary for a time, sometimes longer. Avoid substances and foods that worsen cognitive function. Engage in healthy learning processes, classical music, healthy forms of reading, and study of proverbs that grow and strengthen your cognitive function.

Social and Cultural Factors -- Drop unhealthy relationships that increase addiction risk. Seek out healthy relationships with people who do not increase addiction risk.

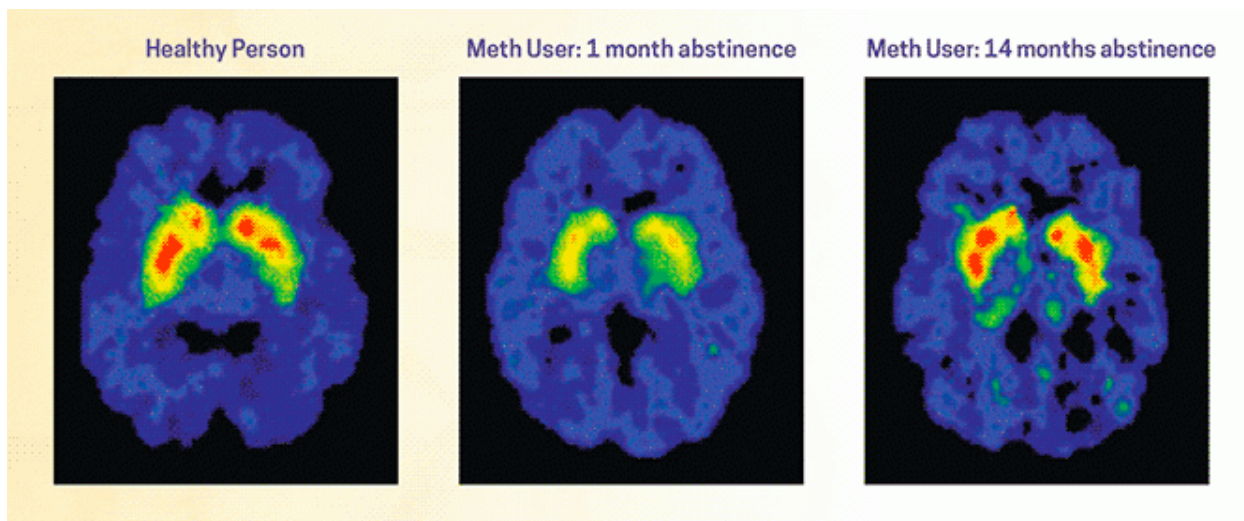
Lifestyle Factors - increase dopamine boosting foods (soy/tofu, beans, almonds, apples, avocados, bananas, beets, chocolate, green leafy vegetables, green tea, lima beans, oatmeal, oranges, peas, sesame and pumpkin seeds, tomatoes, turmeric, watermelon and wheat germ). Vigorous exercise boosts dopamine levels and increase BDNF levels. Cold water immersion therapy may increase dopamine levels by 250%.¹⁴⁸

Billy Walked Away

¹⁴⁷ Sinha R. (2008). Chronic stress, drug use, and vulnerability to addiction. Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1141, 105–130.

¹⁴⁸ Šrámek, P., Šimečková, M., Janský, L. et al. Human physiological responses to immersion into water of different temperatures. Eur J Appl Physiol 81, 436–442 (2000). <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s004210050065>

Billy decided he was a person with great value before God, that God's unmerited grace was his gift as well, and it was time for him to take responsibility for his actions. He started studying how the chains had been built in his brain and how to overcome them. He sought medical help, obtained an accountability partner, and for a time for needed medication, on top of lifestyle changes and related natural remedies. He deepened his understanding of himself. He learned relevant Bible verses and began praying diligently. He adjusted his exposures and reduced his triggers. He worked on his stress resilience. He did counseling to understand his emotions and thinking errors and then learned to reframe them. He bathed every effort in prayer knowing God was the only one who could ultimately empower Him to success. He worked through his emotional trauma's and sought to forgive those who had wounded him. He sought forgiveness of broken relationships, improved them and sought new healthy relationships. He started looking after himself and kept up with his healthy lifestyle behaviors. He made new goals for his life and actively began to achieve them. It all took time; but for Billy the time it took to heal was time well spent.¹⁴⁹



These images showing the density of dopamine transporters in the brain illustrate the brain's remarkable ability to recover, at least in part, after a long abstinence from drugs—in this case, methamphetamine.¹⁵⁰

1c. Jesus opened the eyes of a man born blind (John 9:1-38)

¹⁴⁹ A godly, Christ-centered counselor, friend, or group with experience in addiction is often invaluable for recovery. Helpful books include *The Lost Art of Thinking* by Neil Nedley and *Healing the Addicted Brain* by Harold Urschel.

¹⁵⁰ National Institute on Drug Abuse. *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction, Treatment and Recovery*.
<https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/treatment-recovery>

Now as [Jesus] passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. - John 9:1-3.

Why not ask "what's the cause?" Rather than who sinned?

One would think the disciples wished to understand the cause of his infant blindness¹⁵¹ out of a sincere desire to help the man. Perhaps this was the case, but that wasn't the question. The question was who sinned, this man or his parents? **My question to the disciples is did the disciples really think that a fetus could sin?**

Can a fetus or a baby sin?

We know that until a child has independent decisional capacity, there is **no capability of sin. Sin is a decision.**¹⁵² Therefore, infants can't sin until they can decide to do wrong. The following is a beautiful quote speaking to the role of the angels toward infants at the resurrection of the saints,

As the little infants come forth immortal from their dusty beds, they immediately wing their way to their mother's arms. They meet again never more to part. **But many of the little ones have no mother there.** We listen in vain for the rapturous song of triumph from the mother. **The angels receive the motherless infants and conduct them to the tree of life.** Jesus places the golden ring of light, the crown upon their little heads.¹⁵³

Jesus quickly moves past "who did it"

The **consequences and complexity of the of sin and resulting disease** can be much farther reaching than the immediate behavior of the parents and the blind man. Jesus response seems to suggest that He was not interested in exploring the question, after his brief rejection of blame of the man or his parents. Jesus did this perhaps because

¹⁵¹ Causes of neonatal blindness are long and varied. They include toxoplasmosis, rubella, syphilis, cytomegalovirus, herpes virus, retinitis pigmentosa, chlamydia, gonorrhea, anophthalmos, microphthalmos, coloboma, congenital cataract, infantile glaucoma, neuro-ophthalmic lesions, ophthalmia neonatorum, retinopathy of prematurity, cortical visual impairment, congenital cataract, persistent hyperplastic primary vitreous, and retinoblastoma, to name a few.

¹⁵² In John 15:22,24 when Jesus told them that they did wrong but they persisted in the evil choice, then according to the text, that was sin. In Romans 7:7-9 sin doesn't come unless the law comes first. Thus, we must knowingly disobey the law of God for there to be sin counted against us. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

¹⁵³ White, Ellen. Youth's Instructor. April 1, 1858, par. 3

they did not have the knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and genetics prerequisite to engage a discussion.

More importantly, Jesus **did not want to focus on blaming the victim**, but rather wished the disciples to direct their minds to the **wonderful things God could do for the blind man regardless of how He ended up in His position of suffering**. This is God's desire for us today. **Avoid the blame game. Focus on what can be done to help and to heal**. Romans affirms this focus as well,

Do not be overcome by evil, but **overcome evil with good**. - Romans 12:21.

Jesus refocuses the disciples

I am fascinated at what Jesus immediately said to His disciples after His previous answer to their who sinned question,

We must **work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day**; [the] night is coming when no one can work. - John 9:4.

Stay focused on the job at hand

When taken with the first three verses of John 9, the idea that we must work the works of Him that sent Jesus gives one the distinct impression that Jesus is saying to His disciples — **Stay focused. Don't get distracted with debates about who gets the blame.**¹⁵⁴ **Our job is to work the works of our Father in Heaven.** I came to save people from their sins,¹⁵⁵ and to bring good out of evil.¹⁵⁶ I am directing our minds to things above, not things on the earth.¹⁵⁷ I am healing and saving.¹⁵⁸ This is My calling for all My followers.

Work hard while it is still day

Jesus **worked diligently to heal and to save** as well as **to teach and to preach** while it was still "day", while He was still free to move around, **before He had been apprehended by the authorities**. The "night" came when Jesus was arrested and killed. **We must work diligently while we are able to as well.**

Jesus was the light and we are the light

¹⁵⁴ This emphasis is also in **Isaiah 58** where God calls His people to care for and uplift others (vs. 6-7), remove their yoke, and avoid pointing the finger (v. 8).

¹⁵⁵ Matthew 1:21.

¹⁵⁶ Romans 12:21

¹⁵⁷ Colossians 3:2.

¹⁵⁸ Jeremiah 17:14.

As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. - John 9:5.

After Jesus died, was resurrected, and ascended to heaven, He bestowed His light (of healing, saving, preaching and teaching the truth) on His disciples and all His faithful followers in succeeding generations. Their "night" came in the dark ages during the 1260 years of persecution during the times of the Gentiles.¹⁵⁹

Jesus then heals the man

When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. - John 9:7-8.

Four phases of natural healing

Step 1: Attempt healing through a **natural modality**, whenever plausible.

Step 2: Urge a **simple task** upon the one in need of healing.¹⁶⁰

Step 3: The one in need of healing performs the task.

Step 4: God does the healing through His miraculous power.

A cooperative miracle

It was a common theme of Jesus miracles for the one being healed to engage in a cooperative action with Jesus. This miracle was no exception.

Healing a blind man gets the neighbors talking

The miracle got the town talking. But there was debate as to whether the **one who was seeing was the same as the one who had been blind** and sat begging.

Apparently, they hadn't paid much attention to him before. The man testified to his inquirers and said,

"A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." John 9:11.

When God does your healing, **it gives you a testimony**. It's your opportunity to **give Him the glory**.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel 7:25, Revelation 12:14, Luke 21:24.

¹⁶⁰ The fact that he was begging suggests that he was aware of his need certainly of money, but also, as an unspoken longing, his need to have his sight, which for all intents and purposes was hopeless.

Healed man confronted by the Pharisees

Some how the Pharisees found out and so the healed man was brought in and questioned. The issue, according to John 9:14, seemed to be because **the healing was on the Sabbath.**

Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "**This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.**" Others said, "**How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?**" And there was a division among them. They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet." - John 9:16-17.

Healed man confronted again by the Pharisees

Some of the Pharisees refused to believe that the healed man was born blind and that his eyes were healed by Jesus. So **they called in his parents** who testified that indeed he was born blind and that now he sees but that they didn't know how or by whom he received his vision. And that if they wanted their question answered, just ask their son, "**he is age; ask him,**" They answered briefly due to the **Pharisees threat that anyone who confessed Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue.**

The healed man answers the Pharisees

"Why, this is a marvelous thing, **that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.** "Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. **"If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.** They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And **they cast him out.** - John 9:30-34 NKJV

True healing versus spurious works of healing

The healed man believed that **Jesus was a prophet** and that Jesus was from God because no one who is not from God can heal. **In this case, the man is right about Jesus but the thing is Satan can do miracles too.** Satan in prior times had led men to turn a staff into a snake (Exodus 7:8-13), turn water to blood (Exodus 7:14-22), and summon frogs (Exodus 8:1-7). Was it only merely an illusion, or a sleight of hand? Hardly. As to why the magicians were unable to mimic God's other plagues is unclear. Clearly, God was more capable.

Satan will do miracles at the end of time

No doubt those miracles were performed by the Egyptian magicians to deceive, **to give the impression that Satan is as powerful as God.**¹⁶¹ Before Jesus comes again a second time **Satan will be performing many spurious miracles,**

And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. **The coming of the [lawless one] is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,** and with **all unrighteous deception** among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. - 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 NKJV

Jesus finds the man he healed

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, **"Do you believe in the Son of God?"** He answered and said, **"Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"** And Jesus said to him, **"You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you."** Then he said, **"Lord, I believe!"** And he worshiped Him. And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that **those who do not see may see,** and that **those who see may be made blind.**" Then [some] of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?" Jesus said to them, **"If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.** John 9:35-41.

The blind man sees in more ways than one

Once Jesus showed the suffering blind man that **He loved and cared for him,** having **worked to accomplish His healing,** and **won His confidence,** the healed blind man then testified on Jesus's behalf before the Pharisees. After he was thrown out, Jesus searched him out, found him and **bid him follow to Him.** I'm sure Jesus was proud of this man for standing up to the Pharisees and not being afraid to defend Jesus.

We are to follow the same pattern as Jesus did

The Saviour **mingled with men** as one who **desired their good.** He showed His **sympathy for them, ministered to their needs,** and **won their confidence.** Then He bade them, **"Follow Me."**¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Compare John 8:44.

¹⁶² White, Ellen. Ministry of Healing, p 143.3.