

When God does NOT heal...? Or answer your prayer ?

Should you trust in divine healing or go to the doctor?

What should you do if you or your loved one is not healed?

What about the Scriptures that seem to teach that everyone should be healed?

Why does God say no to some of your prayers?

Conditions for answered prayer.

Should you take medication or have surgery in order to be healed?

Should you ever stop medical treatment when you have a terminal illness?

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It is clear from Scripture that God wants to reveal His power and heal people. Jesus commanded that the disciples should pray and heal the sick (Matt. 10:8). God has bestowed the gifts of healing upon the church so that we might pray for the sick (1 Cor. 12:9). The apostle James taught, *“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven”* (James 5:14-15). Therefore, you should pray and believe God for His divine intervention and healing. Asking for God’s healing should always be your first resort. There will always be those who have the gift of healing and will want to pray for you. Allow them to pray the prayer of faith for you. But, you also must come in faith. God wants you to trust and believe Him to fulfill His plan in this most difficult time in your life. This won’t be easy because your mind fights against your belief in divine healing. Therefore, you must fight in faith to stand on God’s Word that healing is truly possible. Paul said that we must, *“Fight the good fight of faith”* (1 Tim. 6:12). To trust God when you don’t understand exactly why all these things are happening to you; to trust Him when you feel so terrible; to trust Him when it seems so hopeless will require you to fight the good fight of faith.

However, is it a lack of faith to seek out a physician’s help if the illness continues? Absolutely not! God has also given mankind wisdom to treat all manner of sickness and disease. Jesus

would never have used the analogy of physicians caring for the sick, nor would Jesus have referred to Himself as a spiritual Physician if He did not consider doctors essential for helping those who are sick (Jer. 8:22; Matt. 9:12; Luke 4:23). Even Paul the apostle had Luke the physician travel with him to care for his many ailments (Col. 4:14). It is thought by most Christians that Paul had many physical problems from the beatings that he had received and that he had some kind of severe eye problem. Note what Paul said about his physical condition: *“And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me”* (Gal. 4:14-15).

Therefore, you should find the most knowledgeable and caring physician possible to treat you or your loved one. If you are in doubt about the diagnosis, get a second opinion, which brings confirmation and wisdom for your treatment. Take the options given to you by your doctor and make an informed decision on the course of treatment.

What should you do if you or your loved one is not healed?

Many Christians have struggled and even doubted God’s love because they couldn’t understand why some believers are healed and others are not. There is not a complete answer to this question of why He heals some miraculously while others recover through the treatment of medicine and others die. Sometimes Jesus healed everyone that came to Him (Matt. 12:15). Other times He would only heal one person in the midst of many as He did with the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9). Note that there were, *“multitudes of sick people, blind, lame, and paralyzed waiting”* there at the pool, but Jesus healed only one man (vs. 3). Why did Jesus not heal all of them? We are not told. At other times Jesus did not do any miracles or any healing because of the people’s unbelief (Matt. 13:58). Therefore, you must understand that God is sovereign in all healing and it is impossible to try and figure out why some are healed and others are not. God has His own reasons and purposes that He is working out in the life of the one that is sick and in all the family and friends that surround this person. Therefore, pray and seek God’s healing power, find a good doctor, and trust that God will work out His plan through it all.

What about the Scriptures that seem to teach that everyone should be healed?

It is important to realize that God has provided for healing by the death of His Son, but Scripture does not guarantee that *everyone* will be healed. This is why many great men and women of faith have not been healed. Remember the examples of Elisha the prophet, Paul the apostle, or Paul’s fellow worker Epaphroditus, to name just a few that God used greatly to impact their world, but these men were not healed (2 Kings 13:14; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Phil. 2:25-30). Therefore, all Scripture must be taken into account when forming your beliefs. The misinterpretation or the misapplication of God’s Word will lead to great confusion, guilt, and many erroneous practices. Let’s look at the Scriptures that might appear to teach healing for all and determine exactly what they mean.

1. The apostle Peter said of Jesus: *“Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed”* (1 Peter 2:23-24). This is a passage that is used quite often to encourage people that they are already healed because of the stripes Jesus took for them, which seems to imply that healing is guaranteed for any believer. You are told by well meaning people that by faith you should just receive the healing. However, if you give this passage a little closer examination it is clear that Peter is addressing the spiritual benefits of Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection and how His example should help us live for righteousness when we suffer. It is important to note that the intent of this verse is that you, *“might live for righteousness.”* Granted, the word *healed* means to make a person whole, but it is used in reference to the transformation that His death brings spiritually. Unfortunately, people usually quote this passage in reference to physical healing, but the word *healed* is in the past tense which clearly indicates that it is primarily referring to the past work of the cross and the spiritual work of making us whole so that we could live for righteousness. Quite often Scripture uses healing as a metaphor for the transformation from ungodliness to living righteously. Notice how Isaiah spoke of the spiritually sick condition of the nation Israel: *“Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers... they have forsaken the LORD. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints”* (Is. 1:4-5). Jesus used the same metaphor when He said, *“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance”* (Luke 5:31-32). Obviously, the sickness here that needs to be healed refers to the people’s spiritual condition.

Physical healing is definitely a benefit provided for in the sacrifice of Christ, but it is nowhere in Scripture guaranteed to occur in all believers every time you pray. Healing is a gift of God given as He chooses; not a guarantee. It is a gift given at the discretion of the Giver or withheld for His own divine purposes. The ultimate determining factor concerning who is healed and who is not must be left to the sovereign will of God.

2. Another passage of Scripture that seems to imply healing for everyone is the statement by Jesus: *“These signs will follow those who believe: In my name they will... lay hands on the sick, and they will recover”* (Mark 16:17-18). This passage must simply be balanced with the biblical references that refer to His sovereign will. One such verse is Hebrews 2:4 which declares, *“God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.”* Or, as the apostle John taught, your prayers will only be answered if they are according to the Father’s will (1 John 5:14-15).

If you fight and argue with God over this issue of why He heals some and not others, you will stumble in your faith because you are not allowing Him to be sovereign over your life or that of your loved one. We cannot tell God how to do His business; we must allow Him to fulfill His will, whatever that may be. If you trust in the Lord with your whole heart for His divine healing and you are still not healed, then you must conclude that God has another purpose that He is working out in your life. At this time you should cry out as David did, *“Hear my cry, O God;*

attend to my prayer... lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Ps. 61:1-2). Believe Him to give you His sufficient grace to go through this trial.

Why does God say no to some of your prayers?

1. Sometimes God refuses to answer your prayer because it is simply not His will. Here again God is exercising His sovereign right in His kingdom to fulfill His purposes. The apostle John explained that the Lord has one essential requirement for answered prayer: *“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us”* (1 John 5:14). Even Jesus while here on earth prayed, *“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done”* (Luke 22:42). There are many things that we pray for that are simply not God’s will to do. For example, when Paul asked God to take his thorn in the flesh from him, which most people believe was some physical ailment, God said no. Paul explained what happened: *“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”* (2 Cor. 12:8-9). Therefore, God may not answer your prayer in the affirmative simply because He wants to do something else.

2. Other times God may refuse to answer your prayer because it is not His timing to do what you request. God’s timing was one of the reasons why God did not answer Abraham’s prayer immediately for his promised child. God stated that, *“My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year”* (Gen. 17:21). Again God promised to Abraham: *“At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son”* (Gen. 18:14). Note the fulfillment of God’s promise was for a set time. Scripture declared the fulfillment: *“Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him”* (Gen. 21:2). Therefore, submit to God’s timing and trust that He knows exactly what He is doing.

3. Sometimes God refuses to answer your prayer because you do not have the right heart attitude. How do you know if your heart is in the wrong place?

a. James taught that our hearts can doubt the Lord and this will keep us from receiving from the Lord: *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord”* (James 1:5-7). Therefore, be sure your heart trusts the Lord completely.

b. James also taught that we can ask with wrong motives in our hearts and this will also keep us from receiving from God: *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures”* (James 4:3). Therefore, examine your motives.

c. Jesus taught that sometimes people come to Him in prayer with prideful and self-righteous hearts. Note what Jesus taught: *“He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God,*

I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:9-14). Therefore, be sure your heart is humble and right before God.

Conditions for answered prayer.

The previous section will naturally bring up in your mind the question of what are the conditions for answered prayer.

1. You must come before God with personal repentance over your own sin and seek God’s favor with humility. This is obvious from the previous section relating to the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). You must always come to God with genuine humility if you desire to see your prayers answered. Notice the confidence that King David expressed concerning the Lord: *“You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear”* (Ps. 10:17). Therefore, surrender to Peter’s command with the assurance of His love for you: *“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”* (1 Peter 5:6-7).

2. You must not harbor any known sin in your heart. David taught: *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear”* (Ps. 66:18). This means you cannot hold resentment in your heart toward anyone, but you must be forgiving if you want God to answer your personal requests for mercy and forgiveness. Jesus explained to His disciples this important condition: *“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses”* (Mark 11:25-26). Jesus covered all offenses with all people when He used the terms “anything against anyone.” Jesus makes it clear that you must seek reconciliation with those who have offended you or those who are angry with you. Jesus taught: *“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”* (Matt. 5:23-24).

3. You must come before God with real faith to have your prayers answered. Jesus said, *“Whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive”* (Matt. 21:22). Believing prayer is the means to receive from God. Therefore, do you believe God is able and willing to answer your prayer?

4. You must ask according to God’s will. The apostle John taught: *“This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him “* (1 John 5:14-15). God will only grant the request that is made in accordance with His eternal plan.

5. You must ask in Jesus' name seeking God's glory. Jesus said, *"Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son"* (John 14:13). What does it mean to ask the Father in the name of Jesus? To ask in Jesus' name is to plead His merit, character, and righteousness. If you have fulfilled these conditions then the Father and the Son will be glorified by the results.

Should you take medication or have surgery in order to be healed?

Some believers will tell you that it is wrong to take any medication to obtain healing or to treat your pain. Is it right to take medication if you are seeking God's healing touch? Is it right to take pain medication to relieve pain or should you just endure it? God sheds much light on these questions in Scripture. God speaks through the prophet Jeremiah concerning the spiritual need for healing of the nation of Babylon and that He had done everything He could to help the nation. God spoke of the spiritual balm (medicine) that should be taken for the pain that the people were experiencing. *"Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed"* (Jer. 51:8). God clearly spoke and encouraged this nation to take medicine for her pain in the hope that the nation would be healed. God again spoke through Jeremiah to plead with His own people to take the medicine He had for them. *"Is there no balm (medicine) in Gilead, is there no physician there? Why then is there no recovery for the health of the daughter of my people"* (Jer. 8:22)? God would never have used these figurative examples concerning physicians, medicine, or pain relief if they were wrong.

Another passage that sheds some light on this subject is where God spoke of the future Kingdom Age when He would set up His throne here on the earth. God declared, *"Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine"* (Eze. 47:12). It is important to remember again that God would never have spoken of these leaves for medicine if taking medication were wrong. It is clear that Jesus came into this world to relieve suffering and pain by all that He did and taught. God has also given wisdom to caring physicians and researchers to try and find healing medications to do the same. Therefore, on the basis of these Scriptures and by Christ's example you should do whatever is necessary, ethical, and wise to relieve your pain and find a cure.

If your doctor recommends surgery or the removal of parts of your body to prolong your life, is this something you should consider? Absolutely! Again, Christ gave a powerful illustration that directly relates to this issue. Jesus said, *"If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell"* (Matt. 5:30). What did Jesus mean by this statement? In this teaching Jesus was making a comparison. In the context, Jesus was addressing the lustful heart of man and asking His listeners to consider what caused them to sin. He asked them if there was something they were doing to incite lust that would ultimately stumble them or destroy their relationship with God. If there was, He encouraged them to take a radical action to remove it.

This is an obvious use of hyperbole or an exaggeration to make His point that radical action is sometimes necessary to protect your life. He made this radical comparison so that all of us would compare the worth of something physical that is hurting us with the value of eternal life. Therefore, radical surgery is sometimes necessary to get rid of that which would destroy your physical life.

The application of this passage is very simple. Jesus would not have used this example if He thought that there was anything wrong with amputation or the removal of something in your body that could possibly destroy your life. I'm sure that Jesus and all of his listeners understood the wisdom of amputating a limb that had gangrene or the patient would die. This was a very common means of medical treatment in the first century and remained so until recent times with the advent of antibiotics. Therefore, you must compare the value of surgically removing a part of your body that potentially can destroy your entire life with the option of leaving it in and possibly dying.

Should you ever stop medical treatment when you have a terminal illness?

Stopping medical treatment is another very difficult decision that should not be regarded lightly. If you are not miraculously healed by God and the medical treatment that you have chosen has failed, you must conclude that God has chosen to take you home and give you the ultimate healing of a new body. Yes, God can choose to heal you at the last moment as He did King Hezekiah in the Old Testament (2 Kings 20:1-6). This is surely possible, but if God does not heal, then you should consider all your options. All end of life decisions should only be made after serious and honest consultation with your doctor and family. You should ask your doctor these questions: Has all available treatment been pursued? If a new treatment were administered, would it save my life? What benefits would there be in continuing treatment? What added suffering would come if I have more surgery or some other type of medical procedure? You must then weigh the value of this treatment and any added suffering that would result against the value of spending quality time with your family and loved ones without this intervention.

The Bible does not encourage mercy killing or assisted suicide, but neither does it encourage unduly prolonging a person's pain and suffering. Paul told the Philippian jailer who was about to kill himself, "*Do yourself no harm*" (Acts 16:28). Obviously this passage would teach against suicide. However, you must also determine-along with the counsel of your doctor-at what point you are doing yourself harm by attempting to prolong your life with unnecessary procedures. If these procedures will not change the final outcome and only add suffering, what is the point? Paul said, "*Love does no harm to a neighbor*" (Rom. 13:10). If you love someone you naturally don't want this person to be harmed by causing them to suffer unnecessarily. The overriding principle that should be used in these issues must be: what is in the best interest of the patient. Paul explained that considering the interests of others was one of the most basic principles of love: "*Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others*" (Phil. 2:4). It is not what is in the best interest of family members or what makes them feel good, but what is in the patient's best interest that is important. The patient is

the one who has to endure the chemotherapy, radiation, surgeries, etc. If these will not restore a patient to health, why would more pain and suffering be inflicted upon the patient with no hope of changing the outcome? Therefore, the patient needs to make the final decision.

If you believe that your death is near, you should discuss your final wishes with your doctor and family. If you were to become unconscious due to some medical complication wouldn't you want your doctor and your loved ones to know exactly what your wishes are so you could relieve them of any guilt, confusion, or conflict among them? Do you want to be kept alive using extraordinary means no matter what happens or how futile these attempts are to restoring you to health? If it becomes clear to you and your doctor that, barring a miracle, no matter what medical treatment you try, you are still going to die, would you prefer to stop treatment and be allowed to go home and die with your family and friends around you? You must decide when the treatment is causing more suffering than if you were just allowed to die at home with your loved ones. This must be a personal decision between you and God, with the added counsel of your doctor and loved ones.

When you discuss this issue of stopping your treatment with some people they may tell you that you are giving up. Others will understand that you are only acknowledging the reality of your condition and that you have no desire to prolong your suffering. At the same time, it is not inconsistent to believe that God can still intervene and heal you if He so chooses. No one wants to die, but you must submit to the obvious reality of your condition and the sovereign will of God. Jesus had this same struggle when He was about to die. He asked the Father to let this cup, referring to His death, pass. He knew that as He became the offering for the sin of the world He would be separated from His Father. He didn't want that to happen. He asked if there was any other way to save mankind. However, at the same time He was submitting to the reality of His Father's eternal plan to send Him to the cross. Listen to Jesus pray: *"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will"* (Matt. 26:39). Submit yourself to the Father's sovereign will. You don't have to understand God's sovereign plan to submit to it.

I understand that the struggle and emotion surrounding this decision will be enormous. When Paul contemplated his own death while in prison, he expressed his difficulty: *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you"* (Phil. 1:21-24). Paul wanted to go home because he knew that heaven was far better than anything he would experience in this life, but he struggled inside over what was needful. Do what Paul did. Fix your eyes on the place that is far better. Sooner or later we are all headed there. Remember, to die is gain. You aren't losing in death; you are gaining your ultimate reward. Jesus said, *"Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven"* (Matt. 5:12).

Should you ever remove a ventilator or feeding tube?

The last of these difficult decisions will probably not be made by you. This is why you must make your wishes known to your doctor and loved ones beforehand. Do you want to be kept alive on a ventilator and feeding tube if there is no possibility of recovery? Simple, common sense is the best way to make this decision. For example: Common sense would dictate that you should not try to keep someone artificially alive if his or her spirit and soul has already departed the body. If your doctor tells you that there are no brain waves present, you must conclude that the real person (the spirit and soul) has departed the body. James used this common sense comparison between life and death when he declared, "*For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*" (James 2:26). The Bible is clear that death occurs when your spirit and soul leave your temporary dwelling place (your body) and you get a new body from heaven (2 Cor. 5:1-10). When Jesus died on the cross He bowed his head and "*gave up His spirit*" (John 19:30). The Greek word for *spirit* in this passage means breath, referring to the vital or essential principle of life. Also, when Elijah prayed for the widow's son who died, the Scripture declared that, "*the soul of the child came back to him and he revived*" (1 Kings 17:22). The Hebrew word for *soul* is translated other places in the Old Testament as life, mind, or himself. Therefore, do you want oxygen and food to be forced into your body even when your spirit has departed from you?

Remember this very important principle. Just because man's technology has the ability to keep you alive does not mean that it's the right thing to do. Man's technology has intruded into God's domain and His sovereign right over life and death in many ways. Technology has given us the ability to do many things that are not morally right (i.e. human cloning). The question is, what is in the best interest of the patient? What will give the greatest benefit to the patient with the least amount of pain and suffering? Just because we have the human ability to force nutrients and oxygen into a body that has no chance of survival, does not mean that this is the right thing to do. Wouldn't this only prolong the suffering? May God give you wisdom and common sense in these most difficult decisions.