

My personal ongoing testimony of healing

Does God heal by medicine or miracles? Yes. Sometimes it's one, sometimes it's the other, sometimes it's both, and sometimes it's simply the way God created our bodies to heal themselves over time; but where there is healing, the Great Physician is involved.

This is my currently developing story. It's my story, and I'm sticking to it! I could not have learned much of what I want to share without the input and mentoring of the whole beautiful Body of Christ in all its many parts. Good news and bad news: this article is probably five times longer than my typical newsletter article... but you're not obligated to read it! I decided it was better to tell the whole story in one sitting than try to break it up into parts.

With a bit of fear and trembling and cautious optimism, I'm thrilled to share that God is healing, or has healed, my decades-long battle with depression. I feel better than I ever have in my entire adult life. But even though that's far more significant than what follows, that's not what I want to share here. Maybe another time...

In 2018 I was officially diagnosed with eosinophilic pneumonia. Easy for you to say, you say. Eosinophils are white blood cells that we all have, and mine are overreactive. They probably always have been, contributing to my severe childhood asthma, but this is a recent area of research. My condition is chronic and has recurred approximately annually since 2018. Researchers aren't sure what causes recurrences, but eosinophilic pneumonia is treated with steroids.

In May of this year, pneumonia resurfaced, and we all assumed it was eosinophilic, so I started steroids. They didn't help. We added antibiotics in case it was garden variety pneumonia, which also didn't help. Several x-rays, a CAT scan, and one bronchoscopy later, and we still didn't know what it was. About two weeks after the lung issue surfaced, both my eyes got infected. Similar story – I'm on my sixth eye doctor right now, one of the best corneal specialists in the whole southwest, I'm told, and there's still an element of guesswork. After a month or two, the eye condition was more limiting than the lungs, though neither were completely debilitating, praise the Lord. Ironically, after we removed all medicines for the lungs, and all medicines for the eyes except a lubricant drop, both started improving. Neither were totally healed, but both were close.

Around August 8, we started down exactly the same track once again. Pneumonia got worse. Add the steroids. These didn't help. Add the antibiotics. These didn't help either. Cue the eye infection again. The only difference from three to four months ago was that everything was regressing more quickly. The week of August 14, I did something I've never done before – two back-to-back three-day prayer summits, one in Phoenix, the other here in Tucson. Both were interspersed with doctor visits and phone calls.

I'm a slow learner, but by the end of the second prayer summit, my wife and I intentionally did what we should have been doing our entire lives – we called on prayer and spiritual resources as Plan A, with medicine and science as the backup plan. It's not that we hadn't been praying all along, of course; it's just that instead of putting more of our hope and efforts and intentionality into medicine, we put it into prayer. While still following medical advice, we called in prayer experts instead of medical experts. We intentionally expanded

our prayer circles. [Here's a confession – I got so tired of talking about sickness that there are many, many dear friends who knew nothing about any of this. I'm sorry for not inviting you more intentionally into the partnership.]

In the book of Job, Job blames God for his pain and suffering, while Job's "friends" blamed Job. Neither paid any attention to the actual culprit, which was the enemy Satan. The Bible talks a lot about the enemy and cautions us against giving the enemy a foothold in our lives. No matter how much we learn about how Satan operates, I'm sure heaven will explode the incomplete revelation we gain here on earth. Our healing prayer consultants on Monday, August 21 advised us to very intentionally forgive anyone God brought to mind, since unforgiveness can be one of the enemy's footholds in our lives. We did that as completely as we knew how, and have continued that process right up to this very moment as God brings additional scenarios to mind. It's become fun! We laugh about it now!

Two days later, God supernaturally, directly, and impactfully impressed on both Val and me separately the importance of James 5:16, which says to confess your sins to one another that you may be healed. We confessed everything we could think of to one another: big things, small things, "remember that thing I said six years ago..." The more we did that, the more honest we got, and the more our confessions moved from intellectual exercises to matters of the heart. That also has actually become fun. We look forward to it, and wake up early so we can share another confession that God brought to mind during the night. I confessed my impure motives for confession – which were partly so that I could be physically healed. Then I confessed that my confessions were still, and always will be, incomplete. Then I confessed that I still want to be in control, that somehow by my doing all the right things, I can force God's hand. There's never an end to confession in this life.

Right in the middle of the two back-to-back prayer summits, on August 16, my Pakistani pastor friend and J17 Ministries partner, whose name I won't share here for security reasons, blows up my phone with stories and pictures of how Muslim mobs burned to the ground his church, his home, his food and clothing, and everything he owns. He and his family escaped with their lives, barely; he's in hiding, and could I please help? We're doing all we know to do, both personally and in collaboration with networks around the world. My problems are so minor by comparison. On Sunday, August 27, in my highly treasured morning meeting with the Lord, I read Psalm 41:1-3, which links being kind to the poor ("weak" in some translations) to physical healing. I'm so grateful I didn't see that earlier, so that I wasn't even tempted to consider mixing my motives in ministering to our persecuted Pakistani partners. I don't understand the connection, but that's what the Bible says.

I haven't done a thorough Bible study on physical healing, so I don't know if there are other areas of obedience that the Bible specifically ties to physical healing besides what I share here. I just know these three: spiritual warfare, in part by removing the enemy's footholds in our lives; confessing our sins to one another, and not just to God; and caring for the poor and weak. I don't have to understand them fully before obeying them and following Jesus with what I do understand.

Meanwhile, the night of Monday August 21, the same night we met with the healing prayer consultants, my pneumonia worsened so much so that I had to sleep in a chair, something I did often decades ago but hadn't done in years. A couple nights later on Wednesday, the same day Val and I dove headlong into James 5:16, I had to sleep in a chair again. The next day, Thursday, our beloved family doctor of over thirty years says, "We've failed. You're getting worse quickly. You need to go to the hospital tomorrow. I believe you have two rare pneumonia conditions at work (the other being MAC/MIC, if you're curious), but I can't prove it." We keep praying, forgiving, confessing, and inviting others to join us... and the tide started to shift Thursday night. I slept through the night peacefully, but was not totally healed the next morning, so I went to the ER on Friday. Most of the time I was in the hospital bed, in between medical tests, God was giving me the unbelievable privilege of ministering to and coordinating prayer and financial resources for our Pakistani friends in hiding. The ER doctor said my lungs didn't sound that bad and sent me home with instructions to connect with my pulmonologist on Monday for more tests.

I kept improving through the weekend and miraculously got in to see my also-excellent pulmonologist the next Monday, August 28. He examined me and said my lungs were clear. There's no medical explanation for the change. My lungs have remained completely clear ever since, with no shortness of breath or any lingering effects. I've even been able to return to the racquetball court the last two weeks! My eyes are another story, and we continue to follow medical advice while ultimately putting our trust in God, who heals through – as well as without – medical explanation.

Here are several hugely important things I'm learning and want to share before I close. First, we don't confess and forgive and serve the poor in order to get physically healed. How sick would that be? Confession, forgiveness, and caring for the poor each stand on their own as massively important, regardless of any ancillary benefits they might produce. If there had been no physical healing at all from our intentional acts of confession and forgiveness, it would have been 1000% worth it for all the spiritual, emotional, and relational healing it's produced. We are eternally grateful for what we've received, far above and beyond any physical healing, and have no intention of going back to our old way of life.

Second, all physical healing in this life is temporary. Unless Jesus returns first, we're all going to die of something. Even Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead, died again. Only when we get our new heavenly bodies are we completely healed; everything in this life is partial. I do not have a direct word or promise from the Lord that the chronic eosinophilic pneumonia condition I've been diagnosed with has now been permanently removed. I don't know, and I'm taking it a day at a time. All I do know is that this last episode with my lungs has been healed.

Third, because God is sovereign, omnipotent, and 100% love and goodness, He is able to work on multiple levels at the same time. In the gospels Jesus regularly prioritized spiritual healing over physical healing, because as was just said, physical healing, while important, is always partial in this life. And the greater healing that Jesus is concerned about is not only for us, but for those watching and observing. He will be working in the lives of others simultaneously with whatever He's doing in and through us.

Fourth, fear is real and totally understandable. God knows this, which is why “Do not be afraid” is in the Bible 365 times, one for every day of the year. Fear of death, fear of suffering, and fear of prayers that won’t get answered the way we want them to, all are super-common human experiences. Jesus doesn’t intend us to live by fear. He invites us to live by faith. Not a pie-in-the-sky, naively optimistic faith that denies the reality of evil or suffering, and not even faith in a desired outcome, but faith in a good God who can even use things meant for evil to produce good and godly results. God is altogether good, and we can trust Him even when we can’t understand Him. Thankfulness is one of the ways the Bible recommends battling fear and anxiety (Philippians 4:4-7).

Fifth, we Americans don’t do suffering very well. We often overlook the redemptive value of suffering and the good fruit it can produce (Romans 5:3-5 and all over the Bible). We miss out on the sweet fellowship of joining Jesus in His suffering, because we’ll do anything to relieve it, including medicine, psychology, self-help tools and other devices, all of which can at times be used by God for healing purposes, but none of which are ultimate and worthy of our greatest trust.

Finally, our healing prayer consultants we met with wisely ended our meeting by saying, “Your healing is not your responsibility. We trust God for that.” Reject the lie from the enemy that if you aren’t being physically healed, it’s probably your fault. If the Lord leads you to be more intentional about living out a Biblical truth, do it! Your obedience will always produce great spiritual fruit, whether physical healing results or not. As Martin Luther once said, there’s no safer place to be than in the palm of God’s hands, and praise the Lord, that’s where we are!

Dave Drum