

A H E L E R
M O R E > T H A N

COSTI W. HINN

NOT THE
JESUS
YOU WANT



BUT THE
JESUS
YOU NEED

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ZONDERVAN BOOKS

More Than a Healer

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INTRODUCTION

LORD, WE NEED HEALING!

As I wrote this book, events in the year 2020 unfolded rapidly: the pandemic, cultural upheaval, dramatic battles in the church, the American election. To say that was a wild year is an understatement. It was so unprecedented that the number 2020 came to represent all that is unpredictable in this world. Just when you thought nothing worse could happen, 2020 struck again. It seemed that with every passing month, someone posted something crazy online and said, “2020 is being 2020 again,” or, “Just when you thought 2020 was done being 2020.”

For our family, pastoral ministry and parenting were challenging in 2020. We welcomed our fourth child (a baby girl named Ruth Joy) into this world during the month of April, shortly after the initial lockdown, while nurses nervously kept us updated on hospital safety protocols and our local government shut down nearly everything in the state. As a pastor, I had to navigate people’s different views of the pandemic while praying the church

stayed unified. For our church, it went well overall, though we saw the departure of a malcontent or two (or more like twenty). Eventually all sides found common ground, and our leadership team urged people to choose relationships over winning their personal wars. By God's grace, our church exploded spiritually and numerically in the months that followed, and generosity hit all-time highs. We were floored by what God was doing during a time when everything around the world was falling apart. But as I spoke with other pastors and observed the general climate of the body of Christ, it was obvious we were going to face a prolonged time of deep disagreements and conflict. 2020 seemed like the perfect year for me to be writing about Jesus. Quite honestly, writing this book became a sort of devotional escape for me. As if I were resting in a quiet mountain meadow, my mind and heart were overcome with peace and tranquility as I reflected on who he is. It was healing for my soul even while hell broke loose all around.

Like me, you're probably no stranger to trouble and conflict. You're probably no stranger to the desire for healing as well. Most of us almost constantly seek healing for our lives. Whether it's cancer diagnoses, pain in our bodies, broken marriages, wayward children, splitting churches, mourning communities, or even a divided nation, we are a people in need of healing.

But what if I told you that in our need for healing, we tend to overlook the healer? What if our version of Jesus is so short-sighted that we are missing much of who he is? What if no matter how desperate we are for healing, our need goes far beyond just the Jesus who heals our ailments? What if he offers so much more? Is there a purpose in pain? Is it possible that we have much to learn while we wait on the Lord?

If you're like me, your first response may go a little something like this: "Of course, of course. Jesus is so much more than a healer. He is wonderful, he is love, he is God, he is [insert more Sunday school answers here]. He's a good God. But all of that is exactly why he wants to relieve all my pain. So can we get back to the healing part now?"

Does this response ring true for you? I'll admit, that's the way my mind works at times. And I think if you get brutally honest, maybe yours does too.

In the midst of genuine cries for healing, we tend to miss the healer. We plead for the gift, content to overlook the giver. We don't want to admit it, but could we be seeking God for what he can do, without pausing to relish who he is? Or conversely, in the midst of our suffering, have we declined to ask God for what he has said is possible? Either way, we are missing out on experiencing the "more" of Jesus we desperately need.

Why I Wrote This Book for You

Whether you are rich or poor, thriving or struggling, young or old, healthy or sick, hopeful or hopeless, we all have a lot to learn and relearn about Jesus. These are the reasons I wrote this book:

Reason 1: We Need a Safe Space to Ask Hard Questions about Healing

I used to think I had the topic of divine healing nailed. It was the one subject I thought I knew better than anyone else because it was our family business. For most of my life, until a little more than ten years ago, I was deep in the world of prosperity theology, but once I realized I'd lived and believed a lie that exploited and

MORE THAN A HEALER

abused people with false teachings about Jesus, healing, and the gospel, I did what anyone else would do and began to study the truth.¹ Suddenly I encountered *all* of Jesus and the full picture of the good news he preached. Real and lasting hope permeated every area of my life. My thinking changed! No longer did I assume that I could control his healing power or even dare believe that healing could ever be sold for money or special offerings. And more, I began to realize that God works powerfully not just in moments of great miracles but even in the mundane day-to-day lives of those who suffer.

Think about this for just a moment: There are people in this world who right now are not experiencing the healing they desperately desire. Is God still good? Is there hope to be had while they wait for a breakthrough?

Or imagine those living in poverty right now. You could say they need healing financially. At least that's what faith healers might say they need. Can their hope still thrive and their eyes look to heaven for provision? Didn't Jesus show a deep and tender care for the poor? Is he so much more than a healer to them? Can he be more than a healer to you?

Perhaps you're thinking, "These are a lot of questions for just the introduction of a book." You're right. They are. I begin this way because this book is published permission for you to ask any question you'd like. Every page is a safe space for you to challenge me and, if you're willing, to let me challenge you. I want us to explore Jesus together, to think deeply about healing, to look at ourselves in the mirror and pull back the layers of our

1. You can read the full story in my previous book, *God, Greed, and the (Prosperity) Gospel: How Truth Overwhelms a Life Built on Lies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

hearts. Each chapter will end with questions for reflection so we can walk together through every doubt, every hope, every false promise, every unfounded belief, every injustice, and every cry for help you've ever had.

Reason 2: We Need to Get Answers to Hard Questions about Healing

But we're not ending with questions. This book is about finding answers and even going beyond them.

Nearly every week, I interact with people who are confused about healing and Jesus. People from all walks of life are in constant need of healing. Some incessantly chase it, desperate for a breakthrough. They cry out, "God, heal my body!" and, "God, heal my finances, relationships, and brokenness too!" Others feel guilty about asking God for healing, insisting we must be content in our suffering and not make such audacious requests. Still others simultaneously plead and doubt. We indeed are a people in need of healing, but even more so, we're in need of answers.

To complicate matters, revivalists tout healing ministries that promise signs and wonders to all who believe or give their best offerings. Mystics travel the world seeking relief for every ailment under the sun, and millions of desperate souls need only one or two clicks before their smart phones deliver promises of health and wealth from polished televangelists. Everyone is vying for their piece of the healing action. In much of this, Jesus is little more than a product being marketed, and he is known only for one thing—healing! We need answers about healing, but that's not the end of our longing. We are a people who need more of him and less of ourselves. We need to be drawn close to the healer. If we must wait for healing, do we not live for him still? If we are

healed, is there not more to know, more to do, and more glorious challenges and victories? I want to show you that there is so much more in store for you in Jesus.

Reason 3: We Need a “Jesus Awakening”

This third reason is the biggest reason. We need a “Jesus awakening.” What exactly is that? It’s a movement of people who come to know Jesus beyond just what he can do and are reminded of who he is. I want you to discover that Jesus *is* a healer, *and* he is so much more. I want who he is to permeate every area of your life. I want his eyes to be your eyes, his truth to be your truth, his ways to be your ways. This book is about solutions to problems that go beyond mere physical needs. I don’t know about you, but I am sick of my selfish inclination toward transactional love. My flesh constantly wants to love God . . . as long as he does what I want and gives me what I believe I need. But what kind of love is that? Do we stand at the altar on our wedding day vowing to our bride or groom, “I promise to love you as long as you do everything I want you to do”? Hardly! But so often we say exactly that to Jesus, not with our words but with our actions—or our reactions—when things don’t go our way.

We need to wake up and see Jesus for who he truly is and get a fuller sense of what it means to love him no matter what we’re going through. Whether we experience healing right now, in the years ahead, or when we reach heaven’s gates, Jesus is more than enough for you and me.

This book is your guide to a Jesus awakening.

More of You, Jesus

Can we ever have enough of Jesus? If we think we can, we ought to think again.

John the Baptist said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30 ESV). Paul was so enthralled with Jesus that even in the midst of suffering, persecution, and sacrifice he proclaimed, “To live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21 ESV). Jesus himself said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28–30). Surely we need more of Jesus.

One of my favorite old-time preachers was no stranger to sickness and challenges in life. Yet he changed the world. His name is Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He was just another human being like any of us, but his perspective during life’s tough times was otherworldly. It was Spurgeon who said, “I have learned to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages.”

Those words are a fitting place to begin. Let’s discover more than the Jesus you and I *want*. Let’s discover the Jesus we need.



CHAPTER 1

HE IS HEALER

*When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he
had compassion on them and healed their sick.*

—MATTHEW 14:14

On August 16, 2018, the clock on the stove read 7:30 p.m. just after we put the kids to bed. It had been a typical—and wildly fun—night in our busy home.

At the time, we had three children ages four, two, and three months old. As with many growing families, our evening moved swiftly through a series of tasks that can sometimes feel like running through an obstacle course. First, there is playtime when I get home from work, then dinnertime, bathtime, cleanup time, family worship (complete with some reading, prayer, singing, and cheesy dance moves), and *then* the kids go down for bed. Of course, there are always a few mishaps along the way when

a diaper explodes or controversy ensues over “stolen” toys. Like ducks that smoothly glide across a pond while underneath their feet paddle with frantic effort, my wife and I try to maintain a calm and steady demeanor through much of this, all the while secretly laughing, cherishing, and at times holding back impatience. After all, these days will soon be over, and—with fewer carpet stains and quieter evenings—I’m sure we’ll long for one more night of kid-filled chaos. Most nights after the kids go down, we share a few sentiments and have a good laugh over their antics before spending quality time together or doing some other productive task.

But that late summer evening proved to be different.

I had found my way into the kitchen while my wife, Christyne, finished putting Timothy into his crib. As the baby of the family, he was still getting Mommy’s special bedtime routine filled with extra cuddles, a favorite song, and a double check on his diaper to make sure he was dry. Beyond that, Christyne was keeping a keen eye on some red spots that had been spreading and had begun to mature into something different from a regular rash on his body. There were now more than a dozen, when just a couple of weeks earlier there were only a few. We had decided to biopsy one of the larger red spots a week prior. Was it just a rash? A skin condition? Maybe he was allergic to something? Speculation would do us no good, so we waited on the results.

After Christyne put Timothy to bed, she logged in to our healthcare account and saw that the results had been shared with us earlier that day. She sent the document to our home printer, picked it up, and brought it to me as I stood in the kitchen.

“Timothy has cancer,” she said. Her voice broke as tears filled her eyes.

“Cancer? How do you know? Are you sure?” It felt like someone had sucked every ounce of oxygen out of the room.

She held up the report. “I found the results posted to our account. I don’t think they expected us to see them just yet, but I have been checking every day. I don’t know why, but I just knew it was something serious. I looked up the technical terms on his report. It’s a rare form of cancer.”

The tears flowed as I hugged her. We held each other in silence until I said the only thing that kept coming to mind.

“We were never going to get out of this life unscathed, were we?”

She shook her head.

“Now we’re going to live what we’ve been preaching.”

There was only one thing we could do. We prayed.

Ironically, for several years we’d been telling others that God is still good, even when things in life are not. We’d made it clear that following Jesus and being a Christian doesn’t guarantee health, wealth, and happiness. We’d stood for truth and pushed back against greedy faith healers who exploited people with false promises, and we paid the price for doing so. But compared with facing our child’s cancer, every difficulty in our lives leading up to this point seemed easy. It felt like all we’d ever stood to lose before was money and family approval. All we’d ever given up was our old life filled with ill-gotten gains in exchange for the greatest treasure of all—Jesus. To be honest, we never felt like we had anything to lose, since we were gaining him.

But now would we lose our little baby boy? It’s one thing to suffer or deal with trials personally, but nothing prepares you for the day you hear the C word and your child’s name in the same sentence. Christyne and I desperately needed and wanted Jesus

to be the healer we knew he was, while not presuming that he owed us healing, as I'd once believed he did.

Questions filled my mind: "How will our families react? What will my family say? What terrible timing—just as we are pushing against abuses by faith healers. Will those faith healers and their followers use this as ammunition to say, 'See! You touched the Lord's anointed, and now look what's happened!'"

I wouldn't have to wait long to get the answers to these questions.

Cancer as a Divine Consequence

We decided to patiently and carefully break the news to certain family members. It was important to us that we have time to pray, process, and then disclose to those outside our immediate circle of friends. One evening, at a larger gathering of family members, I sat down with several to explain what lay ahead and express the certainty of God's comfort in such an uncertain time.

The news about Timothy was swiftly met: "In Jesus' name! He's healed! It's already paid for! No cancer will touch this—"

The remark would have ended with the word *house*, but the sentence stopped in its tracks. My wife jumped in to hold our ground before I could say anything. It was so outside of her personality that I still remember being both shocked and proud of her.

"We have been praying and will continue to pray for healing," she began firmly. "But we will trust the Lord. And cancer *has* touched this house. We don't want Timothy to die, but no matter what, even if our son dies, God is still good!"

Not a single word of pushback followed.

Several weeks later one extended family member reached

out to me and asked, “Isn’t there any part of you that sees the cancer as the result of touching the Lord’s anointed?” (He was referring to the idea that speaking out against church leaders—even those who propagate abuses and deception—invites divine consequences.)

My blood boiled at the suggestion that Timothy had been struck by God with cancer. But I replied calmly, “No. I trust that God has a plan and a purpose in all of this, and no matter the outcome, he is good, he is sovereign, and he certainly can heal our son if he chooses to.”

“I understand,” he responded. And that was that.

While our family may not have said all they were thinking, they’d said enough. If anything, these conversations proved to be a microcosm of a wider way of thinking in our world today. With so many faith healers pounding the airwaves with false promises, and with various degrees of the prosperity gospel finding its way into our churches, countless Christians have at one point or another believed the lie that God is good when things are good and that he is punishing them when things are not. We may even believe that because we are Christians, God owes us a healthy and happy life and must heal us on request. Perhaps no other experience in our lives exposes how we really think about Jesus like sickness does. Everybody struggles with viewing Jesus in transactional ways.

If Timothy’s cancer has taught us one thing, it is that God owes us nothing. His grace doesn’t guarantee healing, and it doesn’t guarantee a perfect life. We’ve also been reminded that Jesus’ healing ministry gets some really bad press these days.

For the rest of this chapter, I promise to help you discover (or rediscover) truths that will silence the noise you’ve heard—and

the lies you've been told—about Jesus and his healing ministry. After that I want to offer you some practical questions for reflection, which you can use to search your heart and seek comfort from Christ.

The Healing Debate

Plenty of opinions about divine healing muddy the waters of truth and steal your joyful assurance that God cares about your pain. With lots of nuance in between, two extremes tend to make the most noise in the church today.

- *Extreme 1: It's always God's will to heal right now.* This view is held by faith healing enthusiasts who teach that something is wrong with your faith if you're sick. They teach that your lack of faith is the problem or that you aren't giving enough money to activate the blessing of divine healing on your life. Still others claim that your healing is already completed and paid for by Christ's death on the cross. You simply need to start speaking it into reality by saying, "I am healed!" That thinking is where we get the phrase "name it and claim it." Last, as in our family's case, some people believe that you would have been healed if you hadn't spoken against faith healers. I used to believe and propagate these hurtful lies.
- *Extreme 2: Jesus doesn't heal at all.* This view, obviously, is held by atheists and others who don't acknowledge the existence of God, but it is also held by Christians who believe that Jesus doesn't heal anymore. The technical term for this belief is "full cessationism," which teaches

that God does not do any miracles today. Our supernatural God isn't supernatural these days. This view is as foolish as it sounds. God is a supernatural God and most certainly still heals and works miracles today. Does that mean every miraculous claim is legitimate? No. But we should not assume a "hold on for dear life until Jesus comes back" mentality. This view crushes the hearts of the sick and the hurting, because it misses the truth about divine healing. If you believe in God, you must believe that he is supernatural, because he is!

Both of these extreme views fall terribly short of what God has made clear in the Bible. Worst of all, they put words in Jesus' mouth. Jesus can and does heal today. But that doesn't mean he is obligated to do so. Still, do not ever give ear to someone who claims that God does not heal today. One of his names in the Bible is *Yahweh-rophe* ("the LORD, your healer"), which is used in Exodus 15:26 (ESV) to identify God as one who heals the sick.

The God of the Improbable

I have a dear friend who is exactly the kind of friend you'd like to have. His name is Daniel, and aside from being a Raiders fan (NFL football), there is nothing you wouldn't like about him. He is kind, prayerful, loving, generous, loyal, and dependable. To this day, whenever we talk, it's as though we were together just yesterday, even though he now lives in Colorado and I am in Arizona. But before time apart and physical distance marked our friendship, we were together in Southern California. When my wife and I first came to the church in Orange County, we were in

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a small group with Daniel and his wife, Daniela (yes, their names are real and adorably close). We loved them dearly and still do. Which is why it struck our hearts so deeply when Daniel was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. But his diagnosis wasn't the final word. I'll let Daniel take it from here.

My cancer story starts well before my condition was diagnosed. In the fall of 2012, I had landed my dream job at Open Doors USA—a nonprofit that helps persecuted Christians around the world. Almost immediately after I was hired, my wife, Daniela, and I traveled to Colombia to check out a project, and while we were there, we fell in love with the church. We wanted to go back to visit as soon as possible.

However, a couple of months before our second trip, I began to experience constant headaches and physical exhaustion. After going to the doctor and being told that it was stress, I waited a few more weeks before I returned to the doctor's office to press the issue. This time, I was given a blood test and told that I would get my results in a few weeks. After not hearing back from my doctor, and because I was shortly going to Colombia, I decided to call so I could get the news that all was well. The doctor, however, did *not* tell me that all was well. Rather he told me that I was anemic and would need a colonoscopy to figure out why.

When we reached Colombia in February 2013, the staff that remembered me from our previous visit made comments about how I did not look well—funny how others could tell but I couldn't. What I did notice, though, was how exhausted I felt and how I had to miss out on a few activities because of my fatigue.

Upon our return to the United States, I began my follow-up appointments. After my colonoscopy, the GI doctor, who listened to my wife's concerns about the swollen lymph nodes on my neck, immediately ordered a biopsy. When my family heard about my need for a biopsy, my brother and his family drove from Colorado to California to be there for us—though I was still convinced it was nothing—and we filled up that biopsy waiting room like it was a family reunion. The results, though, were far from joyous.

I can still remember that day vividly. I remember the gray sky, the look on my wife's face, and the absolute breakdown she had when the doctor told us that it was cancer—Hodgkin's lymphoma, to be exact.

Immediately the cancer treatment preparations began. Our doctor recommended that we freeze my sperm to help ensure that we could have kids in the future. I had never considered that chemo would affect my fertility. What nobody knew is that Daniela had already been told by her doctor that she was infertile. Would we have liked kids of our own? Sure. But to be honest, we knew that adoption or opportunities like living in Colombia would be possible if we didn't have kids. All in all, we didn't see the inability to have our own children as a negative, but more as a fact. We simply trusted God's will. If God wanted us to have kids, he'd cause us to have kids. But for now, the doctors said it wasn't going to happen.

My first session of chemotherapy started on May 2, and I was scheduled to have a chemo session every two weeks until October 3. I remember in the midst of chemo actually being excited for the opportunity to go through it. It was as if this was my time to show the world what I really believed about

MORE THAN A HEALER

God, to be a spectacle for the world to see so that I could honor God. I can't quite explain what this was like, but I believe that the empowering of the Holy Spirit gave me joy and excitement to have been selected for this trial. I was also deeply encouraged because we were clearly not alone. Our church family, as well as our blood family, supported us in whatever way we needed—they brought us meals, drove and accompanied me to my chemo sessions, prayed with us and for us, and the list goes on. We even received gifts from people we'd never met before and still haven't met to this day! To say that cancer wasn't a burden for me would be an accurate statement, but for Daniela it was devastating. We often say how our cancer story was harder on her than on me.

So how did Daniel's story end? By December 14, 2014, doctors declared he was cancer free. The treatments had worked. But that wasn't the supernatural part. Along with Daniel's being cancer free, Daniela was pregnant. The impossible thing that doctors said would never happen had happened. *That* was nothing short of God's power and grace on their lives. Jesus, the Great Physician, saw fit to use doctors and chemo to heal one issue and to leave doctors speechless concerning another. How did it happen? Did God perform a divine surgery? Were the doctors wrong? Did Daniela's body heal itself? These questions are valid and, regardless of the speculation, the reality remains the same: something happened that was out of the ordinary. Refreshingly, there was no fanfare or faith healing spectacle.

My purpose in sharing Daniel and Daniela's story is not to give you false hope or to be sensationalistic but to help us stay balanced and humble in our approach to the subject of healing.

Their story is an encouraging reminder to me that God can work in improbable ways that go beyond our comprehension. He works powerfully through doctors, he works powerfully without doctors, he can overcome any obstacle, and he can do what human opinions say cannot be done.

My guess is that you know people who've experienced similar breakthroughs. But does that mean it's always God's will to heal right now? What about people who are sick for years? If Jesus paid for sickness on the cross, then why don't we instantly get healed when we are saved by faith in him? If God is always good, isn't healing guaranteed?

He most certainly is good. And he is the God of guarantees, the God who keeps his promises. But his guarantees for healing don't necessarily mean we'll like the timing.

In the next two sections of this chapter, I want to address two big questions about sickness and healing. The first question is, why do people get sick? And the second is, is it always God's will to heal right now?

First Big Question: Why Do People Get Sick?

This is one of the most pressing questions when it comes to healing, and it must be answered by using the Scriptures. Opinions and abuses abound, so the only way to address this question is to cement ourselves in the truth of God's unchanging Word.

I've seen it time and time again, and I'm sure you have too. A world-renowned faith healer hits the news after promising to heal people, but only if they pay up first. Some even go so far as to say that God is going to pour down judgment on people if they don't

give a certain amount of money. These “healers” appear to have all the answers for sickness. Years ago I sat through many services in which a faith healer explained to people why they were sick. Some people were told that they weren’t giving enough money, others apparently were not forgiving people, and others had been spending time with negative people. Not only that but some were said to be sick because they just didn’t have enough faith. This sort of guesswork breaks hearts, leads lives astray, and spiritually abuses desperate people.

Thankfully, the Bible breaks such deceptive bondage. If you’ve ever been confused about why people get sick or you know someone who needs answers, the following truths will be a soothing balm to a weary soul.

Truth 1: Sickness and Death Entered the World through Original Sin

On the sixth day of creation, the Bible tells us, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). Notice it doesn’t say “some of what he had made was very good.” It says *all*. There was no sin in the world, sickness did not exist, and Adam and Eve were set to enjoy a flawless life complete with a perfect relationship with God.

Instead they were deceived by the serpent and disobeyed the one command God had given them to follow. This is what is called “original sin,” because it was the first sin the world had ever known, and it resulted in a fractured relationship between God and his creation (Gen. 3:1–19).

Because of sin, fear and shame came upon humanity (vv. 7, 10), marital relationships experience conflict (v. 16), women experience pain in childbirth (v. 16), and work became incredibly

difficult (vv. 17–18). Worst of all, death entered the scene and humankind would return to dust (v. 19). Sickness and death are the result of sin and the fallen world we live in. Because of sin, we need a savior. And while true Christianity looks forward to that day when Jesus will return and restore all things, until then we must realize that sickness and death are part of this temporary life. Thankfully, eternal life knows nothing of such things.

Truth 2: Sickness and Death Can Strike Us because of Our Own Sin

Using the Bible again, let's face the truth that sickness and death can strike us through our sin. In 1 Corinthians 11:27–30, Paul says that taking Communion in an unworthy manner is the reason why some people are weak, sick, or “asleep” (a biblical expression for death). This is a statement made directly to the New Testament church. Taking Communion unworthily includes not taking it seriously, not examining oneself as Paul instructs (v. 28), having impure motives, having unconfessed deliberate sin, and being embittered and unforgiving toward others (the very opposite of what Communion represents, since we've been forgiven).

Another reason why sickness and death can result from sin is based on the law of consequences, the idea that “a man reaps what he sows” (Gal. 6:7). If you do drugs, drink and drive, act foolishly and belligerently, take poor care of your body, engage in rampant and casual sex outside of marriage, might you not at some point experience sickness or death (often prematurely)? Sin often does lead to these things. Therefore when we examine our lives and the reason for some unfortunate experiences, we must be sure to know the difference between what is self-inflicted

sickness or death and what is a genuine trial or tribulation that we did nothing to cause (James 1:2–4; Rom. 5:3–5). Should you find yourself convicted by the Holy Spirit concerning sin that is causing your sickness, take hold of Jesus' beautiful grace. Confess your sin and he will forgive you and cleanse you (1 John 1:9), and then you should go to the elders of your church and ask them to pray for you, as well as confess your sin and be honest with them about your situation (James 5:13–16). God's Word says that in this context, "the prayer of a righteous person has great power" (v. 16 ESV).

Truth 3: Sickness and Death Are Not Always the Result of Our Sin

It's impossible to diagnose the reason for everyone's sickness, but we could certainly say that most if not all of God-loving, sin-confessing, Jesus-believing Christians who are sick fall into this third category. If original sin isn't the only culprit, then a certain situation in Jesus' ministry can shed some light on why some are sick. The gospel of John recounts the story.

As [Jesus] went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go," he told

him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (this word means “Sent”).
So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

—JOHN 9:1-7

This story is an incredible lesson to all of us that what we might think is the reason for sickness isn't always the reason. Our finite human wisdom gets us only so far. Jesus makes it clear that God's purposes and ways are far above our pay grade and that we do not control his plan and schedule. *Sometimes* God allows certain things or determines how long a circumstance will last so he can showcase his infinite power and wisdom and reveal more of himself to us. We wouldn't praise him for his mercy if we weren't aware of his wrath. We wouldn't appreciate his love for sinners if we didn't realize his hatred of sin. In the same way, we couldn't begin to glorify him for his healing hand if we didn't experience (or see) sickness.

This leads to the fourth and final truth in this section. Buckle up. You may not like it—at first.

Truth 4: God Can Use Sickness and Death for His Glory and the Good of Others

Just because God is not the cruel originator of sickness does not mean he can't use it. He is God, and nothing is outside of his scope of authority. Sin may have brought sickness into this world, but God gets the final word.

You might be thinking I've lost my mind to think that God could somehow bring something good out of sickness, but before you give up on me, let's dig deeper. For starters, nowhere in Scripture do we find God to be a cosmic abuser who gets joy out

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of striking his children with sickness in the name of growth and glory. That is not what this truth means. However, the Bible does give us a hopeful perspective about sickness, suffering, trials, and even death that helps us sift through the broken pieces these often leave at our feet.

God is strong enough, wise enough, and powerful enough to bring purpose out of our pain, even if he doesn't take *us* out of the pain right away.

You and I experience this more often than we realize. Whenever someone we know dies, it can lead either to bitterness toward God or to our appreciation of the gift of relationships and the life we've been given. Of course, the grieving process may be arduous, but he never leaves us there alone. Furthermore, our grief often matures us to a place where we are able to encourage and support others when they go through what we have gone through.

Romans 8:28 says, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." This passage is often thrown around as a broad promise that everything is going to turn out the way we want it to. But God wants us to understand important truths from it before we jump to conclusions. First, "all things" means the good, the bad, and the ugly. I think sometimes we miss that fact and jump right to thinking, "God is going to make everything perfect." God doesn't promise that nothing bad will happen to us, but he does promise that all those things "work together for good" (ESV). And remember, whose definition of good are we talking about here? His! Which means that however God chooses to define good is what is ultimately best, even if we don't always understand it at the time. "All things" includes a cancer diagnosis, and "good" could mean that you are going to pray more than ever

before and be closer to Jesus than you've ever been. "All things" includes losing a loved one, and "good" could be the opportunity you have to share the hope and saving love of Jesus Christ at the funeral. "All things" includes the loss of a child, and "good" could mean the beginning of a ministry to parents who are grieving the loss of children.

My friend Nancy Guthrie is the author of numerous resources on grief, suffering, and God's character. She recently wrote *God Does His Best Work with Empty* and has experienced exactly what this fourth truth is all about.

She and her husband, David, endured two "all things," one with a doctor's report stating that their newborn daughter Hope had a rare metabolic disorder and would not live past her first birthday, and the second with their newborn son Gabriel, who lived 183 days. As for God's bringing about "good" through all of this? He chose to bring purpose to their pain by using Nancy and David to speak to hundreds of thousands of grieving parents who need hope in the midst of their own tragedies and loss. Does anyone ever pray to lose a daughter and a son in order to gain a life-changing ministry? Never. But Nancy's perspective on why she wrote her first book about their family's story shows us what God can do in the midst of—even through—our deepest pain: "I wrote the book not to exploit our babies' lives but to use our experience, like Job, to address the question of suffering: 'To what purpose? What is it God wants to do in you and through you that could possibly cost you this much?'"¹

The ability to surrender our lives to Jesus is the mark of

1. Nancy Guthrie, "Mother Faces God through Her Grief," interview by Cathy Lynn Grossman, *USA Today* (July 16, 2002). I highly commend Nancy Guthrie's work and ministry to you. Her books, videos, and small group material are a must-have for anyone enduring suffering or loss.

spiritual maturity. The right perspective on who Jesus is will cause us to raise our hands in surrender, saying, “Jesus, this situation hurts and I don’t know all the answers, but I know that you can take pain and turn it into purpose. So have your way. Thy will be done. You are the potter; I am the clay. Turn this situation around so that it brings blessing to others and glory to your name. Whatever that looks like is fine with me.”

We need to pray for the greatest good, a practice endorsed by legendary Harvard graduate, theologian, and pastor James Montgomery Boice. On Sunday, May 7, 2000, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Boice took to the pulpit to address his congregation. Countless members of Tenth Presbyterian Church had been asking how they might serve and pray for him during his battle with terminal cancer. What Boice said that Sunday captures the perspective which can come only from spending time with Jesus and cultivating a life that emulates the humility and surrender of the Healer himself. He explained,

A number of you have asked what you can do, and it strikes me that what you can do, you are doing. This is a good congregation, and you do the right things. You are praying, certainly, and I’ve been assured of that by many people. And I know of many meetings that have been going on. A relevant question, I guess, when you pray is, pray for what? Should you pray for a miracle? Well, you’re free to do that, of course. My general impression is that the God who is able to do miracles—and he certainly can—is also able to keep you from getting the problem in the first place. So although miracles do happen, they’re rare by definition. A miracle has to be an unusual thing. I think it’s far more profitable to pray for wisdom for

the doctors. Doctors have a great deal of experience, of course, in their expertise, but they're not omniscient—they do make mistakes—and then also for the effectiveness of the treatment. Sometimes it does very well and sometimes not so well, and that's certainly a legitimate thing to pray for. Above all, I would say pray for the glory of God. If you think of God glorifying himself in history and you say, where in all of history has God most glorified himself? He did it at the cross of Jesus Christ, and it wasn't by delivering Jesus from the cross, though he could have. Jesus said, "Don't you think I could call down from my Father ten legions of angels for my defense?" But he didn't do that. And yet that's where God is most glorified.²

These four biblical truths are helpful, but they are also extremely humbling. In the end, we won't always have the answers, but we can certainly have the Answer. Jesus can and will cause anything and everything to work out for good. We must remember what that means.

Now that we understand a bit better why people get sick, let's turn to the second big question about sickness and healing.

Second Big Question: Is It Always God's Will to Heal Right Now?

On a family camping trip in California not long ago, I met a faith healer in the most unlikely of ways. Our first night on the campground, a man walked up to my campsite out of the blue, introduced himself, sat down, and spent the better half of two

2. SuanlalZ, "Remembering James Montgomery Boice," YouTube video, June 15, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOiio8N4WRA>, 7:21.

hours telling me about his divine-healing ministry. Though made aware of it, he did not offer to heal my wife's asthma, but he did give me two copies of his book about the power of words and offered some insights on how to heal every sick person I knew. Unfortunately, he could talk about the theories but couldn't practice what he preached. As the night wore on, I mentioned that I was a pastor—which only further excited him. He eventually offered me four hundred of his books for our church (discounted, of course) to help our people take hold of healing power. Not long after that, I revealed my knowing a thing or two about faith healing, and faith *healers*. After a firm yet loving encouragement regarding his wayward teachings, we said goodnight. He did not come back, though I certainly would have welcomed a spirited follow-up discussion.

A perusal of certain Christian television networks tells a similar story. There you'll find healing televangelists claiming that it's always God's will to heal you right now—if the price is right.

So is it always God's will to heal right now? Let's look at four simple truths from the Bible that will liberate you from the hurtful burden of believing something is wrong with you if you aren't receiving your healing just yet.

Truth 1: God Doesn't Heal Everyone All the Time

The most important starting point for any discussion on healing is the affirmation that though God *does* heal, he doesn't heal everyone all the time. The Bible gives irrefutable evidence to support this. During Jesus' earthly healing ministry, he didn't always heal everyone. Jesus healed just one man out of a multitude of sick people at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:3–8) and didn't heal people in his hometown of Nazareth (Matt. 13:58). After a

healing spree in the district of Galilee, Jesus plainly decided to move on, even though desperately sick and hurting people were looking for him. His reason was simple: “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come” (Mark 1:38). Christ didn’t come to earth merely to hold a healing crusade; he came to bring salvation. More on that in chapter 3, “He Is Savior.”

That God doesn’t heal everyone all the time is clear from the life of Jesus. It is also clear from the writings of the most prolific apostle, who authored thirteen New Testament books. Paul could perform miracles, yet he told Timothy to take wine for his stomach (1 Tim. 5:23). Why didn’t the apostle exercise his gift of healing? Paul also left one of his faithful ministry teammates, Trophimus, sick at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). Why didn’t he heal him and bring him along?

Clearly, God heals as he wills, and his healing power is not a formula that anyone can master.

Truth 2: God Doesn’t Heal Based Solely on One’s Faith

Can you believe your way into getting healed? This view on faith healing was first popularized in the early twentieth century by faith healing evangelists, though I am sure it happened before radio and television took it into the mainstream. These individuals made a lot of money off of people by making them repeat customers to their healing crusades. If someone didn’t get healed, the faith healer blamed the sick person and told them to come back with more faith—and usually an offering. (We’ll deal with that one next.) Fortunately, the Bible clears the air on this abusive teaching.

When Jesus healed the cripple at Bethesda, the man didn’t

have a clue who Jesus was, let alone have enough faith (John 5:13). In Luke 5:17–26, Jesus did heal based on faith: he healed a man's soul through salvation. And when the Pharisees questioned his authority to forgive the lame man's sins, Jesus healed the man physically to prove it. Other times, Jesus was moved by people's faith, but this doesn't mean his healing touch was bound to whether they had enough faith.

When the woman with the bleeding issue crawled through the crowd just to touch the hem of Christ's robe, he felt power leave him (Luke 8:46). Jesus, moved by her faith, healed her, but he also told her of the healing that had taken place in her soul, saying, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace" (v. 48). Jesus called her "daughter" because he offered the greatest healing of all; she was now part of the family of God.

So can the healing power of Christ be coerced by faith? No. Jesus is the Great Physician who focuses on healing the soul, not merely the body.

Truth 3: God Doesn't Perform Healing for a Price

Simon the Sorcerer tried to buy it (Acts 8:9–25), fortune-tellers and witch doctors will sell it, and faith healers will tell you to sow your biggest seed to get it. As it has been throughout history, many people are convinced that healings, like houses, are for sale. When a beggar asked for a blessing in his cup, the apostle Peter offered him something better—and gave it to him for free (Acts 3:6). This truth is pure, sweet, healing truth for your weary and burdened mind. You don't need to go broke to get healed. If Jesus can't be forced to heal by the right amount of faith, then it's unthinkable that the Alpha and Omega can be bribed with money into healing you. No apostle, no New Testament writer,

and not even Jesus himself ever told someone to give a financial seed of faith for a healing, a breakthrough, or protection from sickness. It is not God's will that you give money to be healed. Instead it's God's will that you be liberated from such hurtful lies.

Truth 4: God Will Heal All Believers in Heaven

The atonement bought and paid for everything you and I could never afford. Christ died and paid the penalty of sin, whose consequences are sickness, tears, fears, the wrath of God, and an eternal separation from God in hell. While all of this (and more) is provided for in the atonement, many of the blessings we'll experience won't be fully realized until heaven. While we have assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ here on earth, we don't live eternally until after we die (John 3:16). Similarly, although we know this old decaying body will be replaced by a glorified one (1 Cor. 15:50–53), it doesn't matter how much you go the gym; you won't have your ultimate body until you get to heaven. Finally, Christ said he is going to prepare a place for his disciples (John 14:2–3), and that means us too. Yet many of us would hardly call our current home a heavenly mansion. Yes, all of the benefits of the atonement were paid for by Christ, but heaven is where we'll eternally enjoy them in the fullest sense.

One day the trumpet will sound, the dead in Christ shall rise, death will be no more, he'll wipe away every tear, cancer won't exist, wheelchairs will be good only for scrap metal, blindness will be overcome by marvelous light, and the glorious blessings of the atonement will be realized once and for all in eternity.

Some will experience the sovereign healing hand of God in this life. And others will suffer and not be healed until heaven. In every circumstance, let these truths from the Word of God bring

comfort to your soul and to your body: Your years of suffering and uncertainty are but a vapor here on earth. Your eternity of perfect joy will never end.

Does God still heal today? As the unchanging and sovereign God, of course he does. His will cannot be thwarted, and there are those who are undeniably healed while on earth. But God heals according to his will and for his glory. Jesus lived with a “thy will be done” mentality throughout his life and ministry on earth. He even prayed those words as he prepared to suffer on the cross (Luke 22:42). Under the greatest weight a man has ever carried, and in preparation to take the sin of the world on his divine shoulders, God the Son submitted his will to the glorious plan and purpose of the Father’s will. This is a model that should resonate with every believer today.

Can God heal? Yes. But sometimes he will glorify himself through your suffering, your sickness, and even your death. This counterintuitive way of thinking is foreign to this world. No wonder Peter called believers “foreigners” (1 Peter 2:11). We are a people called to an otherworldly perspective. We are different, even weird. Just think of how countercultural it is to believe that God will use your story for his glory no matter what the outcome may be. That is the greatest honor in this life. Greater even than physical healing in this life.

We’re Just Getting Started

Earlier in the chapter, I told you that we’d discover truths about healing that would silence the lies you’ve been told. I hope you now see that you don’t have to be lost and confused about Jesus and healing. More than that, you are not alone in your pain.

Countless others are reading along with you—others who need the healing hand of Jesus to do what only he can do. And I am with you too as I write this for you. Certainly, Christyne and I cried out to God to heal our baby, Timothy, even while holding fast to the truths I have outlined in this chapter. We clung to God's promises to be near the brokenhearted (Ps. 34:18) and to be our strength in times of weakness (2 Cor. 12:7–9). And we kept reminding ourselves to seek Jesus in all of this, to remember who he is and what he has already done for us.

What about you? What are you going through? Are you seeking to find Jesus and know him better, even in the midst of your trials? Do you know that Jesus is not only a healer? Of course you do. But isn't it so easy to forget? That's true for me. I can quickly get so caught up in what I want and my own suffering that I begin to neglect and even forget who Jesus is. So we're not done. Not even close! The best part of the book is the rest of it. Are you ready? Let's discover the rest of Jesus, the Jesus who is so much more than just a healer.

Questions for Reflection

1. Read John 9:1–34 and 1 Corinthians 11:27–30. Explain what these passages teach us about why some people are sick.
2. In what ways do you tend to love Jesus with a transactional love? Why doesn't transactional love build healthy relationships?
3. List some good things that you've seen come out of bad situations. How has God taken something dark and used it as a beacon of light? Pray for a renewed perspective

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on how God can work in the midst of pain. Meditate on Romans 8:28.

4. Why is it so important to pray “your will be done” kinds of prayers? How would you encourage someone who struggles to have this attitude of submission in prayer?
5. What is so dangerous about putting a price on healing? List several ways in which people can get hurt by this kind of teaching.

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More Than a Healer

Not the Jesus You Want, but the Jesus You Need

By Costi W. Hinn

Find hope that lasts beyond earthly pain and spiritual encouragement to lead you into a deep relationship with the Healer himself.

Our hearts, our bodies, and our world are desperate for healing. Whether we are experiencing physical, emotional, or financial brokenness, we rightfully look to Jesus to perform a masterful restoration. But how does healing fit into God's will, especially when God doesn't heal? And how do we catch ourselves from slipping into the trap of seeking God for what he can do for us, and not for who he really is?

Author, pastor, and frequently sought speaker Costi Hinn provides clarity through thoughtful answers and biblical truths about Jesus and his healing ministry. Growing up immersed in one of the world's leading prosperity dynasties, Costi witnessed the tragedy of people chasing after healing more than the Healer. And now he shares with others the true power and hope that comes from a genuine relationship with God.

More than chasing after the Jesus we want, this hopeful and encouraging book will guide us to discovering the Jesus we truly need.

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