

## Discipling (Working With) the Sick



### SABBATH—JANUARY 25

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17; Mark 2:1–12; Philippians 4:4–9; 1 John 3:20–22; John 11:37–44.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Large crowds came to him. They brought blind people and those who could not walk. They also brought disabled people, those who could not speak, and many others. They laid them at his feet, and he healed them. The people were amazed [surprised]. Those who could not speak were speaking. The disabled were made well. Those not able to walk were walking. Those who were blind could see. So the people praised the God of Israel” (Matthew 15:30, 31, Nlrv).

**“DURING HIS MINISTRY [WORK DONE FOR GOD], JESUS SPENT MORE TIME HEALING THE SICK THAN PREACHING.** His miracles gave proof to the truth that He came not to destroy, but to save. Wherever Jesus went, the news of His mercy reached people before He did. Where Jesus had passed, the people who received His mercy were happy with their restored [made new] health and were testing their newfound powers. People were gathering around them to hear from their lips the works that the Lord had done. Jesus’ voice was the first sound that many had ever heard. His name was the first word they had ever spoken. His face was the first they had ever looked upon. Why should they not love Jesus and sound His praise? As He passed through the towns and cities, He was like a strong current, spreading life and joy.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pages 19, 20.

**SUNDAY—JANUARY 26****THE HEALING MESSIAH  
(Isaiah 53:4)**

**Read Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17; and John 9:1–3. How should we understand these verses? What questions do they raise? What hope do they offer us?**

In Israel during Bible times, people thought that sickness was the result of sinful actions. (And even today, many people still wonder if illness is brought on as a punishment for sin.) Several bad things happened to Job, such as personal illness. His friends thought that these experiences were the result of his hidden faults. They thought that his sinfulness caused his problems. In the same way, Christ's disciples understood that a person was blind because of his or her sinfulness. This suggests that sickness required forgiveness, not medication. Matthew says that Christ fulfilled (completed) Isaiah's prophecies<sup>1</sup>



**Job's friends believed that the bad things that happened to him were because of his sins.**

about the Messiah. And this means that healing can be found in Him. (Read Matthew 13:54; Luke 4:16; Isaiah 61:1, 2; Isaiah 53:3–5.)

Many pagan (not Christian) legends included gods who healed people. Other legends showed gods who made sacrifices for kings. And some showed people who were sacrificed in the king's place so that the gods' plans against a king were satisfied. So, these sacrifices moved punishment for evil from one person to another. But none of them suggested that gods actually accepted human weaknesses upon themselves. And there was no history of kings who died as substitutes for the people who they ruled over.

But Isaiah foretold a Savior who would accept our sickness and sinfulness. This is exactly what Isaiah said, and with which Matthew agreed: heaven's King would suffer human sicknesses. (The word that is translated as "griefs" in Isaiah 53:4 comes from a Hebrew word that means "sickness" or "disease.")

Jesus recognized that His mission was to preach salvation and also to heal the brokenhearted (Luke 4:17–19). He attracted many people through the power that came from His love and character.<sup>2</sup> Others followed Him because they could easily understand His preaching. Still other people became disciples because of how He treated the poor and the suffering. But many followed Christ because He had touched and healed their brokenness.

1. prophecies—special messages from God, usually about what will happen in the future.

2. character—the way someone thinks, feels, or behaves.

**We all have broken places in our hearts and minds. How can we learn to disciple others by being sympathetic about their brokenness? After all, theirs is a brokenness that we can understand so well only because of our own.**



Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted.

## MONDAY—JANUARY 27

### HEALING THE BODY (Mark 2:1–12)

**Study Mark 2:1–12. What can we learn about the connection between physical sickness and sinfulness? What lessons should we not, however, learn from this story?**

Unlike the Bible, Greek thinking separated the spiritual (soul) and physical (body) parts of human life. The Greeks believed that human souls would live forever. So, many Greeks did not think that their bodies were important. This is because they thought that bodies would last just a short time. When the bodies got old, the Greeks thought

they were less important than the soul that would last forever.

In fact, in one of the most famous Greek writings, Plato describes his teacher, Socrates, who is about to face death. Plato writes beautifully about how evil the body is. He also says that when Socrates died, his eternal soul finally became free to do all the things that the body had prevented it from doing.

But the Bible teaches something very different. Human bodies are the direct creation of God. So, bodies are not separate from souls. Body, mind, and spirit are just different parts of human personality and life. Whatever happens to the body also happens to the mind and spirit. The mind and spirit are connected parts of a person. So, whenever Christ healed, He was not just removing cancer or curing heart disease. He was changing the physical, mental, and spiritual human experience, too.

In other words, Jesus healed more than just bodies. Christ always healed whole persons. He knew that physical health was inseparable from spiritual health. Through physical healing, Jesus brought about spiritual change.

**Sickness can come from sinful practices (ways; habits). But so often people, even babies, get sick for no reason except that we are all trapped in a fallen world. Why is it so important to remember this sad truth when we try to help anyone who is sick or who is suffering over a sick loved one?**

**TUESDAY—JANUARY 28****HEALING THE MIND AND BODY  
(Matthew 6:19–34)**

Through physical and mental healing, Jesus made disciples. Often Christ's patients suffered both mental and physical diseases. The final goal was not just to get well physically. His most important goal was always discipleship. Healing could give someone twenty, fifty, perhaps seventy-five additional years. Discipleship, however, offered *eternal* life with Christ.

In Luke 8:26–39, the demon-possessed man from the Gerasene region begged to go with Jesus. But Christ commanded him to evangelize<sup>3</sup> his family and townspeople. In this way, the man could be a powerful witness for Jesus because he had been healed by a miracle.

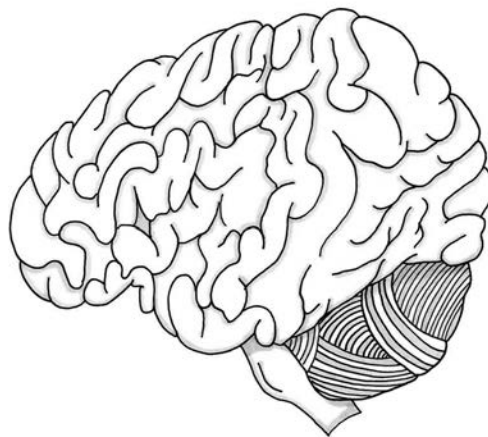
**Study Matthew 6:19–34; 1 Peter 5:7; 2 Corinthians 4:7–10; Philippians 4:4–9; and 1 John 3:20–22. How might the principles (important rules) taught in these verses help with the worry, guilt, and shame that cause many mental (of the mind) illnesses?**

Physical sickness is sometimes caused by the mind. Doctors have proven that there is a relationship between mind and body. Worry, for example, causes stomach and sleep problems. Anger can lead to heart disease. Teaching people about

mental-health principles should show how important it is to trust God, and to let go of worry and anger. This trust should naturally lead people toward a personal spiritual connection with Jesus and full discipleship.

“Each day has its cares and worries. When we meet people, how quick we are to talk of our hardships and troubles. Sometimes we are so troubled and afraid that we may forget that we have a loving Savior ready to hear all our prayers and help us in every time of need.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 121.

**A close walk with the Lord is no guarantee of good health. But there is no question that the peace of mind that we get from the Lord can have a positive influence on us, even physically. What are several principles from today's lesson that we can use for ourselves?**



**Physical sickness is sometimes caused by the mind.**

3. evangelize—spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.

**WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 29****THE RESURRECTION<sup>4</sup> AND THE LIFE (Luke 7:11–17)**

**Death always has the final word in this world. But for now, what great hope can we find in Luke 7:11–17; Mark 5:21–43; and John 11:37–44?**

Politicians, singers, actors, and athletes must be so good that they attract fans. Politicians make grand speeches and big promises. Singers and actors use their abilities to move their fans very deeply. Athletes amaze crowds with their physical skills. Jealous people wish they had their skills.

What does Jesus offer? More jobs for people? Fatter paychecks? Amazing (wonderful) ball-handling skills? A wonderful voice? Tear-jerking performances? Jesus offers none of these things. Instead, He offers something that no one else in the world can. He offers eternal life in a new world. What is more important than that?

Television shopping networks insult our intelligence with their advertisements that are too good to be true. Jesus, on the other hand, beats them all with His deal of a lifetime: eternal life, free, and with no shipping and handling charges! Doubters laugh at His wonderful offer. Others come up with cheap copies (such as Satan's "soul-is-eternal" idea). And poten-

tial (possible) buyers carefully examine the claims. So, Jesus gives three known examples as proof to the doubters and true seekers. These examples are Jairus's daughter, the widow's son, and Lazarus. Jesus raised these three back to life, proving that Jesus' offer is true. Disease and accidents might sometimes happen, but eternal life will finally win. Healing will not happen every time people ask for it. But everlasting life is guaranteed to all who make Jesus their Savior.

As we know, many times the healing we want just simply does not come in the way that we want it. Yet, people continue, even for years, with crippling and painful diseases. Sometimes they get worse. And sometimes they die from their diseases, even with anointing (putting oil on) and prayer. We do not know why healing comes to some now and why it does not come to others.

But what we do have is something so much better than the miracle of healing. That is the promise of the resurrection to eternal life at the time when Jesus comes. Then "the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess [take over] the kingdom forever, even forever and ever" (Daniel 7:18, NKJV).

**Why is this promise of eternal life so important to us? Where would we be without it? What hope would you have without it?**

4. resurrection—return to life from the dead.





The raising of Lazarus from the grave proved that Jesus' gift of eternal life was real.

#### THURSDAY—JANUARY 30

##### CHRIST'S HEALING LEGACY (TRADITION) (Acts 3:1–19)

**Review Acts 3:1–19; Acts 5:12–16; Acts 9:36–42; Acts 20:7–10; 1 Corinthians 12:7–9, 28–31; and James 5:13–16. How important was the healing ministry to the New Testament church?**

Disciples in the first century witnessed firsthand Christ's promise of seeing "greater things than these" fulfilled (read John 1:50; John 5:20; and John 14:12). In the time of the early Christian church, for example, there were many miracles when people were healed and sometimes brought back to life through Peter and Paul. These events were important in the growth of the early church. During these miracles, God's eternal presence influenced thousands of religious leaders to accept Christ. And their own

followers often joined them, as well.

Yet, sometimes new disciples misunderstood God's purpose. Simon tried to purchase this miraculous power. And this showed his selfish heart (Acts 8:9–25). But most new believers accepted these miraculous wonders because the miracles showed God's presence among them. These examples of God's power proved that God was there and that He deserved their praise.

After Christ had gone up to heaven, crowds of people still followed Him through the work of His disciples. They continued the mission (work) that Jesus had started. And they continued fulfilling the vision that Christ had shared.

Health, then, clearly was an important part of Christ's church. Healing was listed among the spiritual gifts. And the Bible has instructions for how to minister God's healing grace to people who are sick. These gifts help believers until Christ's second coming. Then they will no longer be necessary.

Church history shows how many believers practiced their health ministry during many different time periods. Certainly, lessening human suffering was an important reason for doing God's work. But others recognized healing people as the first step toward getting to know the complete gospel.

#### FRIDAY—JANUARY 31

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Luke 18:35–43; Luke 13:10–17; Luke 14:1–6; John 6:1, 2; Mark 6:5–7; Mark

6:54–56; Mark 7:31–37; Mark 8:22–26; Matthew 8:1–17; Matthew 12:15–23; Ellen G. White, “Our Example,” pages 17–21, and “Healing of the Soul,” pages 73–85, in *The Ministry of Healing*; “The Divine Plan in the Medical Missionary Work,” pages 25–29, in *Medical Ministry*.

“In Christ the paralyzed man found healing for both the soul and the body. He needed health of soul before he could enjoy health of body. Before his physical problem could be healed, Christ brought healing to the mind and cleansed the soul from sin. This lesson should not be overlooked. Today, there are thousands of people suffering from physical disease. Like the paralytic [a paralyzed person], they are wishing for the message, ‘Thy sins are forgiven.’ Sin is the main reason for their problems. They can find no relief until they come to the Healer of the soul [Jesus]. The peace that He alone can give would bring back health to the mind and health to the body. . . .

“In the home of the paralyzed man there was great happiness when he returned to his family. Now he could easily carry the cot on which he had been slowly carried from home a short time before. . . . Glad thanksgiving went up from that home. God

was given glory [praise] through His Son, who had returned hope to the hopeless and strength to the paralyzed man. This man and his family were ready to give up their lives for Jesus.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pages 77, 79.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How can healing open the hearts and minds of people who are otherwise not open to receiving the gospel message? How can Christians guard themselves against the error of thinking that healing is a goal in itself?
- ② How can churches that are not connected with hospitals take part in healing ministry? How can Christians avoid causing people to think that they are connected with false faith healers?
- ③ What do we say to those people who read about the healings in the Bible and come to our churches or hospitals with the hope for a healing that does not happen? What answers do we have for them? What answers do we have for ourselves as we try to understand these situations? What answers are found in the Bible that can help us at times like these?