

Miraculous Healing

In the Old and New Testaments God intervened in the course of human events with acts of miraculous healing. This is illustrated by a favorable medical outcome not fully explained in medical terms, attributable to the direct intervention of God. In the time of Jesus and the early church this was an essential part of ministry.

Furthermore, Christ gave His disciples the power to heal miraculously. Scripture does not teach that sickness is necessarily due to personal sin, that the absence of healing is due to a lack of faith, or that perfect health is God's will for all. Disease and death are realities of life.

God's nature does not change. We believe in the healing power of Christ today. God created the natural laws that govern health, illness, and the process of healing. We believe that God works both within and sometimes outside of these natural laws to heal people. We believe that all healing is accomplished by God's hand. Sometimes it is clear that scientific principles are used to facilitate that healing; sometimes the connection with known science is not so clear. We need to give God the credit at all levels of healing, whether we understand the science behind it or not.

Whether in illness or health Jesus desires relationship with us. Furthermore, God utilizes all situations for "the good of those who love Him." For the Christian this life is not all in all because eternity with God awaits hereafter. Even in dire circumstances, hope exists.

We promote specific interventional prayer, requesting God's healing as part of the treatment of disease, according to biblical instruction. We also encourage the use of all ethical means of standard medical care. As God increases medical knowledge, we are better able to use this knowledge to facilitate healing processes that God has designed.

Through our faith in Christ, knowledge of medicine, and compassion for His people, we choose to glorify God in all situations and assist in healing whenever possible. Healing is a gift of God's sovereignty, through His magnificent design and His specific intervention.

*Approved by the House of Delegates
Passed with 59 approvals, 2 abstentions
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Explanation of Statement

Background

Do miracles occur? Can we explain them? Should we even try? What is the role of prayer in the practice of medicine today? These issues are of importance and interest to all healthcare professionals, and even more so to professionals who adhere to a faith tradition which has a history of miraculous healing.

Secular Perspective

Contemporary North American society claims to be tolerant of all worldviews. However, in reality, this pluralism often leads to segregation. For example, there is now an intolerant wall of separation between church and state, distorting the original intent of that federal doctrine which was to protect the church from being dominated by the state. It is now almost totally forbidden to discuss religious views in any forum which has any connection to public funding or administration.

Similarly in the practice of medicine there has been a growing separation of science from faith. Ancient medicine had its roots in faith. Early healing was done by priests, and later, healers were assumed to minister to the body. However, beginning with Francis Bacon, there developed a revered trust in science, i.e. "the natural", and a distrust of faith which represents to many "the supernatural". Religious belief in relation to healing has been largely reduced to an irrational, mystical, even silly status.

The good news is that in the 1990's renewed tolerance has led to a resurrection of interest in alternative or complementary approaches to healthcare, including an acceptance of the importance of "spirituality" in healthcare. The bad news is that some of this revival is driven by an interest in varied practices - some may be safe and/or effective, some may be ineffective or even harmful, others may be fraudulent, and still others may be based on occult spiritual beliefs and activities.

Christian Perspective

The Bible is a book about healing. Scripture clearly gives many examples of God's inexplicable and supernatural intervention in human events, especially in miraculous healings. Some of the recorded healings are physical, some are spiritual, some are both, and in some it is not clear. The causes of the conditions which are healed are sometimes physical (e.g. blindness, lameness), sometimes spiritual (the result of sin, or the result of demonic spirits) and sometimes not clear.

Jesus instructed the 70 disciples to "heal the sick" (Luke 10:9). James encouraged believers to call their elders so they could be anointed with oil (James 5:13-18), implying to some that this sanctioned both the use of prayer and physical therapeutic modalities.

Christian physicians and dentists need to have a good understanding of science and of its limits. They should also have an appreciation for God's inexplicable intervention.

The Christian Medical and Dental Associations have encouraged clinicians to incorporate "faith flags" into their practices as a way to let their patients know of their belief, and to open the door to those occasions when a more in-depth discussion of spiritual matters may be appropriate.

The Ethics Commission drafted this statement on "Miraculous Healing" to underscore our belief that God works both within and sometimes outside of natural laws as He goes about His healing.