

RESTORED

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A WORD TO LEADERS

Welcome to this four-part study of what God's Word teaches concerning holistic [wholistic] health! May our Lord give you the insights, wisdom, and heartfelt commitment to lead the members of your study group[s] into an expanded understanding of and appreciation for what it means for a Christian to have a healthy body, mind, and spirit.

This study is structured to lead participants into four levels of discovery: God's creation of us as whole, unique, and integrated people; the forces of disintegration threatening our health as whole people; God's restoration of us as whole and healthy people through Christ; and the challenge to live healthy lives in relation to God, to our self, and to others. For your reflection the goals of the four studies are as follows:

1. That leaders and participants see themselves as whole and unique people created by a loving God for the purpose of giving Him praise in their whole being.
2. That leaders and participants recognize and, with God's help, resist the forces that threaten to pull us apart and make us unhealthy people.
3. That leaders and participants learn to know God as the true source of holistic health, centering in the forgiveness of sins earned by Christ on the cross, and to become a healing presence in the lives of others.
4. That leaders and participants learn to live as whole people before God, making decisions as baptized children of God that will enable them to live healthy lives in relation to God, to their own self, and to others.

Each lesson begins with an introduction intended to get participants into the lesson topic, and closes with various prayer activities. Leaders are encouraged to use music and song to underline the themes of the lesson and actually to use the group's time together an experience leading to greater Christian maturity and health. The "Talk Points" are especially important and are intended to be a starting point for deeper thought about how we can actually become healthier people in relation to God and one another in the Christian community.

May the joy and peace of Christ, who has given identity and purpose and meaning to our lives, fill your own heart as you open the Scriptures under the theme of this series.

STUDY 1: "I AM FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE"

"Secrets of the Teen Brain...Research...explaining its mystifying ways." That's the title of *Time* magazine's May 10, 2004 science section cover story. The story is about Dr. Jay Giedd, who has devoted the past 13 years "to peering inside the heads of 1800 kids and teenagers using high-power magnetic resonance imaging [MRI]."

Time then printed this letter in its May 31 issue:

As one of America's teenagers, I must say I am sick of stories that dissect teens' thoughts and lives. We are not science experiments; we are humans. Why is it necessary to pick us apart and figure out why we act the way we do? Does it take brain experiments to discover that we teens are rebellious? My 5-year-old brother could have told you that. I don't appreciate how teenagers are categorized as a group. Each of us is unique, just like every adult [emphasis added].

NAME WITHHELD

Tulsa, Okla.

Talk Point: Do you agree or disagree with this letter? Why or why not?

FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

From God's perspective, each of us is unique! Look at Psalm 139:14 and consider it the theme of this study: "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know full well." Notice the "I"! God has made ME as a whole person to love and praise Him and to live a life of well-being under His blessing.

Unlike cars with interchangeable parts, each of us is absolutely unique. God has custom-made each of us, down to the last molecule.

Talk Points: Name five ways human beings can be identified as unique [for example, iris scanning].

Now turn to the person next to you. Share five characteristics that make that person unique and special from your perspective.

THE WHOLE PERSON

A specialist in promoting the health of whole people describes the Bible's perspective of the individual human being this way:

From a biblical point of view, the evidence is clear. We are one, whole and undivided, even as God is one, whole and undivided. There is no hint in the Scripture that we are various parts glued together. Each of us is a totality. I do not have a body, I am a body. I do not have a mind. I am a mind. I do not have a spirit. I am a spirit. We are multidimensional creatures who express themselves in a unity of being. Such is the biblical view of the person. [Garth Ludwig, *Order Restored: A Biblical Interpretation of Health, Medicine, and Healing* [CPH, 1999], 136.]

How do the following Bible passages show that we are not just “various parts glued together”?

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24:

Romans 12:1 [compare with 6:13]:

How does the following passage show that our body is not something we have, but something that we are?

1 Corinthians 6:13-20:

Look at Psalm 139 and make a list of aspects of the whole person in God's sight:

v. 2

v. 3

v. 4

v. 13

v. 15

v. 23

What has God designed us to do as “whole people”? [Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37-39; see also Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27 [notice the addition!].

Talk Point: In his book *The Four Loves*, Christian writer C. S. Lewis spoke about a failure of people to think of each other as individuals in the area of sexuality: “We use an unfortunate idiom when we say, of a lustful man prowling the streets, that he ‘wants a woman.’ Strictly speaking, a woman is just what he does not want. He wants a pleasure for which a woman happens to be the necessary piece of apparatus” [cited in 1981 report of LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations on Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective, 16]. What’s the real problem here? How will God’s perspective of us as unique and special individuals change our thinking about sexuality and the value of other people?

TOTAL HEALTH

I [the author] have a personal experience I want to share. I recently met one of the most “healthy” individuals in my entire life—an interesting, cheerful, deeply spiritual, funny, caring [I could expand the list!] person. He is a paraplegic, the victim of a tragic accident in his teenage years. Do you know someone like this? If you do, take a moment to describe that person to your group.

From God’s perspective we can call such a person really healthy for at least three reasons:

1. Health is not the same as the absence of sickness or bodily malfunction.
2. Health is being and living as a whole person, as God has created us to be: functionally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually.
3. Health is to experience well-being as a total person whom God loves and for whom He cares.

The Bible’s big word for personal well-being is peace [Shalom], a word that means wholeness and well-being under God’s blessing. When God gives us peace, we experience wholeness in relationship to:

_____Romans 5:1 [Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7]

_____1 Thessalonians 5:23; Philippians 4:7

_____1 Thessalonians 5:13 [Mark 9:50]

CLOSING PRAYER

Suggestion: Join in a group prayer in which each person thanks God for a special gift given to the person on his/her right. Choose a song that captures the wonderful way in which God has made us His special children.

“Health ought to mean wholeness, or an integration or harmony between body, mind, and spirit, between the individual and others, and between the individual, nature and God”

Eric Ram, ed. *Transforming Health* [Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1995], 10.

STUDY 2: UN-WHOLE-SOME CHOICES

“Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” [Matthew 19:6]. Jesus said this about marriage. Sadly, individuals whom God wants to remain one, sinful forces divide. The same can be said about God’s creation of human beings as whole people whom God created in His image. People whom God created to be whole, sinful forces seek to divide.

In this study we want to think about some of the things that tear people apart in their relationships to God, to each other, and to their own self.

God created Adam and Eve in His image, whole and perfect, at peace with Him, with each other, and within themselves. But then something terrible happened. To borrow a phrase from “Shelter Lyrics” by Canadian singer Sarah McLachlan, we have “watched their existence come apart at the seams.” And it’s all reported, in the beginning, in Genesis 3. We might label this chapter “The Story of Disintegration” [the “Coming Apart at the Seams” chapter].

Read Genesis 3 and share your responses to the following:

Adam and Eve’s life began to come apart when ... [3:6]

Adam and Eve began at once to experience ...

3:7-

3:12-13-

3:15-

3:16-

3:17-19-

And, finally, Adam and Eve experienced ... [3:20-24]

Talk Point: What happens to human relationships when a person’s relationship with God becomes weak, fractured or broken?

A PARABLE

A Christian health professional writes: “The ways people think, feel, relate and manage their lifestyles can maim and even kill. Spiritual crises can kill.” He is not talking literally about death [though that can happen], but crippling and dying within a person.

In the Bible, Jesus told a story about two people whose lives nearly came apart because of their personal thoughts and choices. One finally became well, while another stayed sick within. One finally “came to his senses,” his health restored, and the other continued to struggle. It is the story of the Lost Son in Luke 15:11-32. In a sense, what happens in this story is Genesis 3 all over again: existence coming apart at the seams.

Have your group read aloud, person by person and verse by verse, this incredible story. We could label part of this story: “health threatened.” As you read the story make a mental note of ...

DESTRUCTIVE HEALTH CHOICES

When the wayward son returned to his father, a servant said that the father had “him back safe and sound” [Greek, translated literally, “in a healthy condition”], but only after he had made some unsound choices. What unsound choices did he make and what was the result?

Physically:

Mentally:

Spiritually:

Now take a look at the older son in the story. He, too, made some “unhealthy” choices—which were far more destructive in the final analysis! How would you describe his physical, mental, and spiritual condition? What does the older son’s attitude reveal about unhealthy relationships and their affect on our personal health? What aspects of this entire story remind you of Genesis 3?

ASSAULT OF THE HORMONES?

The youngest son of the parable was likely a teenager [can you guess why?]. If he were living today—and based on what science tells us about our bodies and their development—he could easily trace his bad choices to “a flood of hormones.” But the Bible traces unhealthy and destructive behavior not to “chemicals in the brain,” but to our inner spiritual condition.

Read the list in Galatians 5:19-21. In your opinion, and based on your personal experience, which of the behaviors listed here are the most risky for teenagers today? How do they threaten our physical, mental and spiritual health as whole people? To what are these behaviors traced?

REALITY CHECK

In the parable of the Lost Son, the first son “came to his senses” [literally, in Greek, “he came to himself”—like he had left himself!]. This is the first, and a very important first step, in his restoration to health before God and others.

Talk Point: Counselors wanting to help people with problems often speak of the problem of denial. What do they mean? Especially when it comes to our spiritual health, why is it necessary to overcome this problem?

In his book *SelfMatters*, Dr. Phil speaks about “creating your life from the inside out.” According to the Bible, however, the heart and core of real health is a right relationship with God, who sends His Holy Spirit to make us whole—that is, “pull us together.”

The most important part of the story of the Lost Son is the son’s return home and his restoration. How does the parable show that God is the real Source of real health? How do the actions of the father in the parable dramatize restoration to wholeness?

CLOSING PRAYER

As you close this lesson, read the words of Jesus in John 10:10. In your closing prayer, ask the Lord to fulfill His promise in your life.

STUDY 3: CHRIST HAS MADE US WHOLE

“Alternative medicine” is a huge industry today. In large numbers people are turning to alternative therapies and medicines, often in place of medical doctors or prescription drugs. Some aspects of these approaches to health care are good. They can be acceptable to Christians and beneficial to health.

Ask a member of your study group to read aloud these words of LCMS Pastor Eldon Winker [author of a book on New Age]:

Holistic [wholistic] health care is simply concerned with treating the whole person—body, mind, and spirit—rather than focusing only on physical symptoms. Basic holistic health care, which emphasizes exercise, healthy diet, and preventive self-care therapies is something all Christians should practice ... Some areas of alternative medicine can be beneficial when they support a holistic approach to health care. Practices that assist the body’s natural healing power to function, that promote personal responsibility for staying healthy, that recognize the interaction between mind and body as important to good health, and that makes use of God’s gifts in nature to maintain health as well as to heal are certainly practices that are appropriate for our use as Christians [“Alternative medicine: be discerning,” *Cross and Caduceus*, May 1999, 1.].

TALK POINTS:

1. How is “holistic” health care defined in this paragraph?
2. When are “alternative” health care approaches beneficial?
3. Can you name some?
4. Why is it important to remember the interaction of mind and body in maintaining a healthy lifestyle?

A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

Marilyn Ferguson was a founder of the New Age Movement in America. She once said: “There is always a doctor in the house and it is the self.” As we will see in Lesson Three, there is a bit of truth in this. We do play a certain role in our health.

Typically, however, New Age philosophers and their followers believe that the source of healing is within themselves. They believe healing happens when we are in touch with our “inner energy” or “cosmic energy.” Sin is not our problem, just imperfect knowledge. We need no revelation from God in the Bible or salvation that comes from outside ourselves. We simply need to “experience the salvation hidden within self” [self-salvation] by mastering psychological techniques [for example, altered states of consciousness] that lead to enlightenment and that “unblock energy flow” causing sickness. In New Age thought—which

many people accept uncritically—spirituality refers to an inner experience of harmony and unity with the whole of reality in the universe. We have the potential to get in touch with “the divinity within” each of us and with the parts of us that are alienated and suppressed. Simply, healing is an inner capacity in each person. In other words, we actually heal ourselves.

Christians, however, do not look to impersonal cosmic forces. They look to the loving care of a personal God who created and redeemed them through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus came to bring real healing and real wholeness of life to all who trust in Him.

TALK POINTS:

1. For many New Age thinkers and followers, we ourselves are actually divine. How does this contrast with the Bible’s view of human beings [see Ephesians 2:1ff.]?
2. For many New Age thinkers and followers, nature and God are one. How does this contrast with the Bible’s teaching [Romans 1:25]?

TWO MIRACLES

Isaiah prophesied of the Savior to come: “By his wounds you are healed” [Isaiah 53:5]. Likewise, David declared in Psalm 103:2-5:

Praise the Lord, O my soul,
 and forget not all his benefits—
 Who forgives all your sins
 and heals all your diseases
 Who redeems your life from the pit
 and crowns you with love and compassion
 Who satisfies your desires with good things
 so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

Forgiveness and healing [of mind, body, and spirit] occur in the same sentence! Let’s look at how this became a reality in the life of two people.

1. Read Mark 2:1-12.

- a. One author said of this event: “Jesus forgives when he is expected to heal and heals when expected to forgive” [Thomas Droegge, *The Healing Presence*, 151]. What do you think he meant?

b. Psychologists tell us that people burdened with guilt become vulnerable to stress, broken relationships, worsening of personality problems, etc. Forgiveness, however, brings deliverance, restoration and healing of the spirit. Why is forgiveness such a powerful force for healing [Romans 5:1-5]? Do you think the reality of forgiveness [God's and our forgiveness of each other] affects our physical health? If so, how?

2. Read Mark 5:25-34 [compare with Matthew 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48].

a. Interestingly, the words of Jesus translated “your faith has healed you” or “your faith has made you well” [v. 34], read literally in the Greek, “your faith “has saved you.” What does this tell us about the meaning of the wonderful miracle Jesus performed here?

b. Another translation tidbit: The NIV translates the second half of verse 34 as follows: “Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” In the Greek the word “healthy” is present: literally, “be healthy [and free] from your suffering.” What precious gift did Jesus give alongside physical healing?

A HEALING PRESENCE

As Christians we have the privilege of being a healing presence in the lives of others. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 and Galatians 6:2. Since God has forgiven us and restored us as whole people to Himself, we can be a restoring influence in the lives of others. How can we do this? [See 2 Corinthians 5:19-21.] Share an experience in your personal life when someone has been God's instrument to “restore” your soul [Psalm 23:3].

CLOSING PRAYER

Ask each person in your group to write the first name of a person who has been God's way of "redeeming you from the pit" [a time when you really needed to be restored in the assurance of God's forgiveness and love]. Join for two minutes of silent prayer, thanking your Lord for bringing this person into your life. Close your study time with the Lord's Prayer as you remember consciously that this prayer is really a perfect holistic health prayer.