

**HELP! I AM A CHRISTIAN,
WHY AM I SICK?**

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Published by Aspire Publishing Group

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Scripture quotations are from:
New American Standard Bible
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ISBN-13: 978-0-9792535-0-8
ISBN-10: 0-9792535-0-0

Printed in the United States of America



INTRODUCTION

Disease is a complex subject. I decided to write this book because, when disease touched my life, I felt lost as I sought answers from a broad community of believers. If you're like me, maybe you've wondered why the Lord would allow you or someone you love to be touched by disease.

I write as a layman in the church, not as a scholarly theologian or a medical professional. The opinions and testimony in this book are those of a man who has searched firsthand for answers to the difficult questions surrounding this subject. If you have a disease, it may take some time for you to fully understand your situation. Yet with knowledge comes freedom and peace. It is my hope that by reading this book you will find peace in your circumstance. I believe that the Lord heals people every day. However, this book will not offer you promises beyond what Scripture makes clear.

One day in September 2001, my wife, Teresa, came down with a migraine headache. Since she had a history of migraines, her symptoms did not initially alarm us. She took her normal medicine, but after a few days, the pain did not subside. Her doctor prescribed a new medication, but it didn't help either. On September 13, 2001, two days after the New York City bombings, Teresa stopped eating. I became very concerned and decided it was time to go to the emergency room of our local hospital.

There, the doctors performed a CT scan and gave us the bad news. There was a mass in the right frontal lobe of her brain, and surgery would be necessary within the next few days. Based on every

preliminary indicator, it looked like the most common kind of brain cancer, called glioblastoma multiforme (GBM). All GBMs are grade four; they can double in size in ten days and have only a 2% survival rate after five years. There is no known cure. In the United States, GBMs affect over 18,000 people each year.

My initial reaction was denial. It couldn't be true! Teresa was thirty-six years old at the time, and the sweetest and most loving person you would ever meet. She had grown to become a beautiful Christian woman. We had three children and had been married for fourteen years. She had a successful job at an international telecommunications company. If the news about the cancer were true, we would fight with all our energy and become part of the 2% who survived.

Within the next few days, we met with the neurosurgeon and the neuro-oncologist to understand the disease, the risks, and the treatment procedures. They performed a craniotomy and did their best to remove the mass of cancer cells. The biopsy confirmed that it was GBM. We began the most complex of treatment programs, which included chemotherapy, radiation, and dissolvable wafers left in the brain after surgery. I added a nutritional treatment program and some alternative medical treatments that did not conflict with the allopathic recommendations.

Teresa recovered from the surgery with amazing success. She experienced none of the usual side effects: no paralysis, change in personality, headaches, or post-operative complications, such as swelling or bleeding. The medical professionals were very pleased with the results. For the next eleven months, Teresa underwent various treatments, beginning with conforming field radiation and followed by a rotating protocol of chemotherapies prescribed by the renowned Dr. Henry Friedman of Duke University Medical Center in Raleigh, North Carolina. The typical GBM patient has recurrence within a year, which often requires a second craniotomy. Teresa, by contrast, reached the one-year mark in perfect health. In fact, she discontinued treatments and outperformed all expectations for twenty-four months.

In the twenty-fifth month, she had recurrence. The cancer was in a new location, still on the right side, but this time deep in the white matter of the brain at about ear level. Surgery was not an option without severe consequences. She started chemotherapy treatments again, but they were ineffective. Over the next three months, she received three completely different drugs with three completely different delivery modes. None of them had any impact on the cancer cell growth. GBM is known as a “smart cancer” because the cells can mutate and become resistant to the prescribed treatments. The cancer grew without restraint.

In spite of all our prayers, Teresa died on March 13, 2004, at the age of thirty-eight. Her death was peaceful. She did not experience any pain and died rather quickly, without the anticipated coma. We were all with her till the end, and she knew she was greatly loved. We had closure and had been able to say everything that needed to be said. The Lord had approved her home-going, and she received it as an obedient servant. She ran her race and finished well. Teresa is now in the presence of the Lord, experiencing an indescribable feeling of freedom, wholeness, and peace, and she does not want to return to this life.

This was the most difficult trial of my life. I sought the Lord on my knees and pleaded with Him to heal Teresa. Those of you who are facing disease may understand the way I felt. I spent hours reading on the Internet and woke up countless times at night thinking about the situation. I had hours of conversation with health-care professionals. I also sought counsel from my community of fellow believers, who belonged to many churches and different denominations. They showered us with love and compassion beyond our greatest expectations.

However, among the community of believers I found a distinct lack of knowledge and training in medical matters, which left little possibility of a substantial biblically-based response that could lead to

healing. We were offered sincere yet simplistic answers, such as, “God will heal you if he wants to,” and “God has a purpose.” It was this gap in spiritual training that prompted me to write this book. As stated in Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Yes, lack of knowledge is devastating and keeps us from the blessings of God.

My primary goal is to prevent disease before it occurs. My secondary goal is to have a solid biblical response to disease when it does occur. I have observed that the body of Christ worldwide is not trained to respond to disease, and that Satan is having his way. I have asked a thousand questions: Why are some people healed and some are not? Is it true that healing was more common in biblical times than today, and if so, why? Healings seem so arbitrary, almost like a lottery. Does God have a logical plan or criteria as to who gets healed and who does not? Are the healings we see on television valid? Does anyone go back and talk to the healed a year later to see if their situation was temporary or permanent? Did the healing accompany a change of heart in that person, or a new spiritual revelation?

Sometimes it seems as if we have become so smart that we don't need God. I would say that most pastors and church leaders consider themselves to be only indirectly responsible for the physical health of their flock, and therefore they avoid teaching on this subject. Conversely, medical doctors don't pastor. There is therefore a great void where those two professions meet. In the alternative medical community, on the other hand, the clear majority of holistic practitioners are not operating within biblical guidelines. In my experience, the typical holistic health-care practitioner is more inclined to speak New Age philosophy than biblical truth. I have learned to distinguish the holistic approach to disease from what I refer to as a “biblically holistic” approach. The two are very different.

I want to emphasize my primary motivation for writing this book. There is little possibility of finding a ministry to meet our needs when

there is such a lack of knowledge within the church about medical information and scriptures that are relevant to our physical health. Typically, the church leadership, for various reasons, does not take responsibility for the physical health of their flock. I hope that this book can help church leaders to become more confident addressing believers' physical health through effective teaching and ministry.

There is almost always a connection between the spiritual health of the saints and their physical health.

Throughout this book, I will demonstrate that there is almost always a connection between spiritual health and physical health. The biblical directives of our heavenly Father are not only spiritual in purpose. When He says, “Don’t be anxious,” “Forgive one another” (i.e. do not be bitter), and “Do not fear,” He has in mind our physical well-being in addition to our spiritual well-being.

As you read this book, I ask two things of you. First, if you’re fighting a disease, realize that your battle is physical *and* spiritual. Satan does not like to be exposed, and he’ll give you a thousand reasons not to read your Bible, to receive encouragement from others, or to be encouraged by reading this book. I encourage you to be persistent, to resist him, and to keep reading—but of course, don’t substitute this book for the time you spend in God’s Word. Second, because this topic is complex, read the *entire* book so that you won’t draw the wrong conclusions. I’ve seen it happen before. If you only read two chapters, you’ll likely miss the primary message. I realize that we may disagree on some issues, but I think you’ll agree with the primary message once you understand it.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 examine different and seemingly unrelated aspects of disease in our lives. I call them “puzzle pieces 1, 2, and 3.” It won’t be until chapter 5, when the three pieces are put together, that you’ll be able to see the whole picture. Then the full scheme of Satan will be revealed.