

there have been many divine healings of believers who have followed the biblical instructions and looked to God to be healed.

New Testament instructions

In the New Testament, we find the following instructions: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:14-16).

We also find a biblical example of healing when an anointed cloth or piece of material is sent to the sick person. The apostle Paul practiced this in the New Testament (Acts 19:11-12). We in the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, follow this example when for some reason a minister is unable to personally anoint the sick individual.

Christians look to God in faith as their healer (Matthew 9:20-22; Acts 14:8-10) and strive to live their lives in obedience to the will of God (1 John 3:22-23). God honors that faith and obedience. There are many examples of this in our modern day.

Faith in God’s power to heal does not prohibit a believer from also seeking medical advice and treatment and doing what he or she can do to recuperate from the illness or injury.

Understanding God’s will and timing

Understanding these wonderful promises and fully believing in God’s power to heal, some may wonder why everyone is not healed immediately when he or she is anointed. When considering ourselves, we should give thought to whether there is something more we should do or learn. We can pray for help to grow in faith and obedience. But when considering other people, it is never helpful to question their faith or obedience. These are for God to judge. There

are other reasons that God does not always heal immediately.

God is sovereign and knows about each individual’s needs. He has an eternal perspective, and has our ultimate best interests in mind. Like all trials, sickness can help us grow in faith, obedience, character and our relationship with God. God wants us to learn patience, so we must not assume that His promise of healing must be fulfilled immediately or not at all. He may have lessons for us or those around us to learn.

Paul mentioned a “thorn in the flesh” that he beseeched God about three times. In this case, Paul finally got the answer, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul’s inspiring response was, “Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

God promises a wonderful future when there will be no more pain, sorrow or death (Revelation 21:4). But in this world we will have troubles, including health problems. God does not promise to keep us alive forever in this physical body, so eventually He allows us all to die (Hebrews 9:27). We can still go to Him for healing, always trusting in His love and perfect desire for our ultimate good as children in His Kingdom forever.

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What Is Faith?

Biblical faith is not just an empty platitude. What does it mean to have faith, and how can you have it?

Faith is a commonly used religious-sounding word that many people would find hard to define. The expression “just have faith, it will work out” is used by people to encourage and comfort someone facing serious problems or stressful situations. But just what is faith as described in the Bible, and does it really work?

In the New Testament the English word *faith* is used to translate the Greek word *pistis*. *The New Strong’s Expanded Dictionary of Bible Word* says, “*Pistis* is used of belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Christ, springing from faith in the same. ‘Faith’ means trust, confidence, assurance, and belief” (p. 1315).

The Bible also defines *pistis* in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith is the substance or assurance of things we hope for, but have not yet received. Faith (confidence, belief, trust) is also our evidence of that which is not seen—the invisible spiritual things. Faith comes before a prayer is answered or before an individual has received what he or she has requested from God. If we have received what we asked for, then faith is not needed.

A New Testament example

An example of this definition is found in Matthew 9:27-30 where two blind men came to Jesus and asked Him to heal them. Jesus first asked them, “Do

you believe that I am able to do this?” and their reply was, “Yes, Lord.” “Then He touched their eyes saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you.’ And their eyes were opened.”

Their faith and assurance that Jesus could give them sight was the substance or reality they hoped for. It also gave them the evidence or trust that they would receive what they asked for. They believed; that is, they had faith in advance that it would be done.

An Old Testament example

Another example is that of Daniel’s three friends who refused to bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold. Those who refused to bow to the image were threatened with being thrown into a fiery pit alive.

The three young Jewish men (Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego) who refused to bow to the image told King Nebuchadnezzar: “If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Daniel 3:17-18).

They did not know in advance how God would deliver them from the fiery furnace, whether at that time by saving their physical lives or later in the resurrection. Their faith or trust was the substance of what they hoped for, and it was the evidence of that which was not yet seen or received. Their faith or trust was built on serving God and obeying His commandments. They believed God would deliver them because they obeyed His commandments and did not bow down to worship any others gods.

Faith without works is dead

The apostle James, who was the half-brother of Jesus Christ, wrote in his epistle about what he called dead faith. Dead faith is when one believes in God, but does not obey His commandments.

James wrote, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and trem-

ble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:19-20).

James went on to use the example of Abraham, who had both faith and works because he believed God and he obeyed what God commanded him to do. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” (James 2:21-22). Real faith is more than just believing in God alone. It includes acting on that faith in one’s life by serving God and obeying His commandments.

Some may argue that James’ teaching that we should obey the commandments of God is teaching that we are saved by works. That is not the case. The apostle Paul makes this clear when he says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of

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yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Paul clearly understood and wrote that no one could earn salvation and that faith itself is a gift from God. Yet in the very next verse he went on to say that we are God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (verse 10).

Like James, Paul knew living faith would be accompanied by service and obedience to God and His laws. Paul wrote in Romans 3:31 “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”

God gives faith to those who seek it

Faith is increased by drawing closer to God through prayer and the study of His Word, the Bible. Paul

told the Philippians to “be anxious for nothing [don’t worry], but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). They believed God’s Word, and they obeyed His commandments. As they listened and followed Paul’s instruction on giving their cares to God in believing prayer, their faith (belief and trust) was increased.

Another way faith is increased is by reading or hearing examples of faith in the Bible publicly expounded. This is mentioned in Romans 10:17. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Today, we have the complete Word of God in many different translations. The Bible is God’s inspired Word to mankind. When we read the Bible, our faith (confidence and assurance) in God and Jesus Christ to answer our prayers and bring us through impossible situations increases.

To summarize, faith is trust, assurance and confidence in God and Jesus Christ. Living faith is not just believing that God exists. It is demonstrated by one’s service and obedience to God. God will increase our faith if we fervently ask Him for it and seek to draw closer to Him in prayer and the reading of His Word.

Does God Heal People Today?

The Bible reveals God to be a miracle-working God. Can Christians today expect miraculous healing? What does God want us to do?

The Bible gives many examples showing God’s power to heal the sick. But does God heal today? The short answer is yes, He most certainly does, and