

6

Constructing a Biblical Framework for Health Care 1

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Proverbs 1:7

Understanding Purpose: Man's Normal Physiology (First year of medical school)

Any understanding of man, of people (and remember that we treat patients, not diseases!), must understand his purpose, so can evaluate if he is functioning according to the purpose for which he was created. Also must understand anything that has happened to him along the way that might explain why and how he acts, the symptoms he presents with, etc. Need to begin at the beginning, see how this all started.

Let's begin with a case study: Adam and Eve.

Read Genesis 1:26-31 and Genesis 2:7-25 for our initial case presentation.

1. What characterized man's relationship with God? _____

With himself? With other people? With nature?

2. What was man's purpose? What roles were given to him?

3. Was there any death? Any disease? Any decay? Any suffering, pain, fear, distrust, guilt? _____

4. What does it mean that man was made in God's image? What traits does man thus possess? _____

5. What are some implications that man is made in the image of God? _____

6. Describe man's overall physiology, the way he functioned physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, psychologically, and spiritually. _____

7. What do you think was the state of their genetic material? Was it corrupted? Did it require constant repair in order to prevent decay?

Did they need an immune system? _____

8. What was the essential element to man's functioning (remember his purpose). _____

9. Summarize Adam and Eve's condition, their physiology, in the Garden. _____

10. Are we still functioning this way, or has something happened to our physiology? _____

Summary

- God created man to be in relationship with Himself; this was the essential element to man’s function, the purpose for which he was designed. Essential to man’s physiology was his living, dynamic, intimate relationship with God.
- Man was (is) unlike any other created being on earth (Psalm 8).
- God made man in His Image. This includes the fact that man transcends the material world; he is both body and soul, and is capable of interacting and apprehending both realms.
- Man is also an eternal being, existing forever.
- God placed man in the Garden, and all was good. There was no death, no decay, no disease. Only perfect harmony with himself, God, and other humans.
- Everything functioned according to its design purposes.

Purpose Shattered: Man’s Pathophysiology (Second year of medical school)

Read Genesis 3 to see how our patients are now presenting.

1. What symptoms are our patients presenting with now? How has their normal physiology changed? _____

2. What now characterizes their relationship with God, each other, themselves, with nature? What happened to man’s body, his genes, etc.? What happened to the rest of the world as well (2nd Law of Thermodynamics came into the world), Romans 8:20-22?

3. What happened to cause this? (Genesis 3:6) _____

4. What did God say would specifically happen *on the day* they ate the fruit (2:17)? _____

5. Did this happen? If they *physically* lived for many more years, did God lie, change His mind, or make a mistake? So what did happen to them on that day? See Ephesians 2:1-3. _____

6. What is the direct cause of physical death entering the world, and man being subject to it? See Genesis 3:17, Ezekiel 18:20, Romans 6:23. _____

7. What else was involved in the curse? _____

8. What was the other reason for death besides as a punishment for sin? See Genesis 3:22-24. (What would have happened if they, in their state of sin and spiritual death, had eaten of the tree of life and lived forever in that state?) _____

9. **Who** then is responsible for death coming into the world, and with it disease, decay, suffering, and pain? See Romans 5:12. _____

10. This explains Adam and Eve; what about the rest of mankind? See Romans 5:12, 19a 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, Romans 3:23, Psalm 14:1-3, Mark 10:18. _____

11. What is **the** fundamental disease process at work in man? From what are we all dying, no matter what the specific means? (Romans 6:23) _____

12. What is the relationship between physical death and spiritual death? _____

Read Isaiah 59:1-8

Man, who was made in the image of God and not programmed, chose to go his own independent way, so that man became what he was not. And man as he is now is not man as he always was, for there has been a space-time historic change in man.

– Francis Schaeffer

Summary

- Man sinned, disobeyed God. At root, man wanted to be like God, transcending His authority and limits.
- As a direct consequence of man's sin, man and all of creation became subject to death.
- On the day they ate of the fruit, they died, just as God had said. But it was not physical death they experienced that day; they died spiritually, becoming separated from God by their sin.
- The physical and spiritual aspects of man became separated and distinct from each other. Man was dead spiritually, but alive physically for a time prior to physical death.
- During that time, the processes leading to physical death were set into motion: disease, decay, decline, entropy, destruction, pain and suffering, all as part of the curse.
- The fundamental element to man's functioning is his relationship to God; therefore **man's fundamental pathophysiology is his separation from God.**
- Death is the great enemy, a dramatic and stark reminder that things are not the way they are supposed to be, that something is wrong, that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
- **Physical death is a reflection of, a reminder of, the reality of our spiritual death.**

Purpose Corrupted: Man's Clinical Presentation (Clinical years of medical school)

So man was designed to function in perfect relationship with God and His creation, but sin separated him from God and His creation, and set

into motion the processes of decay and disease, leading to suffering and death. What are the **clinical manifestations** of this disease of sin?

1. How does sin and separation from God effect people and how they function? See Romans 1:18-20, 8:6-8, Jeremiah 17:9. _____

2. What are the clinical manifestations of man's pathophysiology? Romans 1:21-32 _____

3. In the same way that physical death is a reflection of the greater reality of spiritual death, is there a relationship between sin and disease? See Psalm 38:3-8, Psalm 107:17-18. _____

Read Isaiah 59:9-15a

Summary

- Sin has affected every aspect of man; he is physically, emotionally, socially, mentally, spiritually sick. Everything ahs become corrupted and tainted.
- We became enemies of God, and stand under His wrath.
- **Disease, decay and decline are reflections of and reminders of the reality of sin and judgement.**

The doctrine of original sin seems an offense to reason, but once accepted it makes total sense of the human condition.

-- Blaise Pascal

Man's Prognosis

So now we have the diagnosis: SIN and all of its effects.

1. What is the end result of all of this? What is our prognosis?
 What is the natural history of this disease? See Jeremiah 17:9,
 Revelation 6:12-17, 20:11-15, Romans 2:5-9, 2 Thessalonians 1:9.

Our prognosis is eternal separation from God, complete and lasting spiritual and physical death. That is the inevitable consequence of this disease if left untreated.

So what do we learn from our case study? What is the relationship between the physical and the spiritual realms?

Material World	Spiritual Reality
Physical Death	Spiritual Death (separation from God)
Disease, (decay, decline, destruction)	Sin (the Fall in general, and also specifically in certain instances)
Pain (physical)	Suffering
Permanency of physical death (until the world ends)	Eternal separation from God, torment

Purpose Restored: The Therapy for Man’s Disease (Post-graduate training)

Man’s treatment plan

Because of our sin, we would rather hide from God (as Adam and Eve did) and try to solve the consequences of sin ourselves (as Adam and Eve did with the leaves). We do not want to admit our need for help, for treatment, for a physician; we would rather treat ourselves, or deny that any problem exists at all.

1. What is the effect of our attempts to treat ourselves? See Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:20, Galatians 2:16. _____

2. How has man tried to treat himself? Denial of sin, denial of its consequences, denial of judgement, denial of God, both His characteristics and His existence, and much more. Think of our previous study on the History of Western Thought.

God's treatment plan

We have seen that the physical world is a reflection of spiritual reality, and specifically that disease and physical death are shadows of the reality of sin and spiritual death. Is there anything we can learn about spiritual reality by looking at the world around us?

In the world around us, in our experience, is there any reversal of the decline towards death? Is there any movement away from death towards life? The obvious answer is yes; people get sick, and they get better. Healing takes place. What is the reason for this? What is the source of this treatment?

1. Read Matthew 5:45 and Psalm 104:14-23 and define **common grace**. _____

2. How is God's sovereignty and His common grace towards man reflected in the realm of health and disease? _____

3. Who is the source of ALL healing, ALL movement away from disease and death? See Exodus 15:26, Deuteronomy 32:39, Psalm 103:1-3. _____

4. What is God's desire for us in the physical realm? See 3 John 2, Jeremiah 30:17, 33:6. _____

5. What does the fact that God has provided a temporary reversal of the processes of physical disease, decay, and death tell us about His character? _____

6. What does this suggest about our spiritual terminal illness? If God cares about our physical diseases and provides healing, does He care about our more serious spiritual disease? (Would a good physician treat a cold and ignore someone's cancer?) See the following verses: Isaiah 53:4-6, Luke 4:16-21. _____

7. What has God done about our sin, our spiritual disease? See John 3:16, 5:24, Ephesians 2:15-16. _____

8. What is the basis for this healing? See Romans 5:6-12, 18-21.

9. What has God done about death, both physical and spiritual? See 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 54-56, Proverbs 14:32.

10. What is God's ultimate plan for us, both physically and spiritually? See 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, Revelation 21:22-27, 22:1-14.

11. Read Ephesians 2:4-9 and Titus 3:3-7 and define **special grace**.

Read Isaiah 59:15b-21

Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee.
 – Saint Augustine

Summary

- All of creation benefits from God's common grace, the undeserved extension of His goodness and kindness.
- Any movement away from entropy, away from decline, decay, and death, is by grace and grace alone, because God has to do so against the now natural order of things.
- **God is the source of ALL healing from disease.**
- God's desire is for healing, for health.
- God's common grace to us is a reflection of His special grace, which reconciles undeserving sinners to God through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.
- God therefore also heals our spiritual disease, sin, and restores the negative effects of it.
- **Physical healing from disease is a reflection of spiritual healing offered in Jesus Christ. And since physical healing comes by grace as well, the two are really not separate ultimately.**
- God ultimately restores the unity between man's spiritual and physical selves, and ultimately does so for the rest of creation as well.

Material World	Spiritual Reality
Common grace	Special grace
Physical healing (cure)	Spiritual Healing (heal) -- salvation
Recovery of function	Reconciliation to God (and others/world)
Restoration	Redemption

How to comply with God's treatment plan – His therapy

What is God's therapy? He has the cure, but what form does it take?

How do we avail ourselves of this treatment? See John 3:1-8,

Galatians 2:19-20, Romans 6:1-11, 2 Corinthians 5:14-17, Colossians 3:3. _____

Is God's treatment plan one of reforming us or transforming us?

God does not reform our sick physiology; He transforms us. We die, and He gives us the physiology of Christ; it is a total transplant! We are again restored to the way we were designed to function as much as is possible here in this life, spiritually alive again! He gives us the hope and promise of full restoration in the life to come, when the physical and spiritual will be united again in perfection.

Summarize the relationship between the material/physical realm and the spiritual realm, between physical and spiritual death, disease and sin, physical cure and spiritual healing. _____

What are some implications for health care? What are some applications? _____
