

God & Health

A reminder of "God and Life"

In a previous study we considered the topic of "God and Life". The key conclusions were:

1. Man is unique in God's creation, created in God's image to rule over God's creation. Human life is therefore sacred.
2. No human being has the right to take human life without express permission from God (Biblically this permission has only been given to the state in execution of wrong-doers and in war)
3. Human life begins at conception and its value is unchanged until death (based on both biological and Biblical arguments). Therefore abortion and euthanasia / assisted suicide are not morally justifiable.
4. Christians must respond to issues like abortion and euthanasia with grace and compassion – providing alternatives to people trapped in difficult situations.
5. The purpose of human life is to reflect the image of God in exercising stewardship on God's Kingdom. We must seek to do God's will and extend God's Kingdom in every sphere of life.

Mind over Matter?

One of the greatest questions facing philosophers is the relationship between the brain and the mind – this is the "mind-body problem". The debate is closely related to the issue of whether soul/spirit and body are separate entities or one entity. The two main competing theories regarding the "mind-body problem" are called dualism and monism.

A] Dualism

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato (427-327BC) was one of the first dualists. He believed that the soul was distinct from the body and could maintain a separate existence from it. He also believed in reincarnation. Amongst dualists there are two main theories about how the mind and body relate to one another:

- (i) *Parallelism* – the mental and physical realms do not influence each other. Most parallelists believe that God has made us so that our mental and physical dimensions are synchronised and appear to interact. In this view, causal interactions between mind and body are explained as the work of God. For example, touching a hot baking tray does not cause pain, but rather in response to this occasion God causes the mental state of pain.
- (ii) *Cartesian interactionist dualism* – the mind and body can exist independently but in reality they do interact. This view is held by most dualists and was popularised by French mathematician and philosopher, René Descartes (1596-1650), who believed that mind and matter were separate substances, but that the mind can cause changes in matter (for example, we can choose to move parts of our physical body), and that changes in matter can cause sensations in the mind (for example the feeling of pain in response to the physical body being injured). The one problem with this view is the question of the nature of the interaction between mind and body. If they are two distinct types of entity, how can they influence each other? Descartes believed that God was responsible for these interactions, but in modern times some dualists have argued that it is unnecessary to bring God into the equation and that we cannot yet explain how the interaction works because we don't yet understand fully the nature of matter and mind. This discussion is related to the sphere of quantum physics, which has opened up new theories of the very nature of reality.

B] Monism

Monism is the belief that mind and matter are, in essence, one substance. This view is associated with the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC) although the term itself was coined by German philosopher Christian Wolff (1679-1754). Monists can be further divided into two groups:

- (i) *Idealists* – believe that only mind and mental processes exist. British philosopher George Berkeley (1685-1753) was an idealist. He suggested that the physical realm is just a collection of ideas that exist either in our minds, or in other minds (*attributive monism* sees reality as consisting of one kind of substance, in this case "minds"), or in the mind of God (*substantive monism* sees reality as consisting of only one substance, in this case the "mind" of God).
- (ii) *Materialists* – believe that only matter exists. Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) believed that the mental and physical were simply two modes of a more basic substance, which he called God or Nature.

Materialism - the spirit of our age

Many modern philosophers and scientists are materialists, believing that everything is material or physical. The terms material and physical are often used interchangeably, although strictly speaking, *physicalists* say that energy exists as well as matter. Materialism has gained popularity recently, and many people in the Western world now believe that human beings are simply very complex machines and that all our mental processes can be explained purely in terms of physics and biochemistry. This growth in popularity of materialism has been influenced by three factors:

1. Scientific research into brain function – we are gaining increasing knowledge of the complex biochemical changes that occur in the brain when we think, act and have sensations.
2. Computers that can mimic (often at greater speed) some of the functions of the human brain have led to the brain being compared to a complex computer.
3. Increasing acceptance of an atheistic world view. If the supernatural is denied, people must look for answers to the nature of reality in physical matter alone.

There are three main objections to materialism from a practical and theological perspective:

1) It undermines the sanctity of human life

Materialism has led to a tendency to judge a person's worth by their ability to reason. The result is that babies, brain-damaged people and people with dementia or significant learning disabilities are treated no differently from animals. Bioethicist Peter Singer has presented this argument in stark terms:

Once the religious mumbojumbo surrounding the term human has been stripped away, we may continue to see 'normal' members of our species as possessing greater qualities of rationality, selfconsciousness, communication and so on than members of any others species, but we will not regard as sacrosanct the life of each member of our species, no matter how limited its capacity for intelligent or even conscious life may be.

Singer has advocated infanticide, euthanasia and animal rights on the basis of this view. These attitudes may shock us, but they do follow logically from the belief that human beings are 'less than persons' if they have lost, or never gained, reasonable mental faculties.

2) It cannot explain all of human experience

Materialism struggles to explain psychological phenomena such as desires, intentions, sensory experiences, thoughts and beliefs. Most human beings believe that we have freedom to make choices, and that the 'I' that chooses is somehow independent of cause and effect, able to judge between alternative possible actions. If materialism is true, then this choice is merely an illusion and our feelings, choices and actions will be determined solely by the interactions of chemicals in our brains. This does not fit with the natural instinctive belief most people hold that there is actually an 'I' that is conscious and knows guilt, pleasure and pain as well as a host of other sensations. As medical science advances we are increasingly able to measure and interpret the electrical impulses in the brain, the hormonal levels changes in the body and the facial expressions that accompany these sensations, but this ability to measure connected physical phenomena is not the same as knowing the other person's private subjective experience. We all know that two people could experience identical situations but feel entirely different. Even if we read their account of how they felt we are not experiencing those feelings, merely trying to identify with them through empathy. When counselling others we can say that we understand something of how they feel, but we can never claim to fully understand them. We are able to distinguish between being able to see and feel our own bodies and being able to see the world and feel it through them. In short, materialism does not quite match with our own instinctive sense of reality. It seems logical to conclude that mankind is more than merely a product of physical forces, although ardent materialists will argue that this perception itself is simply an illusion produced by the biochemistry of the brain.

3) It does not fit with the Bible's teaching about man and truth

The Bible is clear that man is a moral being, responsible before God for the choices he makes. Although "free will" is an illusion in one sense, because our will is always influenced by the wills of others and by temptation from the evil one and because we often find ourselves weak and powerless to decide to do what is right (this is Paul's central struggle in Romans chapter 7), it is wrong to suggest that we have no choice about our actions. The whole story of the Bible depends on the fact that Adam and Eve made a decision to rebel against God, and that God is calling people to decide to surrender again to Him. Only those Christians who take a strong Calvinistic view of reality (believing that God's grace is irresistible and is only revealed to those whom God has chosen

in His own infinite wisdom) could find some resonance with materialism. However, this view neglects the Biblical tension between God's election of those He foreknew and the individual's response to His call to repentance. If man has no choice about sin and repentance then God's judgement on sin makes no sense. The Bible claims that absolute truth exists, emanating from the person of God Himself. He is the basis for truth itself, and He is outside and separate from creation. There is such a thing as objective truth, and truth is not just the subjective result of our own experience.

Neither Monism nor Dualism - a Biblical perspective

In recent years philosophers have begun to ask whether science will ever be able to explain the true relationship between mind and matter. Some have called people who hold this position the *New Mysteries* because they insist that consciousness is fundamentally mysterious and cannot be explained by standard scientific means. They suggest that the subjective can never be assessed accurately using objective means. This position makes a great deal of sense in light of the Biblical position on the nature of man as one entity composed of body, soul and spirit (see notes on *God and Life*). Biblically speaking there are problems with both Monism and Dualism:

Problems with monism:

- ***Creatio ex nihilo* (Hebrews 11:3)**
The existence of God before His creation of all physical things means that the spiritual reality, and particularly the existence of God, is independent of the physical, material reality. The God of Scripture is independent of His creation – it depends on Him for its existence, but He does not depend on it. As poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) put it, "the world minus God is zero, but God minus the world is still God undiminished".
- **Incarnation (John 1:1&2, 14)**
The Biblical doctrine of incarnation does not make sense if the spiritual and physical are not distinct in some degree or at least different orders of essence. Christ existed eternally as God and as spirit, yet He became physical.
- **Trinity – unity and diversity in the nature of God**
The mystery of the triune nature of God – one God yet three persons – is difficult to reconcile with a strict monist view of reality.

Problems with Dualism:

- **It denies the goodness of all of God's creation (Genesis 1:31)**
Genesis is clear that the entire physical universe as created by God was entirely good. The first century Gnostics developed Plato's dualistic thinking with influences from Eastern philosophies to lead to a thoroughly dualistic view of mankind. They taught that a heavenly spirit acted independently of God to form the material world, trapping human spirits in material bodies.
- **It leads to a wrong attitude to the body and its functions**
According to Gnostic thinking, the goal of life is to punish the body and deny its desires in the hope of eventually being released from the body. The afterlife is one of spiritual, non-physical existence. Therefore, the body and its desires are sinful. In the 4th and 5th Centuries this thinking led to Manichaeism, which had much in common with the Eastern Taoist philosophy. It conceived of two realms, of light and darkness, in eternal conflict. Human beings have two souls – the rational, which is a fragment of God's light, and the irrational, which is the offspring of demons in the kingdom of darkness – and matter is inherently evil. This kind of thinking led on to the ascetic approach to life evident in some monastic orders, and to the concept of celibacy as the purest level of human life as seen in the Roman Catholic system where priests, monks and nuns are celibate. The view that sex in itself is evil comes from dualistic thinking. Much of the New Testament is actually dedicated to countering the false claims of dualism. In particular, Paul's epistle to the Colossians emphasises that the Son created and sustains all things (Colossians 1:15-19), that the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in physical form in Christ (2:9), and that moral living doesn't come through ascetic denial of our desires but the new life that comes from Christ (2:10-3:4). John also countered Gnosticism in his gospel and in his first epistle.

Biblically speaking, creation sees the human being as one entity composed of body, soul and spirit (see Genesis 2:7 where God forms a body for the man, then breathes into his nostrils the spirit of life [the same word is used for breath and spirit in the Bible] and he becomes a living soul [the Hebrew word

for soul is used in the phrase "living being"). In the Fall, the whole person has been corrupted, and we find the results of sin in our body (susceptibility to aging, disease and death), soul (desires that are uncontrolled and personality flaws) and spirit (disconnection from God and the tendency to sin). All three are in need of redemption and regeneration. In glory we will be perfected in every part – we will have a new body which is incorruptible (I Corinthians 15:42), our soul will be renewed in the likeness of Christ and our spirit will live eternally in connection with God and free from sin. In the meantime we can realise the truth that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19) and can offer our bodies to God as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1 – the body representing our whole being). Paul's choice of word is deliberate to counter Gnostic dualism and because it is through the body that we live out the implications of this living sacrifice as the remainder of Romans 12 makes clear. Interestingly it is through the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) that we are transformed – the body and mind together become instruments through which God's will can be accomplished. There is no false dualism here. The mystery of the nature of man may well be beyond the ability of man to fully understand, as the *New Mysteries* suggest, just as the mystery of the nature of God is beyond us. We cannot fully grasp the reality of the trinity, and so it should not surprise us if we cannot fully grasp the nature of man who is made in the image of the triune God. As Paul says in Romans 11:33-36:

*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable His judgements, and His paths beyond tracing out!
Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been His counsellor?
Who has ever given to God, that God should repay Him?
For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.
To Him be the glory for ever! Amen.*

The origins of illness

CAUSES OF DEATH

The WHO World Health Report for 2004 listed the estimated figures for causes of death worldwide. The percentages of deaths by cause were as follows:

Cardiovascular diseases	29.3%
Ischaemic heart disease	12.6%
Cerebrovascular disease (strokes)	9.7%
Infectious and parasitic diseases	19.1%
HIV / AIDS	4.8%
TB	3.4%
Diarrhoeal diseases	3.1%
Malaria	2.2%
Malignant neoplasms (cancer)	12.5%
Lung cancer	2.2%
Injuries	9.1%
Accidents	6.2%
Self-inflicted intentional injuries (suicide)	1.5%
Violence (murder / manslaughter)	1.0%
War	0.3%
Respiratory diseases	6.5%
COPD	4.8%
Perinatal diseases	4.3%
Digestive diseases	3.5%
Cirrhosis of the liver	1.4%
Neuropsychiatric disorders	1.9%
Diabetes Mellitus	1.7%
Genitourinary diseases	1.5%
Malnutrition / nutritional deficiencies	1.4%
Maternal conditions	0.9%
Congenital abnormalities	0.9%
OTHERS	7.4%

It is worth noting that many of these causes of death include lifestyle choices (e.g. smoking and COPD, ischaemic heart disease and lung cancer) and external factors (e.g. injuries and infections) that are not directly the result of weakness in the human body.

MAJOR CAUSES OF DISEASE

A] NURTURE – environmental factors (factors that influence us after conception)

- Infection – viruses, bacteria, parasites
- Toxins – includes alcohol, cigarette smoking, pollution
- Lifestyle factors – lack of exercise, poor diet
- Trauma (injuries)

B] NATURE – genetic factors (factors we inherit)

- Chromosome disorders
- Single gene disorders
- Multifactorial – involved in most diseases including cancer / heart disease

THE FALL AS THE ORIGIN OF DISEASE

A biblical theology of disease cannot be separated from the theology of sin and the Fall. The Fall, and God's curse that followed it, transformed the world dramatically. Genesis 3 records the account of how the Fall occurred, with Adam and Eve's sin, and the curse of God that followed it. The key changes that must have occurred as a result are:

1. Aging began

The process of aging appears to be genetically programmed. Although environmental factors (e.g. smoking and exposure to the elements) can hasten aging and some people seem to age faster than others, everyone ages eventually, so that even if we do not succumb to any disease or trauma we will not live forever. Biblically it is not clear whether aging began with the Fall or not. Genesis 3:19 speaks of the inevitability of death, but not specifically of aging or an age limit to the life of man. It is possible that the early generations of human beings, who had lifespans of the range 700-1000 years (see Genesis chapter 5), were not subject to aging, but lived until a disease or traumatic event took their lives, or at least that the aging process at that stage was much slower than today. In Genesis 6:3 it seems that God limits the lifespan of human beings to 120 years. It seems likely that this was the introduction by God of the genetic factors that limit the human lifespan through aging, or that God accelerated the aging process greatly at that time. After the Flood the lifespans decreased dramatically each generation until around 120 years became the normal maximum (Genesis 11:10-32). By the time that Psalm 90 was written by Moses the expected lifespan of a man was 70 years, or possibly 80 years for a strong man. For most of human history this would have been a reasonable limit of age, and in fact, in the classical world through the Middle Ages and into the Modern era, the average lifespan of a man was much lower (around 28 years in ancient Rome, 33 years in Medieval Britain, 38 years by the end of the 19th Century). It was only during the 20th Century that lifespan began to rise again due to advances in nutrition, sanitation and medical care, so that today the predicted lifespan in Western countries has reached around 80 years. Interestingly, however, the maximum lifespan seems to be exactly what Genesis said – around 120 years. The oldest person on record according to the Guinness Book of Records was Shigechiyo Izumi of Japan who died in February 1986 aged 120 years and 237 days. Despite all the advances in medical science, the process of aging means that we are programmed to decay and die.

2. Some organisms began to cause disease in others

Before the Fall there cannot have been any pathogenic (disease-causing) organisms. After the Fall some organisms became harmful to human beings, namely parasites, bacteria and viruses.

3. Copying of genetic material became prone to errors

Before the Fall the process of replication of DNA must have been fool proof. It was only after the Fall that this process became prone to errors which introduced mutations. Some of these mutations are capable of causing disease on their own, either if the individual has one bad copy (dominant genetic disorders) or if they have two bad copies (recessive genetic disorders). Other mutations do not cause disease on their own but combine with other genes and environmental factors to contribute to causing disease or to make the individual more prone to disease (these are called multifactorial diseases, meaning that many factors are involved in causing them). As medical research progresses we are discovering genetic elements in an increasing number of diseases. This explains why some people are capable of living for longer than other people who have the same environment – they simply have less damaged genes (it is the reason why some people can smoke all their lives and live to an old age while the majority succumb to heart or lung disease).

4. War and violence began

Before the Fall there was no violence, but in the very first generation after the Fall one brother (Cain) killed another (Abel).

5. Human population growth and competition for resources began

When the human population was very small there was no competition for space on earth and no problems arising from over-crowding. As the population grew, the challenge of feeding and housing larger numbers of people began to create greater pressures on human government. Because of sin the principle of greed existed in the human heart, with the result that some people became rich whilst others were oppressed and remained poor. To our shame we still see this effect in our modern world, with life expectancy varying between social classes and even more dramatically between rich and poor nations (the highest life expectancy in the world is in Andorra – 83.51 years – and the lowest is in Swaziland – 33.22 years). This difference has nothing to do with differences between ethnic groups and everything to do with poor government, lack of sharing between nations and lack of concerted efforts to educate people, reduce disease and improve medical treatment.

So, sin is the root cause of all illness and suffering in the world, whether indirectly through its effect on our genes and on other organisms that are now disease causing, or directly through violence and greed.

IS ILLNESS GOD'S JUDGEMENT FOR PERSONAL SIN?

In some cases people may suffer as a direct result of God's judgement on them for a particular sin, and it is also possible for judgement to be passed on to successive generations of a family because of the sin of one person (Exodus 20:5, 34:7, Numbers 14:18, Deuteronomy 5:9). In Scripture we see specific examples of God judging individuals through illness (e.g. Moses in Exodus 4:24, Miriam in Numbers 12:10, Uzziah in II Chronicles 26:16–21, Jeroboam in II Chronicles 13:20, Gehazi in II Kings 5:25–27, Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:5, 10, Herod in Acts 12:21–23 and Elymas Acts 13:11). In John 5:14 Christ seems to suggest that a man's paralysis resulted from sin. Scripture also contains warnings about the risk of bringing God's judgement in terms of disease or even death if individuals or groups sin (for example I Corinthians 11:30 where Paul warns that some believers are sick and some have even died because of their sin against the body of Christ). So, then, it is possible today that suffering may be the result of God's judgement against sin. However, in practice it is seldom easy to tell whether an individual's physical illness is a direct result of their own sin (although it may be easier to tell with soul or spiritual health problems), and it is dangerous for anyone to proclaim with certainty that this is the case. The case of Job shows us that it is possible for a person to suffer very severely and yet be completely innocent before God. Most cases of physical illness are not directly due to an individual's sin but are the result of bad lifestyle choices, the actions of another person, or just the general reality of living in a fallen world. Even where it is suspected that the illness is a direct judgement from God we have the responsibility to respond in compassion and to seek to bring healing, which will be at all levels of the person's being.

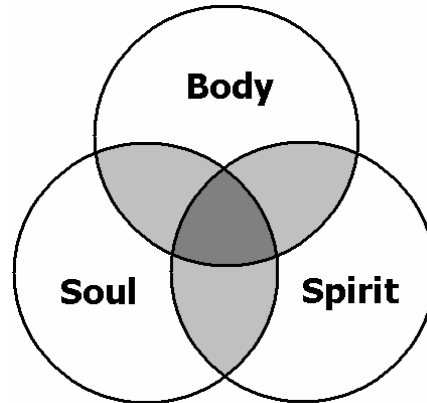
Holistic Health - body, soul and spirit

In the Western world we tend to think of health and healing in terms of physical and mental illness only. The World Health Organisation defines health as: "the state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing; not merely the absence of disease and infirmity". This already expands the idea of health beyond merely the physical to include the soul, although, as might be expected, it does not include the idea of spiritual well-being which must be added to make a complete Christian definition of health. The roots of the English word "health" help us to understand this further. It is derived from the Old English root *hal*, which is also the root of the words "whole" and "holiness".

In the Old Testament the concept of health is tied up in the Hebrew word *shalom*, which means literally "peace". *Shalom* comes to the individual through good relationships, firstly with God and then with others in community and affects the whole person – body, soul and spirit. It includes the ideas of contentment, well-being and pleasure. In Biblical terms, therefore, healing includes the restoration of a good relationship with God and social harmony as well as physical health. This concept of health is also clear in the healing ministry of Christ. He clearly saw people in their whole need, and He was able to restore people to "wholeness" meaning that body, soul and spirit were healed.

It is not pushing the point too far to say that any instance of illness will have physical, psychiatric, social and spiritual dimensions. In each instance the relative importance of these factors will vary – some illnesses will be primarily physical, others primarily spiritual etc. – and it is often difficult to determine which factors are causative and which are the results. The Bible reflects this degree of involvement of different factors, for example in Matthew 15:22 where we read of a girl who was

(literally) 'severely demonised' (*kakōs daimonizetai*). The diagram below attempts to capture this concept graphically.



In the diagram there are some areas that consist of only body, spirit or soul – these represent problems that fall entirely within one of these spheres. The light shaded areas are a combination of two of these aspects of life, and the dark shaded area affects all three. I believe that the majority of illnesses we face end up in the dark shaded area, although they may begin in one of the separate white areas. There is always a tendency for problems to gravitate to the centre to affect the whole person. For example:

- A person develops a physical disease (body affected) that then cuts them off from social support and leads them to feel depressed (body and soul affected) and eventually leads to them feeling far from God (body, soul and spirit affected).
- A person sins and does not repent (spirit affected) with the result that a relationship with the person they sinned against is damaged (spirit and soul affected) and the combination of guilt for the sin and the damaged relationship causes them to feel nauseous (spirit, soul and body affected)
- A person experiences bereavement of a person they loved (soul affected) which leads them to doubt their faith in God (soul and spirit affected) and to be unable to sleep (soul, spirit and body affected)

There are, of course, unlimited examples of how these three inter-play with each other, but these examples should serve to show that the tendency is for a problem in one aspect of our being to affect the other aspects sooner or later.

Practical advice for maintaining good health

How, then, can a Christian maintain good holistic health? One Christian doctor, Dr Deidre Little, has said that: "I think the best biblical definition of health is threefold. Spiritually it is to be holy even as the Lord God is holy. Emotionally, to not let the sun go down on your anger and physically to remember that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and that though we fall, yet we will arise." In this section I will try to give some wise advice for how to maintain good health in the body, soul and spirit.

BODY HEALTH

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body."
(I Corinthians 6:19&20)

- **Sexual health** – this is the immediate context of the verses above. I will deal with this issue at more length in a future study on the topic "God and sexuality". This is another good example of how something physical also has implications for the soul! Our current society has tried to divorce the physical act of sex from its emotional and spiritual significance, but as Christians we know that we cannot separate these three aspects. Sexual health is a vital aspect of holistic health.
- **What you put in** – this includes food, air and drugs. We must be careful about what we eat, and especially that we have a healthy nutritionally balanced diet. The realisation that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit is also one of the key reasons why Christians avoid drunkenness, smoking and use of harmful drugs.
- **How you use it** – of course this is a broad subject, but I want to mention particularly two areas:
 - *Exercise* – our modern sedentary lifestyle is not healthy. Exercise is best combined with social interaction, in which case it helps soul health as well as physical.

- *Sleep* – it seems to me that the majority of young people today have highly unhealthy sleep patterns. We need good quality sleep to function well in every aspect of life. Sleep is a gift from God (Psalm 127:2), and one that we should not mess around so much with. Many people function at less than full power because they are not sleeping enough or at sensible times.

REMEMBER: Physical symptoms (e.g. stomach pains or problems breathing) can signify a problem that lies primarily with the soul (e.g. insecurity) or spirit (e.g. unconfessed sin).

SOUL HEALTH

“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength.”
(Proverbs 17:22, NLT)

- **Sabbath rest** – the principle of Sabbath rest is foundational to the Bible. God instituted this principle in the creation week, and it is woven into the order of creation. We need to take appropriate rests from our normal work. If we fail to take at least one day off in the week then we are violating this principle and dishonouring God. This rest is not merely rest away from work but unto the Lord, and therefore this has spiritual connections too. Workaholism is never commended in Scripture and is not a virtue. We must make sure that we prioritise rest and that those who are employers foster this attitude in their employees.
- **A cheerful heart** – the attitude of our heart is a major factor in determining the health of our soul. Our attitude should be one of thankfulness. Whenever a person develops a critical spirit that prefers to focus on the negative rather than rejoicing in God’s blessings, that spells disaster for their health. Too many Christians have a wrong attitude. God does not want us to focus on the problems of life or the faults of others, but on His goodness and the potential in others. Having a right perspective will transform our soul health.
- **Fellowship** – Meaningful, accountable relationships are also vital to good soul health. It is extremely dangerous for a Christian to remove himself from fellowship with God’s people. We must seek out opportunities to be accountable to others so that they can help to keep us right. We all need the encouragement and the spurring on that others bring us if we are to continue with a healthy soul (see Hebrews 10:24-25). These relationships will also be a major source of security to us and of comfort when we face difficulties.

REMEMBER: Soul symptoms (e.g. depression or anxiety) can signify a problem that lies primarily with the body (e.g. thyroid problems) or spirit (e.g. lack of forgiveness).

SPIRITUAL HEALTH

“if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin”
(I John 1:7)

- **Forgiveness** – the principle of showing forgiveness is vital to maintaining spiritual health. The Scriptures are clear that if we do not forgive others God will not forgive us (e.g. Matthew 6:14-15). We cannot separate forgiveness of others from our relationship with God. Many Christians feel far from God or spiritually cold because they have never fully forgiven a fellow Christian who has sinned against them.
- **Repentance** – unconfessed sin in our lives is a major barrier to intimacy with God. I John 1 is absolutely clear that as Christians we need to continue to confess our sins to God, in the assurance that Christ is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and continue to cleanse us. We must also take confession of sins to others against whom we have sinned seriously if we are to have good spiritual health.
- **Communion with God** – we cannot neglect the importance of prayer, solitude with God and Bible reading for our spiritual health. God is the giver of life, and the sustainer of life. If we are to draw deeply on the richness of life He offers us then we must not neglect our relationship with Him. Our aim should be to live in constant communion with our Father – always in prayer, always listening to Him, constantly meditating on His word. This must also be supplemented with prolonged times of retreat in silence and solitude before Him.

REMEMBER: Spiritual symptoms (e.g. feeling far from God or doubts) can signify a problem that lies primarily with the body (e.g. exhaustion) or soul (e.g. a critical spirit).

Towards a theology of healing

GOD, THE SOURCE OF ALL HEALING

God can bring healing to us through three means, all of which have their origin in Him:

- a) **Natural healing** – the body's own ability to fight disease and heal itself based on good nutrition. This includes cases of spontaneous regression of medically incurable diseases.
- b) **Medical healing** – the skills of medical professionals to use the resources of God's world to bring healing to the body and mind. This comes from God indirectly in that he created mankind with the ability to learn and to use resources in the world to create drugs and instruments for medical use.
- c) **Miraculous healing** – spectacular divine intervention that is beyond the normal rules of nature. This healing is usually complete, instantaneous and permanent (as in the case of Christ's healing miracles). In Scripture miraculous healings always had a theological purpose – to show God's power or to testify to the identity of the agent of healing as the servant and spokesperson of God.

It is important to recognise that all three of these sources of healing are gifts from God, and therefore it is appropriate for Christians to seek medical help with illness as well as praying for God's healing. Yahweh is the one who heals His people (Exodus 15:26), although the means He uses may vary. In the Bible only God, the life-giver, is seen as the source of healing, and in the New Testament Christ is a source of healing, one of the great proofs of His deity. His healing was different from others because He did not ask God to heal through Him or proclaim healing in God's name – He assumed His own authority to heal directly. Other people who are agents of healing heal in God's power or in the name of the exalted Lord Jesus (see Acts 3:1–10, 9:34, 16:16–18). God should be acknowledged and thanked for every instance of healing, whether or not the means was "miraculous". Unfortunately, historically Christians tended to separate their role in spiritual healing from the concept of medical healing. Although the Church was at the forefront of founding hospitals and in more recent years Christians have been very active in the healthcare professions and medical missions, throughout large periods of Church history Christians followed the false dichotomy that stemmed from Greek dualism and therefore neglected the importance of medical treatments. Using medicine does not imply a lack of faith in God – so long as the person is still trusting in Him as the ultimate source of healing.

THREE THEOLOGICAL VIEWS ON HEALING

There are three main theological perspectives:

- (i) **Cessationism** – this view sees healing as confined largely or entirely to God's action in specific periods of salvation history – there are three key 40 year periods in Scripture: Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and the apostles. Gifts of healing (and other miraculous gifts) disappeared from the church after the apostolic age, and later references, to quote BB Warfield (1851-1921), demonstrate "an infusion of heathen modes of thought into the church." Cessationists point to I Corinthians 13:8-10, where they believe "perfection" refers to the completion of the New Testament, as Scriptural support for the concept of certain spiritual gifts disappearing from the Church after the apostolic age.
- (ii) **Triumphalism** – claim that healing is the birthright of every Christian in the basis of Christ's atonement. Those who hold this view argue from passages such as Psalm 103:3, Isaiah 53:4-5, Matthew 8:16-17, I Peter 2:24. In the extreme form of triumphalism, only a lack of personal faith limits God's blessing. This view of healing is often associated with individuals who are recognised as gifted healers or anointed channels of God's healing.
- (iii) **Inaugurated eschatology** – this view seeks to hold the theologies of suffering and healing together through emphasising the "now but not yet" nature of the Kingdom of God. Those who hold this view argue that God's Kingdom broke into our world in the person and ministry of Christ (see Luke 4:18–19, Matthew 8:14–17), but that it is not yet revealed in its fullness. Healing (whether natural, medical or miraculous) is an act of God and a foretaste of the final consummation of the Kingdom when Christ's victory over sin and all of its results is complete with the resurrection of the body (Romans 8:18-25). In this view healing is possible in this age, but is not guaranteed and cannot be claimed by every Christian in every situation. This view fits with Paul's use of the plural, "gifts of healings", in I Corinthians 12:9, 30, which suggests that each occasion of healing is a separate gift of God's grace, and that no individual permanently possesses the power to heal.

Although the cessationist view has some value in describing the pattern of frequency of divine healing throughout redemptive history (it is true that miracles are rare in the Old Testament and tend to cluster around the times of Moses / Joshua and Elijah / Elisha) it has no real basis in Scripture (I Corinthians 13:10 almost certainly refers to the return of Christ not the completion of the Bible). It also has strength in recognising that miraculous healing declined rapidly after the apostolic age had passed (the references in writings from the 2nd and 3rd centuries do not stand up well under examination and are

often clearly exaggerated). It is undoubtedly true that there have been periods of history when God has used miraculous healing with greater frequency as signs of His action, but this does not mean that God cannot or will not heal miraculously today. We must admit that God is capable of healing in His divine sovereignty and that there are most probably examples of miraculous healing in our world today which is instant, complete and lasting just as Christ's healing miracles were. Having said this, we should not be troubled if we do not see a large number of verifiable miraculous healings today. All healing is a gift from God and He should be thanked equally for spontaneous regressions of disease and for healing through medical means. Furthermore, we should be slow to claim miraculous healing where this has not been verified. Doing this only opens us to the criticism of fabricating stories to defend our faith. Those who claim to have witnessed miraculous healing should not be afraid to have this tested and proved using scientific means. The Old Testament requirement for the priests to verify that a person was cured of skin disorders is a precedent for this process of testing (see Leviticus chapter 13). We do not gain anything by claiming miraculous healings that have not been tested, and in fact we risk damaging the reputation of the faith if we are careless in this regard.

On the other hand, triumphalism, does not square with the whole Biblical record on suffering or with our personal experience, in which even faithful, godly believers suffer and die. Even those people healed by the Lord Himself became ill again subsequently and died – not one of them remains alive today. Surely the apostles were people of great faith, yet they too died. The triumphalist tendency to focus on a few individuals as gifted or anointed healers is also worrying, both because of the amount of attention focussed on these individuals and also because of the lack of Biblical warrant for it (see the comment on I Corinthians 12:9 above). It is better to see the prayer for the sick as a role of the elders of the local church of which the ill believer is a member (as per James 5:13-16). For a brief discussion of the Christian view of suffering see the section *When God does not heal – a Christian view of suffering* below.

CHRIST THE HOLISTIC HEALER

When Christ healed individuals the healing was always complete (with one recorded exception in Mark 8:22-26 where a two-stage healing of a blind man has a figurative significance in the disciples' unfolding understanding of the identity and mission of Christ), instantaneous and permanent (people did not relapse in the immediate period after the healing). It is interesting to compare these three qualities with many of the modern day claimed healing miracles, which often seem to be more at a psychological rather than a physical or holistic level. Examples of Christ's holistic healing of individuals are numerous:

- *Leprosy* – it is likely that people described in the Bible as suffering from leprosy rarely is ever had true leprosy (Hansen's disease caused by infection with *Mycobacterium leprae*), and the term could refer to a number of skin diseases. However, these skin conditions brought with them social alienation from the community of God's people and a ritual uncleanness that barred the individual from full worship of God. When Christ healed lepers He restored them not only physically, but also socially and spiritually. In Lk. 17:11-19, ten lepers were *cleansed* (*katharizō*) by Jesus (v14). The emphasis in this word is on the ritual cleansing that allowed them to be accepted again into society, although physical healing must have occurred to allow this to happen. Only the one who was grateful is described as being *cured* (*iaomai*, v15), which obviously has a deeper sense of healing of the soul. This man was also told that his faith had saved him (*sōzō*, v19), which, although it can refer simply to being "made well", in this case almost certainly refers to his spiritual state. In other words, all ten men experienced physical and social healing, but only the one who returned experienced emotional and spiritual healing.
- *Exorcism of demons* – demon possession (in actual fact the Greek phrase would be better translated "demonisation") in the Gospels was responsible for a range of physical (e.g. dumbness in Matthew 9:32, blindness in Matthew 9:32 and epilepsy in Luke 9:37-43) and psychiatric symptoms (see Mark 5:1-20). Essentially, a person who is demonised often has their personality so influenced by a demon that they are no longer in full control of their actions, although there is no reason to believe that this was true in all Biblical cases. It is important to note that the New Testament does distinguish between diseases, including epilepsy, which were not directly caused by demonisation and cases where demonisation expressed itself in the symptoms of a recognisable disease (see Matthew 4:24 and Acts 5:16). It is not correct to say that the people of New Testament times were mistakenly confusing disease with demonisation as the Gospels are clear that there is a distinction and it was Christ Himself who determined those cases where people were demonised, and He could hardly have been mistaken. A prime example of the broad ranging effects of demonisation is seen in the Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8:26-39. He was affected physically, mentally and socially. When Christ exorcised the demons who had possessed this man he was restored in each of these dimensions of life. There is no reason to

assume that people cannot be demonised today, although it is likely that it is less common in the Western world than during Christ's earthly ministry (cases may be more common in Eastern countries where people are arguably more susceptible to influence from demons), but even where it does exist the Holy Spirit has the power to overcome this possession and cast the demon(s) out, and He is capable of working through God's people to accomplish this.

- The woman with a haemorrhage (Mark 5:25-34) – Christ healed this woman's physical problem, with the result that she was also restored socially (the haemorrhage made her ritually unclean), but by speaking directly to her He also restored her emotionally (her sense of self-worth and value was renewed).
- The paralysed man brought by his friends (Mark 2:1-12) – Christ saw that this man's greatest need was not his physical disability but his spiritual need of forgiveness for sins. In this encounter Christ first forgave sins and then, to prove visibly that His power to forgive sins was real, healed the man physically.

THE AIM OF CHRISTIAN HEALING – NOT ALWAYS PROLONGING LIFE

One problem with the recent increase in life expectancy is that many people are living longer but with a lower quality of life. Generally speaking many of the added years of life are years of chronic ill health. It seems that many health care providers focus on keeping patients alive rather than ensuring that their health is maximised in the broadest sense of the word. From a Christian perspective, death holds no fear, and therefore the ultimate aim is not prolonged life but fulfilled life. The responsibility of the Christian doctor is not merely to keep her patients alive as long as possible, but also to help them prepare for a good death. It is not helpful when health care professionals act as if death is not inevitable or help to foster the illusion that modern medicine can, or at least will eventually, bring healing from every disease. The sure hope of the resurrection of the body and confidence in the triumph of Christ over the "last enemy", death, transforms the Christians approach to the end of life. We can face it with confidence if our hope is in Christ alone.

A WORD TO CHRISTIAN DOCTORS

It is a huge privilege to be called by God to work as a Christian doctor, following in the footsteps of Luke, the "beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14, KJV). Being a Christian doctor means that you will have a different approach to healing than our non-Christian colleagues, primarily because you have a different understanding of what health is. There are three main aspects of medical practice that will be enhanced by your Christian faith:

1. Christian doctors will seek to minister to their patients holistically

The Christian doctor is armed with medicine **and** with prayer. She will pray for her patients at work and out of work. She will seek opportunities to share biblical wisdom with her patients, and, where requested (or if offered, where accepted) she will even pray aloud with her patients. She will include questions about spiritual health in her history taking (e.g. "Do you have a faith that helps you at a time like this?") and will be honest with her patients about her own perspective without forcing anything on anyone else. Her aims in treating the patient will be total health and quality of life, not merely prolongation of physical life.

2. Christian doctors will follow Biblical ethics

The Christian doctor will be motivated by a firm belief in the sanctity of human life, and will avoid compromising his ethical beliefs as well as influencing the medical establishment towards Biblical ethics.

3. Christian doctors will approach their patients with compassion

In this Christian doctors will follow the example of Christ, the Great Physician. This should be the single greatest thing that sets the Christian doctor apart from her peers. Where they become critical of working conditions she will give thanks to God for the privilege of caring. Where they fail to respect other members of the multi-disciplinary team she will be humble and see herself as a servant. Where they draw limits on the emotional investment they make, she will love her patients with the love God has poured into her heart.

When God does not heal - a Christian View of Suffering

Although the focus of this study is on health rather than suffering, it is worth taking a moment to comment on a Christian perspective on suffering. The reality is that God, in His wisdom, does not always heal His people. This should not surprise us as there are many Biblical examples of people of faith who were not healed from illness. In the epistles, for example, we do not read of any examples of miraculous healings, but we do read of four believers and servants of God who were not healed in

the usual sense of the immediate removal of the illness (Paul in II Corinthians 12:7-9, Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25-27, Timothy in I Timothy 5:23 and Trophimus in II Timothy 4:20). It is a mistake to take passages like Psalm 103:3 and Isaiah 53:4-5 to refer only to the present age. Clearly, healing (or restoration to wholeness) can never be complete in this present age. It is when Christ returns and our bodies are redeemed (Romans 8:23) that healing will be complete. The resurrection body will be incorruptible (I Corinthians 15:52-53). In the New creation there will be "no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4) and "no longer will there be any curse" (Revelation 22:3). God's project of redemption – restoring fallen man – will be complete, and only on the basis of the Lamb's atoning sacrifice. Ultimately, as Isaiah 53:3-5 shows, it is through the cross that all healing is possible. The Biblical theology of suffering finds its most profound depth in that moment when God in Christ entered into our suffering and bore the full consequences of our sin in His body on the tree (I Peter 2:24). Through that sacrificial offering of Himself the entire Fallen universe can be reconciled to God (II Corinthians 5:19).

How, then, can Christians approach suffering as we patiently wait for the return of Christ? Three passages will be helpful for us in thinking this through:

1. John chapter 9 – Suffering is an opportunity for God to be glorified

The belief that all illness was the result of a specific sin committed either by the individual or by his or her parents or grandparents had become common amongst Jewish thinkers by the time of Christ, but Jesus spoke out against this view. In John 9 He healed a man born blind. The disciples had assumed (v2) that this disability was the result of either the man's sin or the sins of his parents, but Christ clearly said that neither was the cause (v3). Christ's response is interesting, because He brought a new perspective on suffering – that all instances of suffering are opportunities for God's work to be displayed in the life of the person suffering. This is an important Biblical principle. In suffering God can be glorified either through healing the individual or through providing grace for them to stand up under the suffering.

2. Romans 5:3-5 – We can rejoice in suffering because we grow through it

Paul knew a great deal about suffering, yet he confidently claimed that we can rejoice in suffering. This does not mean that suffering will be enjoyable – Paul was not a masochist! What Paul is saying is that because God has justified us and we stand in grace (v1) we can have a new perspective on life's suffering. We know that suffering leads to perseverance, and that produces Christ-like character in us. That character is a foretaste of how we will be when we are glorified at His return. This reminds us of our hope – the hope of the glory of God (meaning the future when we will be made perfect, our healing complete)! Not only do we have that future hope, but right now we have the power of God's Holy Spirit at work in us so that we can face suffering confident in God's perfect love for us (v5). Our hope does not disappoint! This is why we can actually learn to have joy (deep contentment and satisfaction) even through sufferings. It is often through times of suffering that we learn most about our relationship with God and that we grow most into Christ-likeness.

3. II Corinthians 12:7-10 – God's grace is sufficient and His strength is made perfect in our weakness

The apostle Paul had a problem that caused him to suffer. We don't know the exact nature of his problem or whether his suffering was primarily in body, soul or spirit, but we do know that he asked God three times (v8 – in fact the word is "pleaded" – a strong or desperate request) to remove this source of suffering (which he calls a "thorn in the flesh"). God did not heal him, and Paul tells us that this was to keep him dependent on God rather than becoming proud in himself (v7). God's reply to Paul is a great source of comfort for us. God will not leave us in any suffering without sufficient grace for us to bear it. When we are weak it is an opportunity for God's power to be seen. If I can continue to serve Him despite my weaknesses then it will be all the more clear to everyone that the glory belongs to Him. If you are suffering, depend on God's grace.

These examples show that at times God chooses not to heal so that His strength can be made perfect in our weakness, to shape our character or to draw us into deeper relationship with Him. When we suffer it is appropriate that, like Paul, we should ask God to heal us, but we must also accept that this will not always be His will for us. In our suffering we must:

- a) **Remain confident of God's love for us and our future hope of sharing in His glory**
- b) **Depend on God's grace and the power of the Spirit in us**
- c) **Persevere in serving God, allowing His strength to be seen in us**

For further study on the Christian view of suffering I recommend a study of I Peter (especially chapters 3 & 4), which was written to suffering Christians to encourage them to stand firm in the true faith.

Peter's summary words in chapter 5 verses 8-10 are an appropriate ending to this brief consideration of a Christian perspective on suffering. Although these Christians were suffering more in terms of persecution than illness, Peter's challenge to resist Satan, to hold on to our faith, to depend on God's grace and power, and to remember our hope of future glory is relevant in suffering of any kind: *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

A practical pastoral approach to the ill

In pastoral practice it is often unhelpful to try to determine whether the exact cause of the problem lies in the body, soul or spirit, and it is far more important to know how to address each of these dimensions. Even where the problem appears on first impressions to be entirely physical the pastoral carer will consider the soul and spirit, and where the problem appears initially to be purely spiritual the effects in the soul and body will also be considered. In approaching a person with illness the skilled elder or pastoral carer will employ all of the following in every case:

- **Prayer for and with the person** – it is always wise to pray for God's healing. It is important to lead the person in prayer, especially if they feel too weak to pray themselves. This prayer should be in faith that God is powerful to heal but that His will in the situation is best.
- **Rebuking of Satan and evil spirits** who will undoubtedly seek to use this illness to weaken or destroy the faith of the suffering one or to "demonise" an unbeliever to keep them from believing. It is important not to give the person who is suffering the idea that once the influence of evil spirits has been dealt with the problem will always go away immediately.
- **Spiritual counselling** – regarding unconfessed sin and the person's spiritual condition before God. The aim of this counselling should be repentance and deeper trust in God, and it is important to encourage dependence on Him rather than on the counsellor. It should always focus on bringing the authority of God's word to play in the person's life.
- **Relational counselling** – addressing problems in relationships with loved ones.
- **Social support** – offering support from the church in terms of visitation, a listening ear and practical help such as food if the person is ill and unable to cook.
- **Advising appropriate professional care** – from counsellors with experience in specific issues affecting the individual and medical professionals. Remember that it is not in any sense a failure of faith in God to recognise the part that healthcare professionals will play in helping the person – it is recognising that God heals in different ways.

Often as the elder or pastoral carer spends time with the person and in prayer the root cause of the problem will become more clear and this can be tackled directly, but in practice it is important to consider all aspects above and to address each area with sensitivity and compassion.

In James 5:13-16 those who are sick are told to call the elders to come and pray with them. This passage focuses particularly on people who are ill because of a spiritual problem of sin (again emphasising the interaction of body, soul and spirit in illness) but the advice contained in it for the ill person is presumably relevant for all sick believers. The phrase translated "anoint him with oil" (*aleiphō*) means literally "massage him with oil" rather than specifically anointing (the standard Greek word for anointing is *chriō*), and carries the meaning of medical application of the oil. In other words, the person should seek both spiritual and medical help. This principle is also seen elsewhere in Scripture (e.g. the fig poultice for Hezekiah's boil in Isaiah 38:21 and Paul's advice to Timothy to take wine for his stomach's sake in I Timothy 5:23). This remains an important guideline for believers who are ill today. It would be foolish for a believer to depend wholly on medical input for healing without seeking spiritual help, but equally foolish for them to refuse to seek medical help because they are "depending on God" to heal them.

A comment on "alternative medicine"

Before moving on from this discussion of a theology of health and healing I must make one brief comment on "alternative" forms of healing. This cannot be discussed at length here, but it will suffice

to say that Christians must be careful to examine the roots of any form of therapy they consider. Many alternative therapies have their roots in traditional folk religion, Eastern philosophies or New Age thinking, all of which are hostile to God. In Scripture God is the source of true healing, as we have already seen, but evil spirits can counterfeit some miracles through human agents (e.g. Exodus 7:11, Matthew 7:22). The difference is that even if an evil spirit brings physical healing it will further ensnare the person at a spiritual level. Some alternative therapies have been found to have genuine physical benefits (a good example is acupuncture, which stimulates the formation of natural endorphins) but others have no physical benefit and derive any benefit from psychological factors (e.g. homeopathy). The great danger here is that these alternative therapies become the object of the person's faith rather than the true and living God. This can open the individual to spiritual influences that will lead to greater spiritual bondage. If a believer is in doubt about a particular therapy then it should be avoided. God's people are to have absolutely nothing to do with any form of sorcery or occult practices (see Deuteronomy 18:9-11). Scripturally we see examples of this, such as the magicians who became Christians in Ephesus burning their scrolls of sorcery. A bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit (Matthew 7:18) – no matter how attractive or beneficial its fruit initially appears to be, it will eventually corrupt those who eat it!

A present day plague - HIV / AIDS

One of the greatest and most tragic health problems facing the world today is the global HIV / AIDS pandemic. According to the World Health Organisation (see the Appendix for further statistics):

- An estimated 38.6 million people are living with HIV worldwide – 63% in Sub-Saharan Africa
- 4.1 million people were newly infected in 2005 – 65% in Sub-Saharan Africa
- 2.8 million people died of AIDS in 2005 – 71% in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Every 3 seconds a child dies of AIDS or extreme poverty
- Over two times as many women as men are affected in Sub-Saharan Africa

Unfortunately Christians were relatively slow to respond to the global HIV crisis, partly because of lack of awareness (Africa seems so far from our comfortable Western world) and partly because some Christians saw it as a judgement from God on homosexuals (it has been linked by some to Romans 1:27, which speaks of the penalty for perversion received in themselves). HIV / AIDS is a consequence of sin just as all illness and suffering is, and it is true that it can largely be avoided if human beings make good lifestyle choices in terms of sexual behaviour, but to describe it as a judgement from God in the absence of clear confirmation from Scripture is dangerous, and to use this claim as an excuse not to act is completely contrary to the Biblical imperative for us to act as Christ's witnesses. Christ showed compassion and extended God's mercy to all who were suffering, and especially to those who were outcast and oppressed. Although we cannot accept homosexual behaviour we must not shy from showing compassion to homosexuals who are suffering. Not only this, but we must recognise that many have contracted HIV through heterosexual contact, and that many of these are innocent women whose husbands were promiscuous, or from their mother (during birth or from breast milk) or from contaminated blood products.

Thankfully today Christians are engaging with the AIDS crisis, and in some cases are taking the lead in combating this disease. It is essential that we who are blessed so richly in the West play our part as God calls us to. We cannot ignore what is happening in Africa where whole generations of young people are being decimated by a disease that is 100% preventable. Those countries that are poorest in the world are disproportionately affected, making it even harder for them to rise from poverty. How can we respond? There are several ways:

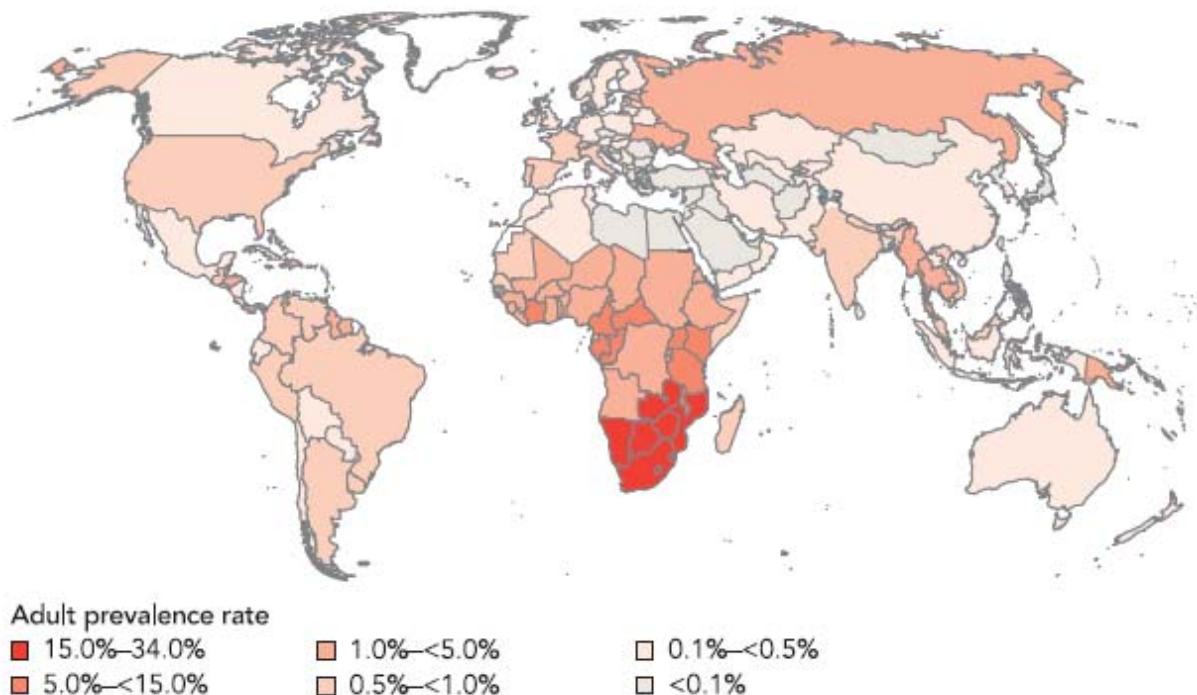
- (i) Take a stand against AIDS – there are many good organisations through which we can do this and make our voice heard to influence government to do more
- (ii) Pray for Africa and for those who are on the ground
- (iii) Donate money towards combating the crisis (one statistic shows that we spend as much on ice cream in Western Europe alone as is spent globally on combating AIDS)
- (iv) Consider going to Africa to be part of the fight on the ground

Appendix - The global picture of HIV / AIDS

Global HIV/AIDS Statistics (taken from WHO report available at www.who.int)

Region	Adults (15+) and children living with HIV	Adults (15+) and children newly infected with HIV	Adult (15-59) prevalence (%)	Adult (15+) and child deaths due to AIDS
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>				
2005	24.5 million	2.7 million	6.1	2.0 million
2003	23.5 million	2.6 million	6.2	1.9 million
<i>North Africa and Middle East</i>				
2005	440 000	64 000	0.2	37 000
2003	380 000	54 000	0.2	34 000
<i>Asia</i>				
2005	8.3 million	930 000	0.4	600 000
2003	7.6 million	860 000	0.4	500 000
<i>Oceania</i>				
2005	78 000	7200	0.3	3400
2003	66 000	9000	0.3	2300
<i>Latin America</i>				
2005	1.6 million	140 000	0.5	59 000
2003	1.4 million	130 000	0.5	51 000
<i>Caribbean</i>				
2005	330 000	37 000	1.6	27 000
2003	310 000	34 000	1.5	28 000
<i>Eastern Europe and Central Asia</i>				
2005	1.5 million	220 000	0.8	53 000
2003	1.1 million	160 000	0.6	28 000
<i>North America, Western and Central Europe</i>				
2005	2.0 million	65 000	0.5	30 000
2003	1.8 million	65 000	0.5	30 000
TOTAL				
2005	38.6 million	4.1 million	1.0	2.8 million
2003	36.2 million	3.9 million	1.0	2.6 million

World map showing Adult prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS



Map of Africa / Middle East showing Adult prevalence rates of HIV/AIDS

