

How to pray in times of sickness, pain and suffering

Practical guidelines

1. Sickness does not necessarily have any relation to sin or demonic attacks. God in His sovereignty often uses sickness to achieve His own purposes in people's lives. (*John 9*) Whenever sickness is present, it is always wise to make sure what the cause of the sickness is. Sometimes it is clearly the result of sin or it can even be caused by demonic attacks, but at times it can be that God uses it to purify us or to get our attention in order to teach us some spiritual truth. There is a huge difference between purifying and punishment. When God uses sickness to purify us, it is to prepare us spiritually so that we can be more useful in His service. Several of the well-known spiritual writers, preachers and church leaders in history struggled with acute and chronic illnesses. In spite of, and often because of those sicknesses, God could use them powerfully.
2. It is important that we should guard our hearts in times of sickness. Do not allow rebellion against God in your heart. There is a difference between rebellion and asking God why He allowed the sickness or what the cause of the sickness is. God does not mind when we ask questions. Ask God to explain to you why He allows it, but remember that God is not obliged to give you an answer and will not always give an answer. God the Father works in different ways with different people. Read *Isa.28:27: Caraway is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cumin; caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cumin with a stick.*
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any possible sin in your life. Confess your sin(s) before God and accept His forgiveness. If the Lord leads you, you can pray with another believer about this and bring it into the open. It often happens that healing comes when people confess their sins. James 5:16 links confession of sin and healing. *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.* When you pray for someone else for healing, ask the Holy Spirit to show that person any possible sin in his/her life that has not been confessed and that he/she will be willing to confess it and turn away from it.
4. Sickness that comes from the devil should be resisted in the Name of Jesus. The problem is to know when it is an attack from the evil one. Ask the Lord for a spirit of discernment, He is faithful, He will show you what the situation is. An example of such a prayer is: *Satan, In the Name of Jesus, I refuse to accept any sickness that comes from you. I resist any form of pain or sickness you bring against me. In the Name of Jesus I resist you and all your attacks and command you to leave me alone.* Satan can also make a person sick when there is occult bondage present in his/her life, such as when black magic was practised or when curses were spoken over him/her. In such cases prayer is necessary to break the effect of these curses or black magic. We should bind, resist and break the devil's works in the Name of Jesus.

5. People often think that when they go to the doctor it is not God who heals, but God is involved in the development of medical science and He can also use medicine and doctors to heal people. He uses people to bless other people.
6. It sometimes happens that people do not want to be healed because they will no longer get attention and sympathy or will have to go back to work and take up their responsibilities when they are healed. Pray for a willingness to receive healing.
7. When you are praying for a person's healing you should ask for wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A person may have heart problems and we know that God can heal the person, but it may be that the person is overweight and does not eat correctly. In that case it would be better to pray for self-control and discipline to eat less and lose weight.
8. As head and priest of his house, the father should pray for his family when there is sickness in the house. But the whole family should also pray together for a sick family member.
9. Research shows that 50-80% of all people visiting the consulting rooms of doctors suffer from sicknesses resulting from psychological and spiritual problems. Often it is bitterness, hate, unforgiveness, tension, etc. caused by pain and hurt from the past that cause physical sickness. To receive healing, these things have to be confessed, dealt with and worked through.
10. The Lord gave some people the gift of healing, but that does not mean that only those people can and may pray for the sick. Mark 16:17-18 says: *And these signs will accompany those who believe; ... they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.* James 5:13-16 is a guideline: *Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.*
11. In Ex.15:26 the Lord called Himself *Yahweh-Ropheka*, which means: *The Lord who heals*. This is God's Name, this is who He is, and this is what He can do and wants to do for us. Pray to God who calls Himself *Yahweh-Ropheka* when you pray for the sick.
12. There are different 'methods' God can use to heal people:
 - God heals by the laying on of hands.
 - God heals by anointing with oil and prayers of faith.
 - God sometimes heals people by means of Holy Communion.
 - God heals people in answer to intercessory prayer for them.
 - God can use doctors and medicine to heal people.
 - God also heals when the individual prays for his/her own healing.
13. Live a life of holiness before God, which is more important than being healthy. Guard your tongue. Live in obedience and consecration to God. This applies to all people. Accept His love for you in spite of your sickness and the questions you may have. React to His love by loving Him.

Portions of Scripture for prayer

He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you." (Ex.15:26)

Worship the LORD your God and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you. (Ex.23:25)

The Lord who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases. (Ps.103:3)

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. (Ps.147:3)

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. (Prov.3:7-8)

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. (Isa.53:4-5)

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. (Matt.4:23)

A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. (Matt.8:2-3)

When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases." (Matt.8:16-17)

People brought all their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed. (Matt.14:36)

The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour. (Matt.15:25-28)

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. (Mark 5:25, 27)

And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name ...they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well. (Mark 16:17-18)

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed. (Luk.4:18)

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor.12:9-10)

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. (Heb.4:15)

Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:13-16)