

**BIBLICAL  
PRESCRIPTIONS**  
for LIFE™

Small Group Study Guide

Biblical Prescriptions for Life™

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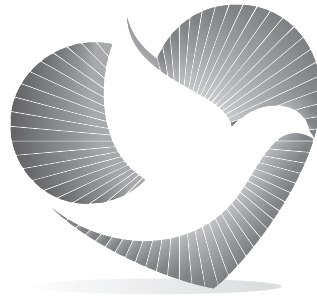
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**THIS STUDY IS DEDICATED** to an unforgettable young lady who prayed without words we could understand, but who demonstrated an authentic life with God that spoke volumes. Kala loved to talk to God and she wanted people to pray with her and for her.

Kala is still teaching us that God uses everything for our good and that when we worship, we see God. And that as we behold God, we are healed.

**Kala Akins**  
**February 15, 1990 – December 17, 2015**



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# PROLOGUE

This study may launch you on one of the most significant journeys you've ever made. It's the path out of the ordinary, go-with-the-flow, hurried and harried quagmire of living, to a growing, thriving, higher quality of life. If you're ready for a change then you're ready for this study. Ideally, you've found a small group of other people who are just as eager to start this journey with you.

This study was written to improve health and serve as another approach to spread the gospel. Christ met the needs of others and introduced them to the Father for ultimate healing. The study is intended to help your physician in your care. Please make your doctor aware of the changes you are making. This might enable your physician to change your medication regimen. The physicians I work with welcome new ways to help their patients. In the office, often we just do not have the time to educate and develop practical steps to combat the complexities of chronic disease. The study will also help to prevent the health problems that are now so prevalent in our society. The practical steps you will learn and incorporate will treat the entire body in the context of our integrated, amazing design. This is termed wholism.

If you are leading, review the leader guide material at [biblicalprescriptionsforlife.com/leader](http://biblicalprescriptionsforlife.com/leader) for suggestions to help your study. Be flexible. Some may want to move slower and spread the study over more time. Some may choose to spend more or less time on the study each day. This is up to you. The study was designed with a format and length similar to other Bible studies. It is perfectly acceptable to have fun during our journey together.

Here are some very important things to consider—so important that we've put them here before you even get started.

- 1. This course is simple, success-oriented, and sustainable.** The material is clear. The action steps are simple, success-oriented, scalable, and sustainable. You start where you are and end up where you want to be—living a healing lifestyle. We try to make changes one step at a time.
- 2. The wellness plan in this study is not intended to replace the counsel of your primary care physician.** We encourage you to consult with a medical professional familiar with you before you begin any of the changes suggested in this course.
- 3. You'll get more from this study if you do the work in the context of a community with regular time scheduled for face-to-face, life-on-life connection.** We were created for relationship and, as we'll learn later, relationship is a central component to whole-life wellness.
- 4. You will get more from this study if you actually follow the plan.** Trust us, it's not overwhelming. In fact, more than 9 out of every 10 people who have completed this course have told us that they cannot imagine living any other way. They've discovered a wellness lifestyle they can actually live with!
- 5. You will not be judged.** Success is taking the journey from wherever you start. We will stay positive as we move forward.

6. **Life is about direction, not perfection.** None of us will achieve perfection in this life. Striving for it creates its own set of pathologies—relationally and physiologically. Don't beat yourself up or set an unachievable goal. Instead, start *moving toward* whole-life wellness.
7. **You will experience lifelong transformation.** Whether you can barely walk across the room today or are training for your first 10k, you'll find clear, simple, and sustainable changes you can make right away to transform your wellness level; probably even transform your life.

I've written *Biblical Prescriptions for Life* using the Bible as the source of truth. To get the most from this study, we must agree on two very important things before we go any farther:

1. **If we're serious about learning from God and making sustainable change in our lives, we need to dig deep into what He's told us.** I want you to start reading with a purpose. One of the best ways for doing this is to mark key words from the Bible passages we'll examine and record everything you learn from them as you read. I want you to search through the Bible like you're looking for the clues for the whole-life healing God longs for us to discover. You will discover Biblical Prescriptions that will transform your health.
2. **I want you to realize—to believe—that you're hearing from a real person when you listen to God through His Word.** God is actually Three in One: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit opens our *understanding* to the Word of God. The Father *redeems* us through the perfect, *sacrificial* work of His Son Jesus. God is the Divine Trinity and He desires to enjoy a relationship with each and every one of us.

Before you begin your time studying *Biblical Prescriptions for Life* each day, ask God to lead you into all truth. You might pray like this: "*Father—thank you for wanting to speak to me today. I want to learn what you say about my health and relationship with you. Thank you Jesus, for making our relationship possible. And thank you, Holy Spirit for promising to lead me into all truth. Amen.*"

In writing this study, I have leaned on the experience I have gained over the years practicing medicine. Many other physicians, teachers, patients and friends have contributed to this study. Their input has been invaluable. I have tried to place a daunting amount of material into a framework that is practical based on experiences of others and myself. This has been challenging, as we want a program that is not too complicated, is doable, economical, and just makes sense. This study is about turning to God for your healthcare concerns. We pray that God uses us to help others in a practical way. Change must happen for the right reasons.

Are you ready? You're probably more ready than you realize! Thousands of others have begun to experience a new path to lifelong, whole-life wellness that's definitely more doable than you've ever expected. Let's start the journey, moving one step at a time.

—James Marcum, MD





Datum:  
Vrijeme:  
13:30  
13:45  
14:00

Pacijent's name

PHYSICIAN'S NAME



# WEEK 1

“The Doctor Will Be Right with You.”

Michelle was 40 years old when she walked into my cardiology exam room. She had invested 20 years of her life as a legal assistant at a prestigious downtown law practice. Unfortunately, things were not going well for her.

At the law firm, she wore high heels everyday—part of the corporate dress code. After two decades of this, she started having foot pain. When she couldn't bear it any longer, she made an appointment with a podiatrist. He found a problem in her calcaneus (heel bone) that required surgery.

After the operation, Michelle had to wear a boot while her foot healed. Because of this, she stopped exercising and started gaining weight. Months went by. She visited her primary care physician concerned about her constant thirst and increasingly frequent trips to the bathroom. You guessed it: her doctor diagnosed type 2 diabetes and put her on the drug Metformin.

Metformin made her hungry. So Michelle ate lots of salty foods. Before long her blood pressure soared. Her doctor sent her to a blood pressure specialist who immediately put her on Norvasc.

Norvasc caused her to retain water and her legs swelled so her doctors prescribed a fluid pill. This drug pulled potassium and magnesium out of her body so they added supplements to keep her electrolytes replenished.

As you can imagine, Michelle was getting discouraged and wasn't sleeping well at night. She started experiencing acid reflux and her doctors suggested an acid-blocking medicine. When she still didn't sleep well, they gave her a sleeping pill.

In spite of all this, Michelle still had pain in her foot.

By this time, because she was heavier, less agile, and dealing with chronic pain, she no longer fit the “standard” at work. She wasn't the ideal they wanted. So after 20 years with the legal firm, they let her go. As you and I can relate, this was quite a blow to her emotionally. So her doctor referred her to a psychiatrist who started her on an anti-depressant.

Since her foot still wasn't healing correctly, her doctors sent Michelle—remember, she's only 40 years young—to a pain clinic where she was introduced to a narcotic called Lortab. Unfortunately, the Lortab caused her bowels to slow down and Michelle felt bloated. Then her bowels backed up and she contracted an infection of the intestines called diverticulitis and was given an antibiotic. The antibiotic changed the bacteria in the bowel. Another infection, C-difficile-colitis developed. Next her doctors started her on another antibiotic called Flagyl.

Michelle was seeing an infectious disease specialist, a podiatrist, a psychiatrist, an internist, and a blood pressure specialist. She came to my cardiology practice because she now was experiencing chest pain. All the doctors were trying to help Michelle, but one stressor led to another.

*Whew!*

I told Michelle, if we can understand the underlying cause of a problem, we could better find successful treatments. Sometimes in life, there's stress we can control. Sometimes there's stress we can't control. And oftentimes, there's stress we don't even know about. But no matter the cause, the chemistry of stress can snowball. And it may lead to more symptoms! Just ask Michelle (who is now doing much better). Michelle asked me to tell her story. To treat Michelle, I needed to know more than the symptoms. I needed to understand the cause and the stressors involved.

I'll bring us back to Michelle a little later.

## VIDEO GUIDE 1

### How's Life Working for You?

VIDEO (20 minutes)

**Major Bible verses:**

- Psalm 46:10
- Matthew 11:28

Who is Michelle? What stands out in your mind about her? Is there anything in her life to which you can relate?

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Symptoms \_\_\_\_\_

Lifestyle \_\_\_\_\_

Relationships \_\_\_\_\_

How do you define stress?

What is Dr. Marcum's definition of stress?

Identify at least three stressors in your life.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Are you currently having symptoms?

The human brain is an amazing, masterfully designed organ with three main functional areas. What are the three functional layers?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What are the functions of the layers?

Area 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Area 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Area 3: \_\_\_\_\_

How do the different layers affect your life?

\_\_\_\_\_

Under stress, the brain seeks functions to remain safe. When under stress the brain \_\_\_\_\_. From the ideas you heard in the video, what are some ways you can make purposeful changes when under stress? To move functions to the third layer of the brain is termed \_\_\_\_\_.

Our *Biblical Prescriptions for Life* for Week 1

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Group Discussion (20 Minutes)**

While watching the video, what most impacted you? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_

Like Michelle, are you ready to get real? If so, you and your group might find this is the perfect time to share your personal answers to the big question—“*How are you doing?*” Along with the members of your group, each of you finish this sentence—“*I want to change*\_\_\_\_\_”

## LIVING IN COMMUNITY

We were created to live in real, meaningful relationships: bearing one another's burdens, and sharing joys, and sorrows. When we live to give, we receive more than we give.

Take a moment right after today's meeting and connect with at least one other person—or if your group is less than 7 people, try to connect with each person and exchange mobile numbers or email addresses. Then call each other during the week to encourage one another in practicing what you're learning *together*, in community.

Name	The Best Way I Can Care for Them	Mobile Number

## INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

As we listened to each other, what was your top-level take-away thought from this week's time together? (This is just for you. Write it here.) \_\_\_\_\_

## BEING MISSIONAL

Is there someone you know outside of this group who might be encouraged and excited to learn what God can do through small, simple, sustainable changes? It's not too late to invite them to join your group for Session 2 next week. Write their name here and plan how you'll contact them.

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## COMMITMENT

This week, I am going to DO at least one of the following simple Biblical Prescriptions for Life:

I commit to	Biblical Prescriptions for Life	Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Read aloud 5x each day. Practice, memorize & recite:							
	<b>Matthew 11:28</b> "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."							
	<b>Psalms 46:10</b> "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth!"							

*If you missed a session or want to review one, go to [biblicalprescriptionsforlife.com](http://biblicalprescriptionsforlife.com) to stream Dr. Marcum's audio and video*



# WEEK 1

## Even if Today is the Worst Day, it's The First Day of the Rest of Your Life

It was the most sobering day of my life. It made me call my education, my training—even my *life calling*—into question.

You could say healthcare is in my DNA. My father was an anesthetist. A gentle, generous and wise man, he demonstrated a life of commitment to helping others. He showed me the most rewarding path was the journey of lifelong learning and serving. He's my hero to this day.

I followed my father into the medical field, earning my medical degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio and completing my internship and residency in internal medicine at the Medical Center of Delaware. I fulfilled my fellowship in cardiovascular disease at the University of Kentucky at Lexington and then committed my education and resources to becoming the best cardiologist I could be.

I was now in my second year of residency as a member of a prestigious internal medicine residency program in Wilmington, Delaware. It was the fall of 1992 and I was on the edge of a case that would shape the rest of my life.

"Tom" was a 32-years-young man who came to the hospital with a malignancy. The medical team in charge of his care thought that a bone marrow transplant was the way to go. So we began treating him with a powerful chemotherapy to kill the malignant cells. As is usually the case with such procedures, this treatment also killed many of his good cells as well.

I remember observing his white and red blood cell count drop as his bone marrow succumbed to the treatment. We had to give frequent transfusions and then give him various antibiotics at the slightest sign of infection. Tom suffered greatly under this treatment, both physically and emotionally. Tom was a strong fire fighter. He was in a new and foreign world. The medications made him ill; he was nauseated most of the time. He lost his appetite and had to receive nutrition through the veins. He lost his hair. His once strong body became weak and frail. My patient was courageous even though he was isolated in a sterile room and could see his family for only limited periods of time.

Soon, it was time for the bone marrow transplant. Hopes ran high that the malignancy was gone. Yes, he was gaining strength, but the strain on his system, all the stress, had left him looking much older than thirty-two. While I was amazed at the science and technology surrounding the case, deep down I felt something was missing. Our hopes, the patient's hopes and his family's hopes were all tied into what modern medicine could do—and I was part of that.

Not long after the marrow transplant, my patient Tom became desperately ill. A sudden infection gripped his body in a terrible embrace. Despite the use of ventilators, dialysis, and intravenous medications, he died. As he was nearing the end, I was in his room, caring for him. I remember him looking at me with unspoken questions in his eyes, but he passed away before I could provide the answers. This bothered me a great deal. Everything I knew—everything that modern medicine had to offer—was not enough to save him.

That's when I turned to God with that same, questioning look in my eyes. There had to be more—more information, more insights and more truth than what I'd been taught. Right then and there, I prayed for God to open my eyes, help me find truth and give me the courage to speak out when others were silent.

And so began, a slow journey that continues to this day. I started looking beyond my medical textbooks for answers. Ultimately, I began searching for *healing* truth where most people search for *spiritual* truth—in the pages of God's Holy Word. What I found was astonishing!

In spite of utilizing the world's best medical training, drug therapy and technology, I learned there was more to healing.

As you read, I hope you'll find the answers you need. As you do the lessons, watch the videos and interact with your group members, I hope you'll also discover that there is something more than what you've been taught. That discovery just might change your life forever.



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# DAY 1

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## What You Don't Know May Be Killing You

It was very early in my life as a physician that I faced a sobering truth—the best that western medicine had to offer was often not addressing the larger issues. I was treating symptoms, not causes. I knew there must be something more.

Remember the story of Michelle? She was an intelligent 40-year-old in the corporate world who described herself as “falling apart physically, emotionally, relationally” when she first walked into the exam room.

In clinician's terms, she “presented” with chest pain. That means when she arrived to our medical office, the symptom we could see and the one she reported was chest pain. As you think back on her story, you also remember there was a long list of other symptoms and a growing roll call of doctors who were treating them even before she showed up in our waiting room. It had all started with foot pain. Or had it?

Well, yes and no.

Our feet weren't designed to be crammed into a pair of fashionable high heels. When we compress bones and restrict blood flow to muscles and supporting tissue within very complex structures (there are more than 26 individual bones in each human foot!), and then add all our body weight in a position and posture they were never meant to withstand, there's going to be stress. Just the pivoting required to accommodate the high heel on each shoe is enough to cause lower leg injury. Add that to the unnaturally compressed and tightly restricted condition of the feet and you're no longer walking or standing in a way consistent with your design.

A recent University of Alabama study noted that between 2002 and 2012, injuries from high-heeled shoes *doubled*. In that study, there were 123,355 mishaps including 3,294 emergency room visits with 19% of those with broken foot bones. The study author ends the article with these understated words: “It would be worthwhile to understand the risks.”

Ladies, I've heard many of you tell me what my wife used to say after a long day on her feet in high heels. “Boy, do my feet hurt” and, “I'm so glad to have those [shoes] off!”

What I meant by “yes and no” is that *yes*, her foot pain was the first symptom that started a snowball that rolled through surgery, multiple prescription drugs, and a long list of specialists. I meant *no*, in the sense that even Michelle's foot pain was not the root cause. Behind her symptoms—and ours—there's something much larger at play. The hidden stressors of life may be causing silent changes in our physiology that may eventually result in a symptom and a trip to the provider.

Consider this formula for pain: Going against our original design > stress > stress chemistry > damage to our bodies > symptoms > eventually, abnormal physiology and/or disease. There is a place for modern medicine. There are

times when a patient's stress is acute and doctors need to take advantage of the medicines and technology needed to successfully treat the emergency. The treatment gets us over the hump, however, even in those cases, the treatment often does not address the cause of the problem.

Through *Biblical Prescriptions for Life*, we are going to unpack the *cause behind the symptoms*.

## WRAPPING IT UP

Imagine you have scheduled an appointment with my office. Maybe you want to make sure your cardiovascular system is functioning well. Maybe you have a symptom that's causing concern and you've finally made time to get it checked out. Whatever the reason for your appointment, you've made the decision to allow me to become involved in your life.

Well, during this our first week together I want to meet your needs just as I do with each patient who comes to my office. I want to find out what the immediate symptoms are and work backward to find a cause.

The first video provided you and your small group the proper setting for talking frankly about each of your lives and the symptoms you experience. I hope you really opened up with each other during that session. When we're serious about getting healthy, we stop holding back. We become transparent. We become honest. We get real. And we connect to others who are committed to journeying with us in grace and love.

To complete our time together today, I'd like to bring you back to two key components to *Biblical Prescriptions for Life*—Community and Commitment—as we take steps to improve our lives.

## LIVING IN COMMUNITY

Plan a time today when you'll stop and contact one of your small group members. You need this as much as they do. I believe you're up to the challenge to overcome the fear of awkwardness, procrastination, and passivity. Call them. Text them. But do it today. Remember, part of our original design is that we were created for relationship in community. This is a very significant component in becoming healthy. Refer to the chart on page 4.

## BEING MISSIONAL

What did God show you today in your study? Ask Him to show you a way to start a conversation about what you discovered with someone outside of your group. Talk to your study buddy and others in your group about reaching out to others with these questions: "How are you doing?" and "What's causing you stress?"

## COMMITMENT

If you were a patient returning to my office for a follow-up appointment, I'd review what we learned about you and your health and remind both of us about the one or two simple things—one or two Biblical Prescriptions for Life—that you agreed to do as part of your journey.

There's no judgment involved here. If you missed doing them yesterday, then make sure not to miss doing them today. Don't get down on yourself. This journey is about direction—about moving consistently toward healing.

As you call your small group members today, remember to extend the same grace (kind favor and acceptance) to them. You and I often feel discouraged when we feel judged, whether by others or even by ourselves. Stop the negative self-talk and move forward. You can do this!

Refer to this chart on page 5. Keep track of your consistency. If you put in the effort, you will experience the results.

## DAY 2

### God's Original Design

Welcome to day two!

I'm so glad you've come back to the study. We have something very important to learn today that will provide one of the major keys to help us all benefit from Biblical Prescriptions for Life!

Yesterday we focused on stress, which manifests itself as a symptom such as pain. Something as lowly—pun intended—as your foot can land you in my cardiology office complaining of chest pain. I can't emphasize this concept enough: *When we use our bodies in ways that disregard their original design, we experience stress on our system and, sooner or later, a symptom develops.*

Remember: Living outside of our design > stress > stress chemistry > damage > symptom > and eventually, acquired disease. Is it really that simple? And if it is, can't we just begin to honor God's design in our life and everything will be perfect again? The answer is YES, although we (or at least as "perfect" as we can be in a sinful world). There is hope! We've been designed to be healthy and enjoy peace. The very best news is that there's someone waiting and eager to teach us how to get there.

Today, let's build on our understanding of design. How did the Creator design us to function?

It's evidence of our Creator that our feet are designed like they are. The arch is one of the strongest architectural structures known to man and you have one below each ankle! Think of the arches in the Roman aqueducts that still stand throughout Europe. Think of the arches that have kept many of the world's most famous ceilings in place for hundreds and even thousands of years.

Those wonderful arches imbedded in each foot distribute body weight and flex to absorb shock during movement. The five metatarsals and five tarsals in each foot articulate the movement so we can walk, run, jump, swim, climb and dance. Neural signals between thousands of pressure receptors communicate with your eyes and inner ear resulting in hundreds of physical micro adjustments per second—mini flexes of the small and large muscles in each foot—thus allowing us to balance while standing on solid rock or walking hundreds of feet above ground on a tight rope.

Try this—stand barefooted on a solid surface and pay attention to the almost imperceptible movements each of foot makes while the rest of your body remains motionless. Want another example? If you're able, balance on one foot and the movements of that foot will become very obvious! Amazing!

Like our feet, our entire bodies were created to live and perform at their fullest potential within a clear purpose and plan. I can almost hear you ask, "So, what is that purpose and plan, Dr. Marcum?"

Glad you asked. I'm going to stun you with the simplicity of the plan. And God is going to amaze you with magnificence of the plan. It's found in the first book of the Bible, Genesis, chapter 1. The Bible's verses are numbered so readers can navigate more easily within each of the 66 books.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.

And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:26-31)"

Now I want you to do something that will help you see the starting point of *Biblical Prescriptions for Life*. I want you to mark Genesis 1:26-31 with:

- A triangle on each use of "God" and His pronouns
- A circle around each reference to "man", "woman", mankind and their pronouns

Who made man and woman? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the design example used in the creation of man and woman? \_\_\_\_\_

What were the instructions given to man and woman? \_\_\_\_\_

Although we did not include it here, if you start reading the Creation account beginning in Genesis chapter 1 verses 1 through 31, you'll read about all six days of creation (God rested on the seventh day). Between the first and fifth days of Creation—days one through five—the Bible records for us that God “saw” (Hebrew = “ra’ah” to recognize or declare) that His work was “good” after each day had ended. On the sixth and final day of creation, God performs His crowning creative act by creating man and woman in His own image. Remember, He has created everything we know from *absolute nothing*. Here’s how He considers the total of His Creation: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” (Genesis 1:31).

Did you notice the difference? He declared the total of His creative work, which culminated in the creation of mankind in His own image, to be *very good*. The world was “good.” We—you and I—made the whole project “very good.” I like that!

This was a time like no other on the Earth. Just the thought of this beautiful place designed from the ground up to serve a clear purpose (enjoying God and others in health and happiness) makes me feel at peace.

## WRAPPING IT UP

If you try to look beyond the destruction man has brought upon himself and our planet, you can obtain a glimpse of how things used to be. Beautiful. Whole. Peaceful. Harmonious. Pure. This amazing creation—from the atoms that make fresh water to the galaxies circling throughout the universe—it was all very good! Then God gave us work to do. It amounted to farming and caretaking of the natural world. Our original job was to steward something given to us. And, even more glorious, He created us to be in a relationship with Him *and each other*. Without these relationships, there would be stress.

What an amazing journey you and I have begun.

## LIVING IN COMMUNITY

How did you do connecting with someone from your small group yesterday? If you had a little trouble, here’s some good news. Today is a brand new day! Why not make time to reach out and invest in a relationship with a fellow traveler on this journey toward healing. You can begin by asking that person what they thought of as they read about our original design and God’s original plan for our lives.

## BEING MISSIONAL

Do you know someone who may have an imbalanced view of God? Maybe they think He’s an angry, judgmental old man. Maybe they think He is all-love and no power. Ask God to give you the opportunity today to talk with

someone about the biblical concept that God created us for a relationship with Him.

## COMMITMENT

I find patients experience the “aha” moment (that time when what you’re learning suddenly makes sense in a special, lucid way) when they see the bigger picture.

Your cardiovascular system doesn’t operate in a vacuum. It’s connected to every other system of your body. As we’ll learn in later chapters of *Biblical Prescriptions for Life*, it even goes farther than that. In fact, whole life healing and wellness goes well beyond us!

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# DAY 3

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## Original Stress

I can’t help it. It’s overwhelming. I find encouragement and hope as I continue to study the incredible ways God designed us. Almost every day I’m discovering scientific evidence that demonstrates His healing ways *work* in the real world. I want to make His divine guidelines the treatments I share.

Are you ready to start putting two of the major *Biblical Prescriptions for Life* ideas together? Today we’re going to begin to see how the painful symptoms that people like Michelle experience relate to God’s original design. We’ll start to see how symptoms indicate underlying unnatural, harmful conditions that can grow into life-threatening illness. And, we will move another day forward in applying God’s solutions to our need for healing by following *His* *Biblical Prescriptions for Life*.

Let’s review what we’ve learned together so far. These are the first steps.

- Modern medicine, treatments and technology play a valid role in acute care—they get us over the hump. There are great physicians, providers, and hospitals helping the healing process, especially in emergency situations.
- Presenting symptoms—i.e., chest pain, shortness of breath, elevated heart rate, high blood pressure—aren’t the cause. They’re the *result* of the cause.
- God made everything good. We were designed to live according to His plan. Inputs, physical or mental, contrary to that plan, puts stress on the system and sets in motion the potential for symptoms and disease.

Stop and think about that last point.

Something’s wrong. You know it. I know it. Our bodies hurt. We get sick. We see people suffer with lifelong, chronic illnesses. We watch as people die. And it goes beyond our own skin and bones. We observe pollution in the environment, disharmony in relationships, and wars over ideology and resources. Most heartbreaking of all, we recognize wicked exploitation of the weak. This all leaves us asking, “Why? If God made everything very good, why is it painfully obvious that things are very, *very* bad? Why is our world so sick? Why are the rates of cancer,

heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, obesity and mental health problems constantly on the rise?”

Read these two verses out loud to discover God’s answer to that question:

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned ... for sin indeed was in the world before the law [i.e., the Ten Commandments] was given” (Romans 5:12-13).

The original plan was to trust, obey, and love God. This plan was disrupted—the original stress. Then, disease set in.

Read the entire chapter of Genesis 3 reprinted here and mark:

- God and His pronouns with a triangle
- The serpent and his pronouns with a pitchfork (yes, that’s a little campy and expected)
- Death with a large X
- Man, woman and their pronouns with “MK” for mankind
- Cursed with a rectangle

Now the serpent was craftier than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever" therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3)

What did the Serpent want Eve to do? \_\_\_\_\_

Did the Serpent get God's instruction about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil right? \_\_\_\_\_

After God made Adam, He placed the man in the Garden of Eden to enjoy life and serve as a steward of all of God's creation. God put Adam in paradise. We can't even imagine it today with our limited understanding and blemished faculties.

Adam had everything to gain and untold wonders surrounding him not to mention the magnificence of living daily with the God of the universe! And this was just before God made the first woman Eve so Adam would know relationship on the most intimate terms. In light of God's cosmologically scaled generosity, God gave Adam a single request.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.' (Genesis 2:15-17)

Did you catch *why* God gave this commandment? It was to prevent death! If Adam disobeyed the only restriction God gave him, Adam would die. He didn't need to understand why or even what death entailed. He was simply asked to trust and obey. This was part of the original plan.

How did God respond to the decisions and actions of Eve, the Serpent, and Adam? Make a list of the consequences.

Eve: \_\_\_\_\_

The Serpent: \_\_\_\_\_

Adam: \_\_\_\_\_

Did Adam and Eve die that day? Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

Did Adam and Eve understand what death was? \_\_\_\_\_



Did they understand that the relationship with God and each other had been damaged? \_\_\_\_\_

Could they understand they were moving away from the original plan, damaging their bodies? \_\_\_\_\_

## WRAPPING IT UP

God tells us in Romans 5:12-13 that through one man—Adam—sin (the original stress) entered the world and condemned all mankind. His sin condemned his children and grandchildren. In medical terms, we've all "inherited" the "sin gene" and with it, physical duress, illness, disease and death. This is a stressor causing real problems. We have inherited the consequences of living contrary to the original design. We've also inherited a dysfunctional relationship with God (we're born rebels who defy Him) and a potentially defective relationship with every other human being (we're genetically selfish and will use all means to get what we want and stay alive). This is what reptiles do. This is how their brain works. This endlessly selfish brain creates the stress chemistry.

How do you see this in the world around you? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you see it in yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

## LIVING IN COMMUNITY

Your study group needs you. One way to live as we were created to live is by seeking and nurturing healing relationships. Your investment in the life of someone else brings you healing as it brings them healing. We'll learn more about that in sessions to come.

In the meantime, today is the day to make contact with at least one person on your list. If there's someone you haven't connected with yet, choose that person and get hold of him or her today.

## BEING MISSIONAL

"So that's how stress began!" We've acclimated to a broken way of living and surviving in a diseased creation. Imagine the surprise on someone's face when you share that the stress we think is normal is not normal and there is a clear way to return to peace and healing.

## COMMITMENT

How are you doing on your first Biblical Prescriptions for Life? Are you starting to recite the verses from memory? Can you get started with just a one or two word prompt? Are you finding that God is bringing these verses—these fundamental truths—to your mind when you find yourself in stressful situations?

Keep going. If you missed yesterday, make sure to practice today.

# DAY 4

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## The Answer

Michelle felt as if her life was a total mess. She'd lost her job because she no longer fit the corporate image at the appearance-conscious legal firm she'd served faithfully for 20 years. She was ashamed of how she'd let herself go while rehabilitating her foot. She wasn't sleeping, was battling depression, and her foot wasn't healing properly! She'd gained enough weight to change her wardrobe several times over the course of a few years. She was on too many medications and was being treated by her general practitioner and five specialists. That's when she came to me with concerns about her heart.

Even though she felt like it, Michelle was not alone.

After reading the historical account recorded for us in Genesis chapter 3 yesterday, we've seen how stress entered the human race. We've seen how stress has entered all of creation. It has settled in our relationships. It stalks our livelihoods. And now millennia after the fall of mankind, the damage can be seen everywhere!

So where's the hope? Where is the prescription to fix the problem? Is the solution to all of these destructive symptoms really found in a pill or procedure?

I'm here to tell you the best news imaginable. It's even better than the news that God created us for a very good life: a life in perfect relationship with Him, experiencing whole-life health, relational harmony, and life-long healing. What's the *best* news? After our great-great-great (great, great...) grandfather Adam made a poor choice, God Himself provided the way back to paradise.

In infinite love, He provides:

- The path to healing and wholeness that we can start experiencing today.
- The final, ultimate healing that will last forever and will never again be forfeited.

How does He do that? Consider this amazing Bible passage: "So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit...the first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47). God Himself has brought redemption and healing into our world through Jesus Christ, the "second Adam." What a treatment for healing! What the first Adam failed to maintain, God's own perfect Son has remedied on our behalf. Jesus has undone the fall! And, in doing so, He has given His followers the free gift of eternal life: the ultimate and ever-lasting solution for all stress and resultant diseases.

Here we find the treatment for all ailments. Let's read how Romans 5:12-19 puts it. Mark:

- Adam with an A
- Jesus with a cross

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:12-19).

Make a list of what we have in Adam compared to what we have in Christ.

In Adam	In Jesus
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

Take a good look at those lists.

There's no greater story of redemption! There can be no greater means of healing! We've been brought from death to life for eternity! And we can start experiencing this redemption right now as we follow Christ back to the Father's perfect design.

Read the next two passages out loud.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoptions as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

(Romans 8:18-25)

Do you see the “pains of childbirth”? These pains are the symptoms we bear as we live under the stress of life. Can you relate to this?

Here comes the best news in health—the best news in the universe. Listen to how the story of the fall and its consequences ends for people in relationship with Jesus the returning King.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’

And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.” (Revelation 21:1-7)

When we live in a way that is less than God’s good and perfectly loving design, we live in a chemistry of stress. Do you have chest pain from a cascade of mounting stressors? Do you have debilitating, irreversible, life-threatening acquired disease? Do you have broken relationships? Jesus will make all things right in His time: our bodies, our minds, the plants, the animals, the environment, the joy in our work, and the wholeness in our relationships. Only *He* can perform this ultimate healing. He’s the only one with the authority to heal.

## WRAPPING IT UP

So this is the secret of true healing. It's not in modern medicine. It's not in therapeutic drugs. It's not in technology. It's not even within the skills and experience of today's well-intentioned healthcare professionals and researchers.

I want you to hear this very clearly. God sometimes uses all of these things. But please understand there is only one Ultimate Physician. Many times He heals in the here and now. He uses doctors and He uses modern medicine. Whether the medical team gives God the credit or not, all healing comes from Him alone. But *ultimate* healing— healing that springs from the very core of our being and addresses the cause of our diseases—comes from a right relationship with Him alone. When we are partaking in this relationship—this treatment—we're looking for Biblical recommendations to improve our entire life. We must be still and know the real source of healing.

## LIVING IN COMMUNITY

Today, you and I have learned the single greatest truth in healthcare. It's the single greatest truth in any context. The key to health and wholeness is our relationship with the God who made us.

He made us for this relationship as well as relationships with one another. Make sure you call your study buddy today. Text everyone on the list. Connect with them. Do it! You will gain more than you can imagine in daily relationships with God and your fellow human beings, starting with the wonderful people on your journey through Biblical Prescriptions for Life.

## BEING MISSIONAL

Do you know someone who is burdened—weighed down—with worry? Pray for them right now. Ask God for an opportunity and the right word or action that can enable you to place your shoulder under one corner of their burden and lift it with them in prayer.

## COMMITMENT

There are only two days left in this first week of Biblical Prescriptions for Life. And although the first prescription included memorizing Bible verses, I hope by this point you're beginning to see the priority of getting our thoughts in line with God's design. Changes in belief precede changes in action. It's up to you to be honest with yourself in light of God's truth and commit to change. God is there to help give you the strength.

The good news is it's never too late. Start with your prescription right now and move forward on the journey towards healing.

# DAY 5

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## Do You (Really) Want to be Made Well?

Imagine this: you schedule an appointment with my office. Maybe you want to make sure your cardiovascular system is functioning well. Maybe you have a symptom that is causing concern and you've finally carved some time out of your schedule to get it checked out. Whatever the reason, you've made the decision to get help.

In our first week together, I want you to think about your needs: the symptoms of your life. I also want you to realize where the true answers will come from: a relationship with God.

The theme is basically honesty and transparency. You won't start your journey to whole life health until you've faced reality. And you can't help your physician *help you* until you become brutally honest and transparent. This is a critical prerequisite to developing real relationships both with God and your fellow man. You can fake it, but you won't make it.

This week, we've been studying the Bible by looking for key words.

Today, we're going to use that study tool to look deeply and honestly at our beliefs and our subsequent behaviors. After all, every action you take is driven by a belief. If you don't hold your beliefs up to the perfect Word of God, your thinking will careen from one error to the next and your lifestyle will start to reflect the absence of God's guidance.

The good news is that God wants to be in a relationship with us. This is the place—the only place—where our true needs are met. Are you ready for a relationship with Him? Are you ready for Him to do everything He wants to do in your life?

More than any other day this week, today's passage of God's word will probably dig into our motives, and that can be uncomfortable. By nature, we avoid discomfort. Our primitive brains motivate us to avoid painful stimuli, to seek pleasure, and to find nourishment. Today's discomfort, however, is good for us. So let's stop now and ask God to lead us into all truth, whether or not it hurts.

You might start like this, *"Father—thank you for wanting to speak to me today. I want to learn what You say about my health and my relationship with You. Thank You for Jesus making our relationship possible. And thank You, Holy Spirit for promising to lead me into all truth. Amen."*

Now—on to what the Ultimate Physician has for you and me today!

As you read this passage from the Gospel of John, chapter 5, please mark these words:

- "Jesus" and pronouns that refer to Him with a cross.
- "The sick man" and pronouns with a red circle.

After this, a Jewish festival took place, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Hebrew, which has five colonnades. Within these lay a large number of the sick—blind, lame, and paralyzed — waiting for the moving of the water, because an angel would go down into the pool from time to time and stir up the water. Then the first one who got in after the water was stirred up recovered from whatever ailment he had. One man was there who had been sick for 38 years.

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had already been there a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to get well?”

“Sir,” the sick man answered, “I don’t have a man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.” (John 5:1-9)

- What was happening at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who was gathered and why were they there? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do we learn about the lame man? \_\_\_\_\_
- Why was this man hopeless? \_\_\_\_\_

In verse 6, the story reveals that Jesus saw the man and knew that he had already been there a long time. Amazing, isn't it? The Son of God chose the precise times in which He would perform His healings. He raised people from the dead on several occasions. Yet most of the people He healed had been suffering—suffering publicly—for a long time. You can read about His healing of the woman who'd endured 12 years of chronic bleeding (Luke 8:42-48) and the man who'd been blind from birth (John 9:1-7).

So, here at this public place of mysterious healing, a lame man has been waiting...and waiting, never anyone to help him. He was never able to get to the water in time before someone else received the healing. Day after day. Week after week. Month after month. Years had passed. He spent a lifetime watching others receive the freedom that for him was just out of reach.

That puts the question Jesus asks him in verse 6 in a very interesting context. Did the man still want to be healed or had he become accustomed to disappointment? Had he grown fatalistic in his prospects? Had he made friends with his infirmities? Had his illness become who he was? It was how he lived. There were undoubtedly friends and kind strangers who made sure he was clothed and fed without having to work to provide for himself. It made most of his life decisions pretty simple.

In light of all of this, *did he really want to be healed?*

We're not told why the lame man doesn't answer directly but we do hear his excuse. Jesus then simply, powerfully and effectively commands him, “Get up. Pick up your mat and walk!” No more excuses. No time for negotiation or doubt. Jesus, the Ultimate Healer, demonstrates His authority over everything by making a chronically lame man walk again. How? By commanding it to be so!

I've been completely transparent with you. Putting egos aside, the best any medical doctor can do is *practice* the healing arts for Jesus is the Ultimate Healer. Still, I think the question for you right now is the same simple yet profound question Jesus asked 2,000 years ago. "Do you want to be made well?"

Don't dismiss it too quickly. You're now beginning to understand your needs. Maybe this is one of your needs: a real, burning desire to actually be well. What are your needs? Jesus, in many instances starts the relationship by meeting a health need.

Truth is, I see patients every day who present with symptoms across the spectrum of severity. And this may shock you—but many of them don't really want to get better. How can I say this? Because I've witnessed their complete lack of effort to follow even the simplest, most critical instructions to save their lives. They either are not dealing honestly with their illness or they've already made up their minds that it's not worth the effort.

How about you? Do you want to be made well?

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## WRAPPING IT UP

Yesterday we learned a secret of healing. The key is found in a relationship with God. In today's lesson, we found another secret: your willing participation is required.

Recite Mathew 11:28. What are you asked to do? Are you willing?

If you have not answered Jesus' question, this is the time to do it. Right now—before you move on with your day and get distracted by the many cares and concerns in your busy schedule—this is the right time to write your response. If you answer "yes"—are you ready to take the next step toward healing, even if it requires trust and effort? If you answer "no"—why? What is holding you back? Be specific and put it on paper in the space above.

Telling Jesus "yes" will put you on the path to healing no matter from where you're starting.

If you want to be made well, then you're ready to move forward, beginning next week with some very practical, simple, and scalable (tailored by you) steps. Yes, you can start immediately to experience a physical—and lifelong—change by incorporating Biblical Prescriptions for Life.



## LIVING IN COMMUNITY

Remember, God made us for relationships—a real relationship with Him and real relationships with others.

Whatever you have decided today, you need to share it with your small group the next time you meet. If you are ready to go forward, you're going to need each other on the Journey. There will be need for encouragement and accountability. And there will be cause for celebration!

If you're not ready to go forward, don't judge (or be critical of) yourself. And don't walk away from real community. Everyone has doubts. Face them together in a grace-filled, accepting, non-judgmental time of discussion. But don't disconnect. Keep studying along with your group. In the coming days and weeks, you may find your desire to get on the path to healing overcomes any reluctance you're experiencing right now. The fact that you are reading this lesson suggests that you may have a hidden desire to be well. I hope so.

In fact—this is probably a really good time to share your thoughts with someone in your group.

## BEING MISSIONAL

Make a list of people in your life who need God to work in their lives. Pray for them by name. Ask God to meet them right where they are in a way that would be unmistakably His.

## COMMITMENT

The first week is coming to a close. We studied God's perfect plan for you and me as He intended life to be on this amazing planet. Then we studied how things went wrong. And we learned how things keep going wrong and getting worse every time we live in a way that's contrary to God's perfect design. This creates stress. All the while, the world is pulling us towards other options in healing.

Today, do your best to complete the Biblical Prescription for Life you chose to work on at the beginning of the week. Let God's promises and encouragement nourish your spirit and give you peace and strength.

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# DAY 6

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## The Third Secret

I deliberately titled today's study the *third* secret. If you've missed the first two secrets to embarking on the journey of whole-life health, I encourage you to stop here and review the preceding days. Yes, those two secrets are truly

that important for they're foundational to everything else we'll learn and the Biblical Prescriptions for Life we're going to integrate into our lives. Remember: we started with the question, "How are you doing?" Understanding your needs and how to have them met is a key to Biblical Prescriptions for Life.

For review—

The First Secret to Healing: \_\_\_\_\_

The Second Secret to Healing: \_\_\_\_\_

The Third Secret to Healing is another Truth with a capital "T" you might not hear anywhere else in the healthcare world. It's a truth so counter to modern medicine that you might actually be shocked to hear it.

Remember, we were created to live in a perfect, healthy, intimate relationship with God the Father who created us. In His wisdom, His desire to bring us the most abundant joy and peace we'll ever know in this life is accomplished by following His perfect plan. And that plan includes a mostly overlooked element: rest.

Rest is so very instrumental to healing that it's at the very foundation of its own Biblical Prescription for Life. It's one of the greatest secrets to healing because God designed it to be. That's why I'd like to focus our time together today on making sure you get the most out of resting.

First—the "why."

### **God's Example to Us**

Part of God's perfect plan for this creation includes following His example. In Genesis chapter 1, you remember that God Himself—the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-effective, never-tiring Creator of the universe created everything in a very specific order. And with the exception of the method He used to create man, He simply spoke everything into existence. Now that's power, power unlike anything you or I can imagine!

So this indescribably powerful Creator who made everything complete, very good, and exactly as He intended it to be does one more very remarkable thing on the seventh day of creation. We learn about it in Genesis chapter 2:1-3.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation.

There it is. God *rested*.

Let that sink in for a moment. How many times is the word "rest" or its synonym used in just those three verses?

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Just from verses 1-3, what makes you think this fact is important to God? \_\_\_\_\_

Did He need to rest? \_\_\_\_\_ Was He tired? \_\_\_\_\_ Did someone tell Him to rest? \_\_\_\_\_ Did anyone or anything give Him the example of resting? \_\_\_\_\_ Of course the answers are “NO!” It seems God’s rest is more than a physical rest. There’s another reason for it.

### **God’s Commandment to Us**

Most of us westerners bristle at the thought of *anyone* commanding us to do *anything*. But remember, God created us. His commands aren’t some arbitrary dictum. They are given for our benefit. We don’t toss the owner’s manual for our new car across the room and shout, “How dare they command that I change the oil every six thousand miles! How dare they tell me what grade of gasoline to use!” No. We eagerly study the manual and gladly follow the “commands” offered by the manufacturer because we want our car to last for miles and miles and miles.

The same holds true for the rules of good nutrition, good hygiene, and communicable disease prevention. There are principles—rules!—we need to follow in order to be healthy and whole. We can choose to disregard these principles, but we do so at our own peril. And the Person who gave us rest is alone worthy of our obedience. Remember, the One who commanded rest is the God who designed us and knows what is best for our system.

Let’s look at Exodus 20, verses 8-11.

Remember the Sabbath (*rest*) day, to keep it holy (*different; set apart*). Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.

For in six days the LORD made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

### **What Resting Says About God and About Us**

The God of the universe designed us to rest and gave us His example to follow. Now, I can go into great depth about the physiological, emotional or intellectual benefits of resting—and we’ll get to those in a later chapter—but suffice it to say the same Creator who designed and made us wants us to rest. Whether or not we understand all the details, *it still is a part of His perfect plan for us.*

When we follow that plan; when we rest, we’re saying to God:

“I’m trusting your example, Lord” (Genesis 2:1-3).

“I’m following your instructions, Lord” (Exodus 20:8-11).

“I’m trusting that this is a means to restoration and healing, even if I don’t understand, nor can explain the exact physiology, Lord” (Leviticus 25.4; fields must rest, we must rest).

"I'm agreeing that I'm not self-sufficient and must remind myself to trust You, Lord" (Hebrews 4:8-11).

Technology has now advanced to the point where we are beginning to scientifically prove the chemical and physiological benefits of rest. The treatment for the stress we have been talking about this week is rest. We need physical, mental, and spiritual rest. Rest is given to us and is a powerful treatment. When we come to God, He promises us the treatment of rest.

God has made rest important and tied it to our relationships with Him. Since it's important to Him, we need to make it important to us. That means we need to prepare a time, a place, and our hearts for rest.

### **Prepare a Time**

If you have something you must do—something you can't let slip or get pushed aside amidst the din of urgent matters, something you can forget or avoid—the best way to get it done is to make an appointment for it on your calendar.

The reason for this is simple: a to-do list changes with priorities. An appointment dedicates time. When something is important, there's no higher prioritization tool than making time for it. Time is the most precious thing we manage and we each have a very finite amount of it to manage. Serious about doing anything? Put it on your calendar. Serious about getting on the path to life-long whole life wellness? *Put rest on your schedule and keep the appointment.*

In the Bible you'll discover "the Sabbath"—the day of rest—from Genesis to Revelation. A Biblical Prescription for Life is to set aside a time for rest. *Plan for it today*—before you get too busy. While you're at it, put a time for rest on your calendar for the next seven weeks. That will get you all the way through this study. By then, you may have begun to realize what God wants all of us to know about rest. Again, make a date with the Ultimate Physician and don't be late to your appointment.

### **Prepare a Place**

Resting means *not doing* the mundane, six-days a week routine. It *does mean* doing activities that recharge your energy in meaningful, relationship-building ways.

Please think wisely about things you can do that will interrupt your normal routine and give you rest while providing an investment in your relationship with God and others. This is between you and God. You'll have to decide if watching "The Game" qualifies as relationship building. Likewise, joining a small group of people in your neighborhood who are fixing a widow's roof as an act of self-sacrificial love may very well be one of the most restful ways to spend this special day.

Jesus told His critics that His acts of love and mercy were exactly the type of actions meant for the Sabbath. If you have any doubt, just ask Jesus to make it clear to you. Ask Him to give you peace as you choose ways to invest your day of rest. Remember, rest is healing and changes your physiology. If you broke your arm, you wouldn't keep throwing fastballs. So don't expect Sabbath rest to be the same ol' same ol'. The body and mind require rest that breaks routine of life and sets in motion the hidden powers of healing.

## Prepare Your Heart

Preparing your heart is an important part of resting. Remember, rest is part of our relationship with God. It's a Biblical prescription to change our chemistry. Rest for that reason. Rest to know Him more. Trust Him even though you don't fully understand how "resting" works. Trust Him even though your list of things to do grows while you take this all-important break from the rush of life.

Rest to meet Him, to spend time with Him, to discern His perfectly loving instructions designed to make us healthier. Rest to invest in relationships that are meaningful and life affirming.

Then watch as God uses this Biblical Prescription for Life to change your physiology by taking away stress chemistry and bringing healing to your mind and body.

## WRAPPING IT UP

God designed us to rest. He gave Himself as an example. Then He gave us rest as His gift and antidote for a diseased world. Again, the treatment for stress is rest. God has promised to give us rest. We must accept the treatment. We need the physical, mental, and spiritual rest.

This may be one of the most difficult Biblical Prescriptions for Life because it's so countercultural. To busy people living in a culture that is saturated with technology, overwhelmed with media, demands our 24/7 attention, and driven by the fear that feeds "the get-ahead-or-fall-behind" mania, rest might seem like the one prescription we could and even should justify skipping. But don't believe it! Don't believe the lies and rationalizations. Instead *rest*. Trust the One who made you.

Take a moment now to write down ways you can rest and break your routine. Make this a priority! \_\_\_\_\_

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## LIVING IN COMMUNITY

I can't think of a better way to remind us of the need for community than learning about this purposeful day of rest. I've said it every day this week: God made us for relationships—a real relationship with Him and real relationships with others.

Right after you've scheduled your day of rest for the next seven weeks in your calendar, reach out to your study buddy and the people in your group. Maybe you can join them in their rest. Maybe they would like to join you in yours. Encourage each other. How can we rest? What does rest look like?

We're all on this journey together. God will see us through even when we start in different places and at different paces.

## BEING MISSIONAL

Examine the list of people you've been building this week and invite one of them to join you for fellowship.

## COMMITMENT

The first week is coming to a close. We studied God's perfect plan and how He intended life to be on this amazing planet. Then we studied how things went wrong and learned how things keep going wrong and getting worse every time we live in a way that's contrary to God's perfect design.

Today, it is especially fitting to complete the Biblical Prescription for Life you chose to work on at the beginning of the week.

Both memory verses are directly related to God's plan—and source—of rest for us all.

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# DAY 7

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## Your Day of Rest

Use this space to record notes about today's rest.

How did you invest it? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you rest? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you join others in their rest? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you serve someone in an act of selfless love? \_\_\_\_\_

What did you learn about God today? \_\_\_\_\_

What did you learn about yourself today? \_\_\_\_\_

Did the people you have been praying for come to your mind and you prayed for them again?

