

Health and the Gospel

by Grace Tazelaar, MS, RN

When it comes to people's prayer requests, health issues often top the list. We all know friends and family members who are suffering from ill health. Cancer, surgery, and infections are all agents of suffering that bring us to our knees. If our own health is not what it should be, it becomes the priority for us as well. We often take good health for granted but when we become ill or injured, we petition God for restoration. We recognize the blessing of good health.

Healthcare is big business in the United States (nearly 18% of GDP). People are seeking healthy lives and want to eliminate all suffering and disease. This has significant implications for Christians.

Christ-centered Compassionate Care

First, we need Christians in the healthcare professions. Advisors tell young people who are looking for job security to enter healthcare. "You'll always have a job because there will always be sick people." But if the motivation is just a stable source of income, then I'm concerned for the nursing profession, as well as the other healthcare professions.

Caring for others who are suffering ill health requires more than advanced knowledge and technical skill. Compassion for others and trust between the caregiver and the care recipient are aspects of healthcare that affect health outcomes but are difficult to measure. The growing trend is on "evidenced based practice" – healthcare that is scientifically researched, measured and established. While science and research are essential to good healthcare, I think that there are some intangibles that may get overlooked. It's not just how to insert an IV or administer a treatment; it's the care and concern for the individual who is undergoing that therapy that is also important.

As Christian nurses we look to Jesus as our example. Jesus understood our suffering. When he died for us, it wasn't only the physical pain of the crucifixion that he suffered; he also suffered the emotional pain of denial by his friends, the social pain of being mocked and ridiculed, and the spiritual pain of rejection by God, his Father. When Jesus cared for people, he not only cared for the physical well-being of those whom he healed; he also addressed their social, emotional and spiritual concerns. He touched

the outcast leper for whom touch had been prohibited (Matthew 8:3). He restored the demoniac to his right mind (Luke 8:35). He forgave the paralytic (Matthew 9:2). [Nurses Christian Fellowship](#) equips nurses to care for others holistically — caring not only for their physical bodies, emotions and social concerns, but also for their spiritual lives.

Whole-Person Care for the Whole World

The second implication of healthcare relates to missions. God has given us incredible ability to treat and cure many illness and disease through science. Today we can treat illnesses that only a were a death sentence a few years ago. For people in other countries where healthcare is not as advanced, the healthcare available in the United States is miraculous. For many years, missionaries have used our advances in healthcare to reach out to the poor and suffering around the world. Medicine and clinics have been tools to bring the message of the Good News of Jesus.

However, healthcare is more than just a way to reach the poor and suffering for Christ. It is an integral part of the gospel message. If we care for the body and don't care for the soul, we have not addressed the whole health problem presented to us. On the other hand, if we are just concerned about a person's relationship with God and we haven't addressed the suffering of injury and disease, we have failed to bring the entirety of the gospel message.

God cares for our whole being, and it is vitally important for Christian nurses to integrate health and the life-giving gospel message.



[Grace Tazelaar](#) is a veteran missionary nurse who offers wisdom from years of experience serving God cross-culturally. Find more resources, best practices, and what you need to know about missionary nursing at [NCF Missions](#).