



THE ONE YEAR<sup>®</sup>

BOOK

— *of* —

HEALING

*Daily Appointments with God for Physical,  
Spiritual, and Emotional Wholeness*

**DR. REGGIE ANDERSON**

*with* JENNIFER SCHUCHMANN



THE ONE YEAR® BOOK OF HEALING





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*The One Year Book of Healing: Daily Appointments with God for Physical, Spiritual, and Emotional Wholeness*

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## Introduction

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As a primary care physician practicing rural medicine in a small town outside of Nashville, Tennessee, I have witnessed a lot of healing. Some of it has been through the work of medical professionals, whom God uses to carry out his good work, and some has happened supernaturally—the result of God’s direct intervention.

The devotions in this book are meant to encourage you to pursue a closer relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I want you to see the many ways that he intervenes in the lives of the sick and the hurting—and the many ways that he heals—so that you will be inspired to have hope; the faith to know that he can bring healing to your life, as well; and the patience to wait for him to act on your behalf. I want you to see what I see every day—that God is alive and that he is active in our lives. I want you to know how much he cares for you. I have written these brief daily offerings to help you meditate on his healing promises.

Because we live in a broken, sinful world, we are all sick or hurting in some way. Some of us need to be healed of things that can easily be fixed, like a sprained ankle or a treatable illness. Others of us need to be healed from things that aren’t as easy to see—like abuse suffered in the past or emotional wounds from a broken relationship. Perhaps you have a chronic, debilitating disease that won’t go away without miraculous intervention. Or maybe it’s a temporary condition that will get better with time. Whatever your sickness, whatever your hurt, I want you to know that God loves you and wants to heal you. Whether you’re seeking relief from pain or want your energy to return or your cancer to go into remission or to have control over your spiraling negative thoughts, you need your Father’s healing hand to reach out and free you from the bondage of your physical body. One thing we all have in common as human beings is that we need healing—God’s healing.

But sometimes we’re not able to see how God is at work, and we wonder if he’s even there or if he cares. That’s why I’ve chosen to tell these stories about my patients—stories about God’s faithfulness that I’ve seen with my own eyes and sensed in my own spirit. *How* God’s healing work will be accomplished cannot be predicted—only that it *will* happen.

Sometimes, God heals us partially by removing our disease or fixing our wounds. Sometimes, he heals us completely by taking us to our forever home in heaven. Often, he uses modern medicine—lab results, high-tech treatments, doctors, and nurses—to accomplish his healing. Less frequently, he does it miraculously and instantaneously, without intervention from the medical community.

From my thirty years of practicing medicine, I’ve learned that we can’t explain why one person gets sick and another one doesn’t. With our society’s focus on fairness, this can be hard to understand. We feel as if there must be a plausible reason why we got cancer or why our child has autism. But whether we have played a part in



our illness through lifestyle choices we've made, or it has happened through no fault of our own, God's desire for us to be healed, healthy, and whole remains the same.

Over the years, I have discovered several common truths in the lives of my patients when it comes to healing.

**1. God is the one who heals.** Medical professionals can treat, cure, recommend, advise, prescribe, and preserve, but no matter how talented the physician, he or she alone cannot heal the human mind, body, and soul. Only God can do that. God often uses doctors and other health practitioners in the healing process, but ultimately only God can restore us fully and completely. This is especially true when it comes to spiritual healing and healing from emotional issues or abuse. A physician can prescribe a mood elevator, but if we want to be fully healed, God must ultimately renew our minds. As you read and meditate on the devotions in this book, look for stories of miraculous healing. I have also included stories of times when God healed someone by nudging me toward a diagnosis or treatment option I would not have chosen based on medical science alone.

**2. Sometimes emotional healing must come first.** Because we don't always recognize the symptoms of emotional injury or illness, we're often slow or reluctant to seek treatment. However, emotional or spiritual wounds can affect our physical health. Look for stories in this book about people who realized that they had to heal emotionally before they could become physically healthy.

**3. Healing comes in many forms.** In medicine, nothing is 100 percent. There is always an exception to the rule. What should work doesn't always work. So, when someone recovers, I know that God played a part in it. This book is filled with these stories. Some are miraculous—that is, there is no medical explanation for what happened. Others will seem like they are simply the natural outcome of a course of treatment. God doesn't always heal in the same way or within a predictable time frame. But just as a bird watcher uses a guidebook to recognize rarely seen birds in the field, I hope this book becomes a field manual to help you recognize the different ways that God heals ordinary people living ordinary lives.

**4. Our hope for healing is only in Jesus Christ.** In conversations about chronic or deadly diseases, it's common to hear people say, "I hope they find a cure." We all hope for scientific breakthroughs in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of disease. But our real hope isn't in a scientist developing a new drug or treatment. Our real hope is in the God who saves us. As Psalm 25:5 reminds us, "All day long I put my hope in you." And our hope extends beyond our days on earth. As the apostle Paul says, "If our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world" (1 Corinthians 15:19). As you read the devotions, the verses and stories will remind you that unless our hope is in Christ, our hope is in vain.

**5. Prayer is an important part of the healing process.** Whether we are praying for ourselves, or someone else is praying for us, prayer is more powerful than any medicine a doctor can prescribe. That's why I take time to pray with my patients



who are willing. I know that nothing pleases God more than when we turn our worries and fears over to him, trusting him to work. Look for devotions about the power of prayer, intercessory prayer, anointing the sick with oil, and how prayer can change us.

**6. Healthy living leads to healthy lives.** If I didn't address the subject of healthy living, the book would be incomplete. Too many people become concerned about their health only after it's gone. I've used stories of my patients to remind you that healing begins before we get sick. We must intentionally take care of our bodies, our minds, our emotions, and our relationship with God in order to prevent, postpone, or lessen the impact of illness.

**7. Sometimes we must overcome obstacles to healing.** Despite our desire to get well and God's desire to heal us, we may encounter obstacles to our healing. Look for stories of people whose fear, anxiety, unbelief, or unwillingness to ask for help or follow a treatment plan held them back from recovering their well-being.

As you meditate on these devotions, my prayer is that God will give you hope, peace, and patience to trust, believe, and wait for him to do what only he can do—heal you from the inside out.



## *How to Use This Devotional* ←

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This book is divided into twelve months, with a devotion for each day of the month.

Each month begins with a checkup—an overview of common experiences or what you may expect that month to bring physically or emotionally. In those monthly introductions, I suggest a spiritual challenge, something you can do for the next thirty days to enhance your relationship with God. Feel free to adapt or replace my suggestion if it doesn't work for you. My objective is to help you see God through fresh eyes each month.

Just as many of your childhood visits to the doctor may have ended with a shot, I finish each monthly checkup here with a Booster Shot, intended to encourage you to greater health and wellness during the month that follows.

At the beginning of each devotion, I have included a verse or two of Scripture. But I encourage you to have your Bible handy so you can look up the verses in context to gain a more complete understanding.

Following the Scripture verse, each devotion has a story of healing. Sometimes the story is directly related to the verse; others are stories that came to mind after I prayed about the verse. My hope is that the combination of these verses and stories will show you that our sovereign God is still very much in the healing business. I want to assure you that he loves you and desires for you to be whole and healthy—though sometimes we won't experience complete healing until we join him in our forever home. Even when healing doesn't happen as quickly or completely as we may desire, I hope these stories demonstrate that God is always present in your pain and suffering. My patients continue to amaze me with stories of how their faith has grown, even when their prayers weren't answered the way they hoped they would be.

At the end of each devotion, I offer a suggestion (Today's Rx) for something specific that you can do or consider that will make you feel better, grow stronger, or draw closer to our Father. Then I close in prayer.

The personal stories from my own life and medical practice are all true. But to protect the privacy of my patients, I have changed their names, circumstances, and other identifying information. After three decades of practicing medicine, I have seen many similar cases dozens of times, so some of the stories are composites of details from different cases. Conversations have been reconstructed based on my best recollections.

The medical information provided in this book is specific to the patients I saw in my office or in the emergency room. The treatments prescribed are not intended to diagnose, cure, or treat anyone else's medical or health condition. It is not medical advice and should not replace the advice of your physician. Please consult your doctor to determine what is right for you and your situation.

And while I am adding disclaimers, it would be wise for you to consult with your



pastor before following my spiritual advice, as well. After all, I'm not a theologian; I'm just a country doctor.

I hope the stories in this devotional will convince you that the healing hand of God isn't limited to the pages of the Bible. Our Lord continues to heal the sick and hurting today.

How do I know?

I've seen his extraordinary work in my own life and in the lives of my patients. My prayer is that you will see God work in your own life, as well.

*Dr. Reggie Anderson*

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## JANUARY CHECKUP

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January is a month when new life can seem distant and unreachable. The days are short, and the sky is often gray. In many parts of the country, the weather isn't conducive to going outside, and when we look out the window, we see a barren landscape and naked trees.

As winter takes hold, the excitement we felt during the holidays is gone, and we're left with nothing but the bills. Along with family and friends, we have resumed the daily grind, and spring cannot come soon enough.

During these often gloomy days, I think of a seed buried in the dark, cold, and lonely ground and how necessary the winter season is in the cycle of life. You see, that seed needs the time underground in order for the plant inside to burst through its shell and sprout new life. We won't see evidence of the growth until spring, but the seed is already in the process of transforming into a blossoming flower.

January can feel a bit like the Saturday after Jesus' death on the cross. It seems as if all hope is lost. But take heart; just as Sunday came and Jesus was resurrected, so too, spring is coming and everything will feel fresh and new.

During this first month of the year, learn the lesson of the seed, and concentrate on your interior life. Make a special effort to set aside time each morning or evening to pray. Pick a new topic each week—finances, relationships, health, family, friends, or whatever you think will most affect your year—and concentrate on praying about that topic for seven days. During your prayer time, take time to listen to what God is telling you. Align your goals with his. Just as a seed prepares to send out green shoots of new life during this cold, dark month, you can prepare for new growth in your spiritual life.

In addition to preparing your heart for renewal, take this time of hibernation to rest and relax from the busy holidays so you will have the strength to blossom in a few short weeks. Make your New Year's resolution something that will not only improve your health, but will also improve your wellness.

**January Booster Shot:** Depression is one of the most common maladies health-care providers see during the winter. It's often referred to as *seasonal affective disorder* (SAD). If you find yourself feeling sad, sluggish, depressed, or tearful, get as much sunlight as possible. If the symptoms persist, seek medical advice.

## THE BEST TIME TO START IS NOW

*My child, pay attention to what I say. Listen carefully to my words. Don't lose sight of them. Let them penetrate deep into your heart, for they bring life to those who find them, and healing to their whole body.* PROVERBS 4:20-22

Do you remember the last time you visited a doctor or a counselor? After discussing your ailments, the practitioner likely gave you a set of instructions to help you feel better.

When you left the office, you were committed to implement the recommended plan. But maybe that's as far as it went. Maybe life got in the way, and before you knew it, the doctor's advice had been shuffled to the bottom of your to-do list. A week later, you had forgotten you even had a plan. The advice that had once seemed important enough to consult with and pay a professional for had somehow slipped away.

The all-too-common pattern of wanting answers to our problems but never implementing them can also happen with God's Word. We go to him looking for wisdom and guidance, but even when we receive his instructions, we file them away for a day when applying them seems more convenient. But the right time never seems to come. We all have good intentions, but we're lacking on the follow-through. We keep putting off until later what we should do right now. When we procrastinate, it often means we never get around to what is important.

If we really want the life and healing that God promises, we can't let his wise words slip away. If we lose sight of God's wisdom, it's worse than if we had never received it. We need to abide in God's Word, allow it to penetrate our hearts deeply, and put into action the things we've heard God say. Write down what God has said, and place reminders where you won't lose sight of them. That is how they will penetrate deeply into your heart.

### TODAY'S RX

*Has God asked you to forgive someone? Call that person now. Has God asked you to give something? Give it now. Has God asked you to show love to someone? Love that person now.*

—◆—

Lord, thank you for giving me wisdom and counsel through your Word. Help me to draw from it daily, impressing your instructions upon my heart and applying your words to the problems I face.

## THE POWER OF PRAYER

*Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord.* JAMES 5:14

We've all had times when we've been sick. Whether we had a minor cold or something more serious, we learned how miserable we can feel when we're under the weather. With proper care and rest, we typically recover fairly quickly, and even those with chronic or debilitating illnesses would say they have good days along with the bad. But there's one thing that is always true: When we're sick, we want to feel better.

In today's key verse, James describes the importance of praying for healing when we're sick. Many Christian churches have a formal time for these kinds of prayers. Other churches may be less structured and more spontaneous as needs arise, but they are nonetheless committed to this practice. Having people pray for us when we're sick helps us to feel better. It's a sign that people love us when they will intercede with the Great Physician for our well-being. But prayers don't only help us to *feel* better; they can also help us *get* better.

In medical literature, there is scientific evidence that patients who have people surrounding them with love and prayer generally fare better than those who don't. Patients who have been prayed for recover faster, report less pain, require less medication, and have fewer complications.

As a doctor, I've been at the bedside of many patients when elders from their church have come to pray for their healing. And I've personally seen many patients with severe illnesses recover and return home to their families and continue living fruitful lives.

I've also been at the bedside of many patients when prayers for healing were not answered as hoped, and we had to trust God for his higher purposes. But even when those illnesses ended in death, the process of praying brought emotional healing and comfort to those who were present. It's as if we were able to catch a glimpse of the patient's soul completely healed on the other side of heaven's veil.

### TODAY'S RX

*Whatever kind of healing you need—spiritual, emotional, or physical—ask others to join you in prayer today for your healing.*



God, thank you for the comfort of bringing my requests to you and knowing that you hear me and love me. Where I am weary, please bring healing and strength, and help me to fully trust in you.

## TURNING BACK TO SEE WHO IS THERE

*O Lord, you alone are my hope. I've trusted you, O LORD, from childhood. Yes, you have been with me from birth; from my mother's womb you have cared for me. No wonder I am always praising you!* PSALM 71:5-6

I grew up in a churchgoing family in Plantersville, Alabama. From the day I was born, any time the church doors were open, my family was there. But even as a young child, I knew that I didn't have to go to a special building to be with God. I felt his presence each time I lay on my back in the lush, green grass and watched the puffy marshmallow clouds float by in the silky blue sky.

When I was four and a half, my favorite cartoon show advertised a contest to win a free pony. One night, I dreamed that God wanted me to have that pony, so I talked to my mom, and she helped me mail the entry. A few days later, I found out I had won! Because God had given me this gift, I promised that I would share that pony with all the children who came to visit.

And as I grew older, the coral colors of the sunset and the twinkling stars in the heavens were all the proof I needed that God was real and always with me.

But when I was in high school, my beliefs changed when some close friends of mine and members of their family were brutally murdered in a senseless massacre. It was hard for me to believe that the God of twinkling stars and marshmallow clouds could allow this to happen. So I turned my back on the God of my childhood and ran as far as I could from him.

Professing to be an atheist, I searched for answers about life but only found more questions. When I finally wore myself out, I turned back and surrendered to the God I'd left behind in Plantersville—only to find that he'd been running alongside me all along, even when I didn't care to admit that he existed. He was patiently waiting for me to run back into his arms. Because of his unwavering faithfulness, I will praise him all the remaining days of my life.

### TODAY'S RX

*If you are running from God, stop and turn back. He has always cared for you—and he always will.*



Father, I confess I turn my back on you all too often, doubting your goodness in my life. Thank you for always chasing after me and welcoming me with open arms.

## HIDDEN DEVILS

*Jesus went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.* ACTS 10:38

As a third-year resident in family medicine, I had the opportunity to serve as the medical director of a mental health hospital in Jackson, Tennessee. The duties, for the most part, were routine. It was my job to make sure that the patients were medically healthy. If we had to admit someone, it was typically because his or her outpatient treatment plan had failed.

Larry was an exception. He was sent to the hospital by a court order because he thought he was possessed by Satan. An unusually large man with a massive forehead, Larry had had periodic outbursts toward his family, and the police had been called to his house on several occasions for domestic violence.

As I examined him, he seemed to look right through me—peering off into a world that the rest of us couldn't see. He had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, but his medical history was unusual. His symptoms had appeared much later in life than was typical for schizophrenia. Larry also suffered from migraines, and there was something unusual about the size of his hands and feet.

When his lab work came back, I could see that he had diabetes mellitus and renal failure. There were now more questions in his chart than answers. I spoke with the psychiatrist who was treating Larry's mental illness and requested a CT scan of Larry's head. When the results came back, we were able to see for the first time what was going on. It turned out that Larry had a pituitary tumor that was causing acromegaly—a hormonal disease that causes growth hormones to be released long after the body should have stopped growing. This explained the unusual size of his face, feet, and hands. They had continued to grow well into adulthood.

We began treatment on the tumor immediately, and within three weeks, his “schizophrenia” symptoms improved. God had removed “the devil” that had tormented this man for so many years.

## TODAY'S RX

*Regardless of your affliction, whether spiritual or physical, God wants to heal you. Sometimes he uses a pastor, and other times he uses a physician.*

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God, only you can see my innermost parts. Please detect in me where I need healing, both in body and spirit. I give myself to you.

## GOD WANTS YOU TO BLOSSOM

*The LORD said to me, “Look, Jeremiab! What do you see?” And I replied, “I see a branch from an almond tree.” And the LORD said, “That’s right, and it means that I am watching, and I will certainly carry out all my plans.”* JEREMIAH 1:11-12

After the holidays, the long, dark days of winter can begin to take a toll on our moods. Many doctors and counselors find that their patients are in a funk during this time of year. But for some people, it could be even worse. They could be suffering from depression. Twenty percent of the world’s population will struggle with depression at some point in their lives. In fact, it’s so common that it’s often referred to as the “common cold” of mental illness.

The brain chemistry involved in depression is both simple and mysteriously complex. Three main chemical engines—serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine—make us feel happy and hopeful. God designed these neurotransmitters to work in concert to help us maintain a hopeful outlook. But when one or more of the systems isn’t working properly, depression can set in.

I have counseled many patients with depression. Often they mention, “No one cares whether I live or die.” If this statement resonates with you, reread today’s verse, which contains a promise from God that he is watching over you and actively involved in your life.

Almond trees are native to the Mediterranean climate and are known for being one of the first plants to blossom. The white and pale pink flowers sometimes bloom as early as January or February. Because of their early blossoming, almond trees are mentioned several times in the Bible—often as a symbol of God’s vigilance and faithfulness.

Do you ever wonder whether God is looking out for you or if he even cares what happens in your life? Wonder no more. The almond tree is a reminder that God wants you to blossom under his care. You are not alone in the battle. God wants you to enjoy the world he has created, and he wants you to hope for even better things to come—in the next world, our forever home.

### TODAY’S RX

*Depression often happens when we focus on the past. Focus on the future, and God’s promises will help to brighten your day.*

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Jesus, I ask that you breathe life into this dreary season—that you lift my head and help me focus on you. Thank you for never leaving me in the dark and always sending me reminders of your faithfulness and love.

## MODERN MIRACLES

*“Now put your hand back into your cloak,” the LORD said. So Moses put his hand back in, and when he took it out again, it was as healthy as the rest of his body.*

EXODUS 4:7

In today’s verse, God reveals his power over sickness and health. If we witnessed today what God did for Moses, we’d certainly call it a miracle.

I believe that miracles still happen. Just because we use medical science to treat people doesn’t mean that God is any less involved or that the cure is any less miraculous—like the night when medical science saved a woman’s life early in my career.

On a slow evening in the ER, I was relaxing in the doctor’s lounge when I received an urgent summons. Before I could even get to the exam room, I heard a woman named Allison pleading for help.

“I’m itching all over. My skin feels like it’s on fire! Please help me!”

Allison was in anaphylactic shock, on the verge of total collapse and cardiac arrest. This was a true life—and-death emergency.

I followed the standard protocol: putting her on 100 percent oxygen and starting an IV of epinephrine, Benadryl, and steroids.

“I can barely breathe,” she said in a panic. She looked terrified. “Are you sure this will work? I feel like I’m about to pass out.”

“Your blood pressure is low, and your heart rate is pretty high. That’s why you’re feeling this way,” I said. “Give the medication a few minutes to kick in, and you’ll start feeling better.”

Soon her shortness of breath began to subside. I saw the fear in her eyes abate as her blood pressure and heart rate returned to normal. It turned out she’d had an allergic reaction to shellfish. If she had gotten to the ER five minutes later, she probably would have been in full cardiac arrest.

Though we used modern medicine to treat her, I have no doubt that it was God who saved Allison’s life. The efficacy of the drugs is really no less miraculous than when God healed Moses of leprosy by telling him to put his hand inside his cloak.

God knows the dangers we face, and it’s a miracle of his grace that we can be saved through modern medicine.

## TODAY’S RX

*Don’t overlook or dismiss everyday miracles just because they don’t happen the same way they did in the Bible.*

Lord, your power is beyond my imagination. Help me to recognize your hand at work throughout my day. I praise you for how intimately you know my needs.

## MY SECRET

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.* PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Over the years, I've had more than one person ask me, "Dr. Anderson, why are you so cheerful all the time? I always see you with the sickest of patients, yet you never get sick. You're surrounded by people who are dying, and yet you always seem happy. What's your secret?"

My secret is contained in today's verses.

When I started medical school, I was an atheist. One night, I had a date with a pretty blonde woman who told me she was a Christian. When she found out that I didn't believe in God, she wasn't interested in pursuing a relationship.

At the university we both attended, she co-led a Bible study. As a part of her preparation, she had to memorize the book of Philippians. The only way she would spend time with me was if I helped her memorize those verses. Night after night, I'd go to her apartment and quiz her on verses, then chapters, and finally the entire book of Philippians. As I helped her study, I memorized the verses too.

Months later, I read a book by C. S. Lewis that she gave me. Then I started reading the Gospel of John. When Jesus revealed himself to me in a dream and I gave my life to him, it took a while for Karen to believe that the changes in me were real. But eventually, that pretty blonde woman became my wife.

At the time, I had no idea how precious the book of Philippians would become to me as a doctor. During the darkest moments, when delivering the worst news—an unfavorable diagnosis or telling parents about an untimely death of a child—today's verses in particular would come to mind. When I share these verses with patients, they often find peace, knowing that God is with them.

What the patients don't know, unless I tell them, is that the very same verses once healed my heart and refreshed my broken life.

## TODAY'S RX

*Memorizing Scripture has a lot of health benefits. Start today by memorizing today's verses from Philippians.*

Help me to keep your Word hidden in my heart, Lord. May I store up your commands, draw from your well of knowledge, sing your praises, and remember Jesus' parables to help me through every season. Thank you for allowing me to know you better through the Bible.

## HEALING POWER OF TEARS

*You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book.* PSALM 56:8

As a young man growing up on a farm, I had no idea what the phrase “I just need a good cry to feel better” meant. It wasn’t until I got married and had three daughters that I understood the importance of that statement.

Men are sometimes reluctant to show their emotions. We think of shedding tears as being weak. We’ll often just buck up and swallow our emotions, internalizing the things that need to be brought up and dealt with.

Generally, women are much better communicators—especially when it comes to feelings. They’re much less reserved about pouring out their hearts and souls. Over the years of being in a predominantly female house, I have seen, up close and personal, the positive effects of crying at the right time for the right reasons.

God created us to have emotions, and tears can be very therapeutic. In fact, even Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus.

In addition to the spiritual benefits, tears have documented healing properties. For example, our tears are similar in composition to the saline solution we use to resuscitate people when they are about to code. And biologically, the release of tears is accompanied by chemical changes in the brain.

There are times when we need to cry and times when we need to cry out to God and ask him to intercede for our needs. Healing tears can be used to reset our emotional center toward all that is good and godly.

And perhaps you’ll learn what I learned: understanding our own tears can help us to understand the tears of others.

### TODAY’S RX

*Know that it is healing to release your fears with tears.*

◆—————  
Thank you, Father, for hearing my cry when I am feeling sad. I take comfort in knowing that you’re alongside me during my time of need and that none of my sorrow is ever in vain.

## BABY BLUE MIRACLE

*I love the LORD because he hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!* PSALM 116:1-2

The mother burst through the doors of the trauma center and ran toward the nurse's desk.

"My baby! My baby! Please help my baby!"

In her arms was a little boy, probably nine or ten months old. He was blue. She handed the child to a nurse, who in turn handed him to me—a limp and lifeless body.

"Tell me what happened," I said, trying to calm the mother.

"I was feeding him breakfast, and I turned around to grab his cereal. When I turned back, he was choking! Please, you have to save him!"

I tried not to panic as I placed the baby on a cot and listened for any sign of breathing. None. I swept his throat with my finger. Nothing.

I wasn't sure we even had time to wait for the code team to assemble, and I was out of my league. What else could I do? I began to pray, "God, please help me save this baby."

Instantly, I felt God's presence, and it gave me confidence beyond my training.

I grabbed the laryngoscope, stuck it in the baby's throat, and looked around. Nothing. I knew by now that he'd been without air for too long. As I called for the nurse to prepare a tracheotomy tray, I sensed God saying, *You won't need it.*

Then something caught my eye—like a ball bobbing back and forth. The hard back of the laryngoscope dislodged it, and the baby took one quick breath.

"Hemostat," I said to the nurse.

When she handed me the clamp-like device, I reached into the baby's throat and pulled out a small square of plastic with a notch on one side. A clip from a bread bag.

The little boy took a deep breath and started crying. It was an exhilarating experience to hand him back to his mother, healthy and howling.

Later, I thought about how little control I'd had over the fate of that young boy. But God did. I had felt his hand guiding me throughout the entire event—and I was so thankful he had!<sup>1</sup>

## TODAY'S RX

*Pray for a miracle today, and give credit to God, the miracle maker.*

—◆—  
God, give me ears to hear your voice today. Speak your instruction to me as I make decisions and interact with others.

Thank you for guiding me every step of the way.

## TWO MIRACLES IN ONE

*Jesus led him away from the crowd so they could be alone. He put his fingers into the man's ears. Then, spitting on his own fingers, he touched the man's tongue.* MARK 7:33

As Jesus was traveling from Tyre to Sidon, he encountered a deaf man with a speech impediment. The man's friends begged Jesus to heal him. After Jesus led the man away from the crowd to where they could be alone, he put his fingers into the man's ears and then spit on his own fingers and touched the man's tongue. Looking up to heaven, Jesus said an Aramaic word that means, "Be opened." Instantly, the man could hear and speak plainly.

In that moment, Jesus demonstrated his power over disabilities that most people would consider permanent and irreversible—conditions such as deafness. In the same moment, Jesus also demonstrated his power over time.

Even after the man was able to hear, one would expect that it would take some time for him to learn to speak properly. After all, speech is developed over years of repetition, with lots of trial and error. Yet this man spoke immediately and plainly. Jesus compressed years of learning into an instant.

This miracle demonstrates that our Lord not only has power over the physical realm, but he also has power over time. This should give us hope that no matter how long we've suffered, Jesus can heal us of even our most chronic disabilities, according to his will.

### TODAY'S RX

*No matter what the diagnosis is or how long you've suffered, Jesus has the power to heal you immediately, if he so chooses. Trust his wisdom and timing.*

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Jesus, just as you have opened this man's ears and mouth, I ask for your healing touch—not just for my physical ailments, but also for the sin that lurks in my heart.

## EXPERIENCING HEAVEN ON EARTH

*Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.* COLOSSIANS 3:1-2

On July 4, 1980, I had a dream of heaven that changed my life. In that dream, I experienced the sights, sounds, and smells of heaven. That one experience changed me from an atheist to a believer in God.

Ever since that night, I have searched the world for signs of the heaven to come. I truly believe it is closer than we think—perhaps just on the other side of the veil between life and death. I know this because, as I've paid attention, God has given me glimpses of heaven.

In fact, I believe God marks the pathway for all of us to our eternal home, drawing us onward toward heaven. But we must be spiritually awake and aware of those bread crumbs to experience them in this world.

Often, while walking around my farm, I will get a whiff of a tantalizing aroma or see a majestic butterfly, and I'll again experience that sense of heaven. Those moments take me back to what I experienced in my dream.

C. S. Lewis said, "If I find in myself a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."<sup>2</sup>

Standing at the bedside of a believer who is ready to cross the threshold into eternal life is like standing on holy ground. It is an opportunity to witness the veil blowing open momentarily to welcome a new saint into heaven. I have treasured every chance I've had to be a part of these transitions. Each experience is slightly different—yet, at the same time, familiar.

We must be fully awake and spiritually aware of the bread crumbs that lead us ever so gently toward home. Who knows? We may just get the opportunity to escort a loved one to heaven's foyer. If that happens to you, inhale deeply and fully experience the moment. You might just be breathing in heaven's air.

### TODAY'S RX

*You don't need to run toward heaven; heaven is walking alongside you.*

—◆—

Father, I long for a glimpse of what awaits me—to shed the weight and pain of this life and to experience the majesty of your Kingdom.

Until that day, send me reminders of your glory so that I may remember that I was made for more than just this world.

## SET ASIDE YOUR ANSWERS TO HEAR HIS

*Harden the hearts of these people. Plug their ears and shut their eyes. That way, they will not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their hearts and turn to me for healing.* ISAIAH 6:10

Early one morning, Mike called my office. He was having stomach pains and was convinced he had a rare form of cancer. He insisted on seeing me that day.

When he arrived that afternoon, he had a stack of printouts listing diseases and symptoms that matched his experience. He told me about the research he'd done online and the diagnoses he'd considered. He firmly believed that he had a particularly nasty—and rare—cancer, and he was understandably stressed.

When I asked about his symptoms, Mike listed several things that had been bothering him. Though some of his symptoms were consistent with the cancer he had discovered on the Internet, I was able to quickly rule it out. Ultimately, it was something much easier to diagnose and treat—irritable bowel syndrome—but it had worsened as a result of his worrying. After we discussed a treatment plan, Mike went home with a relieved smile on his face.

Coming up with our own answers to physical or spiritual problems can often make us anxious. That's why I love the opening line of Psalm 46:10: "Be still, and know that I am God!" Even with my years of medical training and experience, I still rely on God to guide me and to give me insight into the diseases or injuries that cause my patients' symptoms.

When we go to God with our own list of answers, telling him what we think is wrong, we miss an opportunity to hear his wise diagnosis. Instead, we should present him with our spiritual symptoms—whether we're experiencing fear, anger, or anxiety—and allow his Word to diagnose our spiritual diseases. No matter if our pain is physical or emotional, God is the one who can heal us. Sometimes he uses doctors—or even an article on the Internet—but if we want to be blessed by his wisdom, we must go to him prepared to listen.

### TODAY'S RX

*When you hear hoofbeats, you're more likely to see a horse than a zebra, so take a deep breath before diagnosing yourself with something you read about on the Internet.*

---

Thank you, God, that you have the answers to all my needs. Help me to be still before you, listening for your wisdom as I go through times of worry.

## STRIKING A TUMOR SO IT NEVER RISES AGAIN

*Hit their enemies where it hurts the most; strike down their foes so they never rise again.* DEUTERONOMY 33:11

As I listened to Brad's chest, things didn't sound right. "How long have you been coughing up blood?"

"Maybe two or three months, off and on." He didn't sound very confident. "I thought it would just go away, but now the right side of my chest hurts."

"This could be serious. I'm going to call the X-ray department and order a CT scan as soon as possible."

Later that afternoon, I gave Brad the sobering results. "I'm sorry to report that you have a spot on your right lung."

Brad had been a smoker for years, and he knew the risks.

"Is it cancer?"

"I don't know yet. We'll need to do more tests. I'm going to order a fine needle aspiration for tomorrow at the interventional radiology department in downtown Nashville. We'll probably have the results back in a week or so."

Brad looked worried when he left. I'm sure he was thinking about what his family would do if he wasn't there to take care of them.

Four days later, a pathologist called me with the results: adenocarcinoma of the lungs. The workup was otherwise negative. I called Brad. "It's a primary tumor of the lung, but there is no metastasis. We can have it removed with a CyberKnife treatment."

Brad's response was assuring: "You know, you've been telling me to quit smoking for years. I think you've finally convinced me."

After the surgery, I thought about today's Scripture verse. Because of the size and location of the tumor, the CyberKnife was able to hit it directly, strike it down, and completely eradicate it, so it wouldn't grow again.

Five years later, Brad is still cancer free. He sees me regularly for checkups, and each time he praises God for guiding his treatment and for the tools we had available. If this had happened before the invention of the CyberKnife, the diagnosis would have been an almost certain death sentence.

Only God knows the number of days we have here on earth. Brad and his family are thankful that God granted him healing and allowed him more time on earth.

### TODAY'S RX

*The best way to quit smoking is to never start; but if you've already started, the best advice is to stop before it stops you.*

Lord, I realize I have some unhealthy habits. Please provide me with strength and determination to break free of them, especially in weaker moments.

## STRONG AND COURAGEOUS FOR THE FIGHT

*Be strong and courageous, all you who put your hope in the LORD!* PSALM 31:24

“He just doesn’t seem as strong as before. He says it hurts to run and that he doesn’t feel well. He used to want to play outside all the time, but now he wants to stay in.”

Tommy’s mom was concerned. Tommy was only five, and he’d started losing weight and having night sweats.

“It’s the middle of winter, and he’s burning up every night. Last year he had strep. The year before that, both ears were clogged, and you sent him to get tubes in his ears. Do you think it could be one of those problems again?”

Tommy looked pale, and he was thinner than I remembered. When we weighed him, he’d lost five pounds—a significant amount in a child that young.

“Hmm. Let’s look and see.” I got my light out. “His throat looks good. Ears look good—the tubes have fallen out, and his tympanic membranes are normal.” I felt his neck and could tell that his lymph nodes were enlarged. They were also enlarged in his armpits. “Let’s get some lab work done and see if that will tell us anything.”

When the blood work came back, it gave us a definitive answer—but one we had all hoped and prayed against. Tommy had acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), cancer of the blood and bone marrow. I joined hands with Tommy and his mother, and we prayed, “Lord, this diagnosis is not what we’d hoped for, but now that we know the answer, help us to fight this battle. Give us courage and strength, Lord, for our hope is in you.”

The next year was a difficult battle for both Tommy and his mother. The treatments seemed to last a lifetime, but he made it through. Tommy is now in remission with about an 85 percent chance of a cure.

In the midst of adversity, the Lord answered our prayers and gave both Tommy and his mom the strength and courage they needed during his fight.

### TODAY’S RX

*We all have areas in our lives where we must fight. Place your hope in the Lord, and ask him to provide you with the strength and courage you need to make it through.*

Lord, sometimes the road ahead is daunting, and I’m overcome by the challenges I face. Help me to trust in you for courage and strength during these times of trial.

## DOUBLE BLESSINGS

*Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The LORD answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins.* GENESIS 25:21

“Ohhh!” The petite Chinese woman doubled over in pain.

I froze. As a medical student, I had shadowed a resident who showed me how a typical labor and delivery should progress. But now I couldn't remember anything. The woman didn't speak much English, and it was probably a good thing. If she had, it would have been obvious that we shared the same fear about what was going to happen. Fortunately, the labor and delivery nurse had been coaching new moms and new doctors for more than twenty years.

When the mom was fully dilated, I made an exaggerated pushing motion with my hands and said, “You push.” Then, pointing to myself and rounding my hands like a football receiver, I said, “I'll catch.” I'm sure the nurse thought I was a complete fool.

Fortunately, she stepped up to the patient's bedside and took control of the situation. Looking the woman in the eye, she began to model the proper breathing. Soon the mom was following her lead.

Before long, a patch of dark hair appeared as the baby crowned, and it took only another minute before the infant's head emerged. I reached in to guide the shoulders, and out came a healthy baby boy. I clamped and cut the cord and handed the baby to the nurse. He was crying, which was a good sign. I wasn't crying, which was also a good sign.

When I pushed down on the mother's abdomen, expecting to feel a postpartum uterus, it felt larger than I expected. What could I have missed? It was my first solo delivery, and I didn't want to make a mistake. Grabbing the fetoscope, I listened to the woman's abdomen.

*A second heartbeat!*

Pointing to the woman's stomach, I held up two fingers. Her eyes grew large. A few minutes later, baby boy number two came kicking and screaming into the world.

Although every delivery has a sense of wonder, this one—my first—was extra special. No one—not even the woman herself—knew she was having twins. But God knew. And he chose me to be a part of it.<sup>3</sup>

### TODAY'S RX

*When we ask God to bless us, sometimes he unexpectedly gives us a double blessing.*

Thank you for blessing me, Father, with many good gifts. Help me to always be in wonder of you.

## STANDING BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

*As I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a trumpet blast. The voice said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this.” And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it. The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow.* REVELATION 4:1-3

As the medical director of a nursing home, I’ve learned that sometimes those who need the most help aren’t my patients—but the children of my patients.

One day, as I was making my rounds, the senior nurse asked if I would stop in and see the Browns.

Making my way to Mrs. Brown’s room, I stepped in and asked how their mother was doing. The eldest son, Alex, said, “I’m not sure.”

“Sometimes, Momma talks to us, and sometimes she seems to be talking to Daddy,” his sister Amy said. “But Daddy went to be with Jesus more than twenty years ago.”

“Does she seem to be in any pain?” I asked.

“Not really. She’s groaning, but she seems calm and relaxed, almost like she did when we were younger and we’d catch her praying.”

Over the years, when I’ve had the honor of being with people on their deathbeds, I’ve encouraged their family members to hold their loved ones’ hands, pray with them, and sing to them. But mostly I just want them to be present and aware that they’re standing on sacred ground.

“When I examined your mother a few days ago, I saw no evidence of pain or distress. It’s my opinion that she’s close to leaving this world, but only the Lord knows the hour. Her responses make me believe that, right now, she’s standing between two worlds—heaven and earth.”

Alex blinked back tears. Amy let them flow. I had just confirmed what they had already been thinking.

“Though she’s lying in bed, she’s resting on holy ground. I know it will be hard for your family to say good-bye, but I believe she is already making plans for the reunion you’ll have with her in your forever home.”

### TODAY’S RX

*Earthly words cannot adequately describe heaven or explain God’s glory. Sometimes, groaning is the best we can do.*

◆—————  
 God, I cannot begin to grasp how beautiful heaven must be. Thank you for making a place for us there. Help me not to lose sight of your glory in my daily life, but to always remember what awaits me.

## SLIPPERY ICE

*Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.* PSALM 55:22

When the ice storm hit, we expected to see a lot of broken bones in the ER. Typically, the patients would be growing boys with too much energy to stay inside. Broken arms or legs from sledding or a slip on the ice were par for the course.

So when the EMS radioed that an eighty-five-year-old woman had been found in her front yard, my heart sank. A broken bone on a teenage boy would heal just fine, but a bad fall on the ice could be deadly to an elderly person.

When they brought Florence in, I learned she had gone outside to clear her walk. After she fell, she had lain on the icy ground for nearly an hour before someone noticed and called for help. Her core temperature was 94 degrees—a little low, but nothing a warming blanket couldn't fix.

The X-rays revealed that Florence had an intertrochanteric fracture of the left hip, which prevented her from getting up. "It only hurt when I tried to stand," she said. "So I just lay there hoping someone would come by."

When I asked Florence if she knew how blessed she was to still be alive, she answered with a question of her own: "I don't want to be a burden to anyone. Can I get this fixed and go home as soon as you're done?"

"Florence, your hip fracture will take some time to fix. Then you'll need to stay in rehab for a few more weeks while you heal. After that, I pray you can return home with the help of home health care and physical therapy."

A shadow crossed her face as she absorbed the news.

"Florence, know that when we slip and fall, God is right there to catch us. He will pick us up and help us walk again. He was there for you while you were lying in the yard, and he'll be there as you heal from this break. Don't worry. Just give your burdens to God."

Florence smiled. "I always have, and I always will. I may have slipped on the ice, but I have never slipped in my faith."

## TODAY'S RX

*Be mindful of your neighbors and elderly friends during the winter season. Offer to help them with their needs.*

Lord, only you know how many slips and falls I've had—both physically and spiritually. Thank you for not leaving me on my own, and for tenderly caring for me through each one.

## BETTER LIVING THROUGH GOD'S CHEMISTRY

*Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the LORD your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you.* DEUTERONOMY 31:6

“It’s so bad, I’m afraid to leave the house,” Eloise said. “Now my husband has left me because I won’t go out. I lost my job, and I can’t find another one because I miss too much work. I’m swimming in anxiety, and when it gets to be too much and I feel as if I’m going to drown, I start to panic.”

Eloise wrung her hands and bit her bottom lip. “Everything in front of me seems like a much bigger deal than it used to be. I feel as if I can’t be fully present because I’m obsessing about the future. I don’t know what to do.”

“Panic and anxiety are usually related to making the future too big,” I said. “When we look at how normal thought patterns operate, the past, present, and future typically have equal focus. When one is out of proportion with the others, we see the consequences. If you’re worried about the past, then depression usually follows. If you’re worried about the future, then anxiety follows. Our goal is to try to restore balance to your thought life.”

I reminded Eloise that God is sovereign over the past, present, and future. He lives beyond the constraints of time, and he protects us even when we don’t realize we need his protection.

“When you start to worry, Eloise, I want you to realize that God is in control. He’s got this. You can turn all your cares over to him. I recommend that you start with therapy to help restore balance in your thought life. But I can also prescribe medication if you need more help.”

“I understand how God could use a Christian counselor to help me with this,” she said. “But what about medication?”

“God created our bodies with a certain chemistry, and we can use medicine to reestablish a chemical balance. But either way, with therapy or medication, you can be assured that God goes with and before you.”

### TODAY'S RX

*If you're suffering from anxiety or depression, don't be a prisoner to it. Get help. Your quality of life may improve through Christian therapy or God-given chemistry.*

◆—————

God, thank you that time is in your hands. When I become overwhelmed with worry about the future, help me to reflect on your past faithfulness—how you have always seen me through times of difficulty and have drawn me closer to you.

## WRESTLING WITH GOD

*But you have made me as strong as a wild ox. You have anointed me with the finest oil.* PSALM 92:10

Entering the exam room, I encountered a mountain of a man. He was massive even for our local farming community, in which physical strength was a ticket to prosperity.

Charlie looked to be about seventy-five years old but with the build of a much younger man. I could see that his arms had new scars on top of old scars—no doubt a story to go along with each one of them. With that many scars, it was odd that I hadn't stitched him up once or twice before.

"After twenty-five years in practice, I thought I'd met everyone in town. Are you from around here?" I asked.

"I was born and raised here, but I left when I was nineteen. I just moved back after retiring from being on the road."

"Are you a musician?"

"No," he said with a chuckle, "I'm a professional wrestler—well, I was."

"I guess that explains the scars."

"When I was a young man, I always pushed the limits of my God-given strength whenever I was in the ring. I won a lot of trophies, and I made some good money. But as you can tell, it wasn't an easy way to make a living."

"It looks like you've been in a few battles," I responded.

"Yeah, but none was worse than the spiritual toll of being on tour. When I was no longer top billing on the circuit, I lost my way. I went broke and life seemed meaningless. That's when I turned to Jesus, and he anointed me. He gave me a fire in my belly to teach his Word to the same crowd who used to watch me wrestle. Except now, instead of beating my chest, I proclaimed the Bible to anyone who would listen."

Charlie was the real deal. Until the day he died, he sought to reach as many people as he could. He would stop people on the street, at the mall, or at wrestling events to talk about his faith. (I know that if a man his size asked me to listen, I would!)

Charlie was a mighty man, and God used him mightily.

### TODAY'S RX

*God can use everyone for his glory . . . no matter their line of work.*

—◆—

Father, however it may unfold—in my job, in my relationships, in my community—I pray that you will use me for your good works today and in the days to come.

## THE WISDOM DIET

*Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.*

PROVERBS 3:7-8

Betsy had been a patient of mine for years. And for as long as I'd known her, she had struggled with her weight, trying diet after diet. Most of them didn't work at all. But the only thing worse for her than a diet that failed was one that succeeded—because once she hit her goal, she would return to her normal way of living and gain back everything she'd lost, plus more. Still, it didn't surprise me when she showed up in my office excited about yet another diet plan.

“Dr. Anderson, I lost fifteen pounds the first week! And ten pounds this week! That's twenty-five pounds in two weeks!”

I could tell she was excited. But that was a lot of weight to lose so quickly, and I was concerned.

“Tell me about your new diet.”

Betsy described the latest fad diet that was currently getting a lot of attention thanks to a few well-known people who claimed to have lost weight from it. “I think you should recommend it to all your patients!” Betsy said.

Unfortunately, I knew what Betsy didn't, and I had some well-founded reservations. The plan wasn't well balanced, nor was it sustainable over the long term. In fact, I had recently admitted a patient to the hospital who was in renal failure. When we narrowed down what was causing her kidneys to fail, we linked it to the same diet that Betsy was talking about.

Though Betsy was happy with her results so far, I knew that the diet could do a lot of harm if taken to the extreme. I spent the next few minutes debunking the “wisdom” of what appeared to be such a great thing.

Sometimes we're like that with God, aren't we? We forsake his wisdom in favor of what we think will be a faster, better, or less demanding way to get what we want. But God knows what we don't, and he is the source of all wisdom. That includes nutritional wisdom. If my patients would follow God's dietary wisdom, they would be much healthier.

## TODAY'S RX

*Eat healthier by choosing fruits and vegetables over processed foods. That one change today will improve your health tomorrow.*

◆—————  
 Help me to choose healthy ways of living, Lord, that will benefit both my body and my spirit for the long run. Steer me in your direction, and keep me grounded in your Word.

## A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

*The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.*

PROVERBS 18:21

“My sister is always putting me down. She tells me I can never do anything right,” Justine complained. “She tells me my perfume stinks, that blonde hair is ‘out,’ that I don’t earn enough money at my job, and that I should go back to school so I can get a better job and make more money.”

I had asked Justine if she had any stress in her life, and her answer was a lot more than I expected.

“She even picks on my husband. She says he’s a bum and that he’s ugly. Why does she have to constantly run me down in every area of my life?”

Justine obviously looked up to her sister, and their contentious relationship was wearing on her. She wanted to have a more loving relationship, but her older sister’s cutting remarks made that impossible. “Tell me about your sister and your relationship while you were growing up,” I suggested, hoping to get a handle on what was happening.

“She’s two years older, and she won every award there was to win in high school. Most beautiful, most intelligent, most likely to succeed . . .”

As Justine continued to list the accolades her sister had received when they were younger, I didn’t sense any jealousy or bitterness; she was simply stating the facts.

“When we were younger, we got along great. After high school, she met her husband, they got married, had three kids, and moved away. Then something happened. I don’t know the details, but her husband left her and moved in with another woman. After that, my sister just grew bitter, and now that she’s moved back, she’s so hard to be around!”

“Justine, you have a great life with a terrific job and loving children. Your sister’s bitterness is aimed at you because you’re a safe target for her.”

“I never thought of it that way, but I think you’re right. If she said these things to her kids, it would destroy them. Justine resolved to pray that her sister’s heart would heal quickly so that they could have a warm relationship again.

### TODAY’S RX

*Sometimes, people say mean things that aren’t intended to hurt us. Instead, these words reveal the condition of the speaker’s heart and help us to know how to pray for them.*



God, I pray that my words will be uplifting to those around me today. Let me be quick to listen and slow to speak, bringing light to those in need.

## ALL IN ONE BOX

*Whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.* 2 CORINTHIANS 3:16-18

In my medical practice and my personal life, God has allowed me to see some marvelous things. He has offered me glimpses of heaven that most people haven't had, as well as the privilege of walking with many people at the beginning or end of their lives. As a result, I don't view death the way many others do.

I don't dread my own death or that of anyone who belongs to Jesus. I envision death as a joyful homecoming for those who know Christ. When an opportunity arises to escort someone home, I want to be there beside them. Those opportunities energize me and make me want to be a part of the miracle. Death is not a failure of medical science; it is a victory of the soul.

When I tell other physicians about the things I've seen, they often try to compartmentalize them, to fit them into a box formed by their own understanding—especially those who don't have faith in Jesus. It's as if they're saying, "Your scientific training is the only thing that can be used in your medical practice. Your experiences should stay in a religious box." In other words, they don't think my appointments with heaven should have any bearing on how I practice medicine.

I understand their point of view, but when I practice medicine, I can't separate my faith from my training. To me, it all comes from the same source; it's all in one box.

If you've separated your faith from your job or your relationships, or if a hurt in your life has separated you from God, don't wait for a future event to upend your boxes. Ask God to reconcile and restore everything into one integrated box—*his* box.

## TODAY'S RX

*Whatever your circumstances, keep your heart and mind centered on God. Only he can give you peace and joy in every aspect of life. And only he gives us the promise of heaven.*

◆—————  
 God, whether my day is filled with busyness or boredom, keep my heart and mind centered on you, that I might have access to the peace and joy that only you can give in every circumstance. Thank you for the promise of heaven.

## WHEN THERE ARE NO WORDS

*Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God.* LUKE 1:64

“After having two kids, my tubes were tied twenty years ago,” Martha said. “I’m too old to be pregnant, but that’s exactly how I feel.”

Martha was right. At fifty-eight, she was too old to be pregnant again. The oldest new mom I’d ever diagnosed was forty-four, and even that was a surprise.

“I think my belly has been growing since last fall. I remember feeling pressure, but the size increase was so gradual that I didn’t realize how big I’d gotten—until the kids mentioned it.”

When Martha removed her outer clothing, I could see why she thought pregnancy was a possibility. But my training and years of experience told me there was a different story. When I laid my hands on her abdomen and felt the mass in her belly, I knew what it was. For a woman her age with a tumor that size that had grown that quickly, it was usually ovarian cancer.

“Martha, you’re not pregnant, but we’re going to have to admit you to the hospital for some tests.”

The next morning, after receiving word that the CT scan and blood tests pointed toward cancer, I quietly approached Martha on my rounds. When I took a deep breath and hesitated before speaking, she knew it wasn’t a good sign.

“Why are you speechless?”

“It doesn’t look good, Martha. I’ve consulted with a gynecological oncologist to help us figure this out. Based on the tests, he thinks it’s cancer, but I’m praying that those preliminary tests are wrong.”

After discussing her treatment options, Martha and I prayed together for a miracle.

The day after Martha’s surgery, the oncologist caught me on rounds. “The pathology came back clean. I really don’t understand why. Perhaps this is a benign cyst pretending to be cancer. It was a very large mass, but it all came out okay, and she shouldn’t have any problems.”

When I delivered the good news to Martha, once again I was speechless. But when I finally got the words out, neither one of us could contain our joy. We simply praised God for all he had done.

### TODAY’S RX

*Does trying to explain what God has done in your life leave you speechless? Words aren’t necessary. You can still praise God in your heart.*

Jesus, I’m often speechless when I think of your great love for me. You are the ultimate physician, having healed me of my physical needs and the sin in my heart. Thank you for continuing to work miracles in the lives of your people to this day.

## SOUL PROVIDER

*At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name.*

JOHN 16:23

“Sorry to bother you again,” Victor said. “But since you’re the guy who holds the keys to helping me get well, I need another referral—this time to see a specialist for my back pain.”

Victor had struggled with back trouble for several weeks. It had started with mild pain but grew worse until it radiated down his right leg. He was unable to work his factory job, and I had to write an explanatory note so he would be excused without being fired. Next, I wrote a referral for an MRI. Now he was back in my office a third time for authorization to see a neurosurgeon.

Have you ever found yourself in a similar dilemma, having to ask your doctor or insurance provider for permission to treat your basic health-care needs? It’s not easy for patients to do this—or for doctors to stay on top of all of the requests.

With all the changes in health care, “Mother, may I” situations are becoming more common. One doctor must determine whether the patient is sick enough to consult with a specialist, who then decides if more diagnostic tests are needed. But to schedule the tests, the patient must get permission from the first doctor. This creates obstacles that can delay the desired outcome of restored good health.

It’s easy to see how ridiculous this is in medicine. But how often do we do something similar in our spiritual lives? For example, have you ever asked a friend for advice rather than asking God?

Historically, many people have gone to a priest or pastor for guidance or to request permission to ask God for grace and forgiveness—rather than going to God directly. But Jesus, the Great Physician, is our mediator in heaven. We can go directly to him. He holds the keys to our spiritual health and growth. There is no need for a referral. All our healing comes from his hands.

God’s diagnostic and treatment plans have already been written and completed, before we even ask. God is our soul provider.

## TODAY’S RX

*The Father holds the keys to your healing. Seek him first.*

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Father, I confess that I often seek advice and counsel from family and friends before coming to you with what’s on my mind. Help me to turn to you first when I have important decisions to make, knowing that you’ve prepared the way for me to go.

## THE BLIND SHALL SEE

*When Jesus heard them, he stopped and called, “What do you want me to do for you?” “Lord,” they said, “we want to see!” Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Instantly they could see! Then they followed him.* MATTHEW 20:32-34

Too often, we think we see clearly when we really can't see much at all. For one of my patients, it was the exact opposite. He was completely blind, but he had much better vision than most.

Looking at my list of rounds that morning, I saw that Herb was my first patient for the day. At 104, he was also one of my oldest and most resilient patients. I saw him every month, but he couldn't see me. Macular degeneration had stolen his eyesight nearly twenty years earlier. He had no visual response to even the brightest of exam lights.

When I walked into his room that day, the air immediately seemed lighter and fresher, as if spring had arrived there before it reached the rest of the town. As I drew closer to Herb's bedside, I noticed that he gripped a photo in each hand—one was of his wife, who had died ten years earlier, and the other was a group photo of his children.

The nurse was having trouble getting a systolic blood pressure reading above 90, and she asked me to listen to Herb's heart. As I bent forward, I heard him exhale. Three heartbeats later, I heard him draw his final breath on earth. Immediately, I was aware that I stood on holy ground, and I was awed by the sacredness of the occasion.

As I thought of Herb's final moments, I had to pause to catch my own breath. He had clung to two photos he could no longer see, while before his very eyes a world of immense clarity and color suddenly unfurled. The last things to pass through his hands were pictures of those he loved most dearly—those who had gone before him, and those who would come after him.

I immediately knew that the scents of lilac and citrus I had smelled upon entering his room were the aroma of heaven. And now Herb could see the heavens, the earth, and those he loved in all their glory.

### TODAY'S RX

*Pray that God would grant you to see the world through his eyes.*

—◆—

God, you've given me many gifts on this earth. Help me not to take them for granted but to see them as precious, and to make the most of my time with family and friends.

## THE GREAT GOODNESS

*How great is the goodness you have stored up for those who fear you. You lavish it on those who come to you for protection, blessing them before the watching world.*

PSALM 31:19

In college, I bent to the peer pressure of my friends. I wanted to be liked and to be like everyone else.

Day in and day out, it was the same routine. We went to class and then went out drinking. Down the Hatch was the name of our favorite bar—and it was aptly named. When we were through, if we had any time left, we'd grab a little sleep before heading off to class again. In medical school, I more or less kept up the same routine. Classes, drinks, and a few hours of shut-eye.

Then I met Karen and asked her out. When she saw the routines of my life and learned that I was an atheist, she questioned the trajectory I was on. One day, she gave me a copy of C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* and asked me to read it.

I read the book while camping, and it made a tremendous impression on me. As a young man, Lewis had wrestled with many of the same issues I had, including questions about God. Eventually, he came to realize that God truly *was, is, and forever will be*.

That night, through a dream, my transformation from being an atheist to a believer occurred instantly. I was thrown off my high horse, and my eyes were opened to the new person that God wanted me to become.

Your transformation may have been more gradual, but the end result is the same. God renews our minds as he makes us into new creatures. The way we think about this world changes as we realize how temporary it is. As today's verse says, God has stored up goodness for us, and he will lavish it upon us when we fear him and come to him for protection. I felt his goodness that day—and have every day since.

Since college, my routines have certainly changed, but the biggest change is this: I used to run from God, but now I run *to* him.

## TODAY'S RX

*If you're dissatisfied in this world, perhaps it's because you were created for another world, as C. S. Lewis suggests. Today, reflect on the goodness of God that awaits us in heaven.*

---

Lord, as I look back on my past, I see how you have faithfully been working in my life, molding me day-by-day into the person you desire me to be. Continue to renew my mind, Lord, as I live out each day so that I may see with brighter clarity the treasure that awaits me.

## THE POWER OF PRAYER TO BRING A SMILE

*Have compassion on me, LORD, for I am weak. Heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.* PSALM 6:2

“Thank you for keeping your appointment today, Helen,” I said. “I know how the cold and dampness make your rheumatism feel worse.”

Helen nodded. In addition to rheumatoid arthritis, she also had lupus. I knew she had to be in a lot of pain.

“Mom’s had most of her joints replaced, but she still has so much pain,” her daughter said. “I don’t understand how that can be.”

She was right. Over the years, Helen had had a hip and both knees replaced, and her wrists were permanently fused in a neutral position. In the years before current treatments were available, the arthritis had done tremendous damage.

“I know,” I said as sympathetically as I could. “The problem is that the pain gets worse with movement, but if she doesn’t move, her muscles will weaken and atrophy, which will cause even more pain. We can try giving her more pain medicine.”

Helen sat there and never said a word. It was as if we weren’t even talking about her.

“The problem is that she’s limited by the medications she can tolerate,” her daughter added, “so I don’t know if we can do that.”

“I see. What do you think helps her most?”

“She seems her best on the days we go to church and when she sees other people. She prays for them and has prayers offered for her.”

Helen smiled. It was the first time I’d seen her smile.

I learned something that day. Though Helen didn’t say a word, she reminded me how important it is for us to pray for ourselves *and* pray for others. We may never see the results firsthand, but our prayers may be the only thing that eases someone else’s pain.

### TODAY’S RX

*Prayer is like a soothing balm to both body and soul. Apply it liberally.*

Lord, put on my heart today people who need prayer. Help me to be aware of their needs and to lift them up to you.

## BACK IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING

*I am confident I will see the LORD's goodness while I am here in the land of the living.*

PSALM 27:13

“Everything in this world seems broken,” Harvey said, “like it’s all upside down from what it should be.”

I’d known Harvey and various members of his family for years. But I had never heard him sound so despondent, and I was concerned.

“Tell me what’s going on.”

“In the last two years, I’ve lost ten of my closest family members. It’s like God doesn’t even care.”

Harvey wasn’t exaggerating. Most of the deaths had been expected—several were of relatives in their seventies and eighties. But at least one death had happened unexpectedly: a beloved niece who had died in a car accident on a rainy night.

“I’m guessing you feel as if God isn’t listening to your prayers right now,” I said.

Harvey started to cry.

“I understand your pain because I’ve felt that way too.”

I told Harvey about the personal loss I had experienced when my close friends were murdered. “From what I went through, I know that grief isn’t always a short journey. It’s hard to navigate, and it can be difficult to find a spiritual oasis where you can reconnect with God.”

Harvey nodded. I could see he was relieved that someone understood what he was going through. I encouraged him and prayed with him. But as his doctor, I also recognized that depression had set in, and he would need medication to restore his brain chemistry. “I’m going to prescribe something to help you, but you’ll need to come back frequently so I can monitor your progress.”

For weeks, nothing seemed to change. Harvey was as despondent as ever. But as time went on, I noticed that the doom and gloom weren’t quite as prevalent as before. A few months later, when I walked into the exam room, he had a smile on his face—the first I had seen from him in a long time.

“I’ve been trying to get back into the swing of things, Doc. And you know what? It’s not so bad out there.”

That’s when I knew for sure that Harvey had rejoined us in the land of the living.

### TODAY’S RX

*If your glass is half empty and you can’t lift it on your own, see a doctor for help.*

—◆—  
 God, so often the darkness of this world overshadows the light. I pray that you make yourself present to me today and to those around me who are hurting. Bring healing to us, God, and help us to recognize your light.

## MEDICINE CHANGES, GOD DOES NOT

*Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.*

JAMES 1:17

I have practiced medicine for more than thirty years. Occasionally, I've reflected on the exponential growth and changes that have occurred in medicine during that time.

Recently, while cleaning out an old filing cabinet, I found some notes I'd taken while in medical school. For the better part of an hour, I sat on the floor and read through them. I laughed out loud about some of the things I'd written down. At the time, the gold standard advice and treatment we were told to give our patients seemed rock solid. But with new discoveries, many of those solid rocks had crumbled under the weight of new evidence.

For example, my notes contained information on an antibiotic that was the recommended first line of treatment for a certain infection. We now know that this treatment is totally ineffective. It used to be thought that peptic ulcer disease was caused by stress. We now know that it is often caused by the *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria, and it's treatable with antibiotics. Back then, MRIs were still on the drawing board; we had never seen one. Now we use them daily to diagnose problems that weren't detectable even a few years ago.

As our knowledge of medicine grows, it seems that the ground we once stood on continues to shift. The one and only constant in healing is God himself.

The same prayers of hope and healing prayed for patients thirty years ago, fifty years ago, one hundred years ago, even one thousand years ago, are still heard at the bedside here and now. God never changes. Even in our evidence-based world of medicine, he is, has been, and always will be the gold standard in healing.

### TODAY'S RX

*God heals, and God never changes; but with the advancement of human discovery, he may change the tools he uses to heal us.*

—◆—

God, in this ever-changing world, thank you for remaining constant from the beginning of time. You are and always have been a loving, gracious Father who hears and answers prayers.

## GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE

*I am always aware of your unfailing love, and I have lived according to your truth.*

PSALM 26:3

In today's verse, the psalmist reminds us that when we live according to God's truth, we can always be aware of his unfailing love.

Growing up in Plantersville, Alabama, I felt that love. My parents were schoolteachers. They were also active in the small Baptist church in town. Dad was a deacon and the treasurer, and Mom taught Sunday school. To this day, when I recall the story of baby Jesus in the manger, I hear it in my mother's sweet Southern drawl. Other family members were teachers, preachers, and farmers.

Our family life was inextricably woven and intertwined with the God of the universe. From an early age, I knew that he had sent his Son to die for me and to pay the debt of my sin. There was no question in my mind how much God unconditionally loved all of us.

Though I was young, I was always aware of God's omnipotence. I would chuckle thinking about how he must smile watching my siblings and me play and enjoy the world around us. To me, God was as real as the air I breathed. He filled not only my lungs, but the world around me. I would romp through the woods, marveling at his creation and how much he loved us all. At the deepest level, I knew that God's love for me was as solid as the red clay beneath my feet.

Though later in life I wandered far from those powerful truths, I never forgot what it was like to experience those feelings of God's unfailing love in my youth.

### TODAY'S RX

*The things of this world are temporary, but God's unfailing love is not. He will continually draw us back to our forever home in heaven.*

◆—————  
Father, I take such comfort in knowing that you have provided all that this world has to offer. Thank you for creating the beautiful mountains, rivers, cities, and fields that make up this world.

## HE KNOWS US BY NAME

*The LORD replied to Moses, “I will indeed do what you have asked, for I look favorably on you, and I know you by name.”* EXODUS 33:17

Grace’s appointment was scheduled for ten o’clock, but I was running late—as usual. I knocked on the exam room door and walked in gingerly, fully expecting an earful for how long she’d had to wait.

“I’m so sorry that I’m running late this morning, Grace.”

“That’s okay, Dr. Anderson. I’ve waited a lot longer for other doctors. And when I come here, you always take your time with me. I’ve known you for so long that I don’t think of you as our family doctor.”

“You don’t?” I asked, puzzled.

“Nope, I just think of you as family.”

I was humbled to be invited into the inner circle of so many of my patients’ lives, and I was honored to share their journeys with them. Unfortunately, I didn’t have good news for Grace that day.

“Your tests came back, and they’re not good. You’re going to need surgery, probably followed by rehab. Your hip has walked its last mile.”

“That’s okay. I know I haven’t walked it alone.”

Grace’s surgery went well, and I came to see her in the rehab unit. She was smiling, though I could tell she was in great pain.

“I haven’t worked this hard in a long, long time,” she said. “But I will do this so I can get back on my feet for my family.”

Like all of my patients, Grace wasn’t just a number. She was a person whom the entire staff knew by name, and she knew our names, as well. To be considered family by her was something we never took for granted.

In today’s verse, when the Lord replies to Moses, he doesn’t treat Moses’ prayer as just one in a long line of requests; instead, God acknowledges Moses’ request and assures Moses that he will look on it favorably. If that wasn’t enough, God reminds Moses that he knows his name.

What a marvelous thing to consider. The God of the universe knows our names, and he hears every one of our requests. More important, he looks favorably on us.

## TODAY’S RX

*Today, when you meet new people, look favorably on them, and remember their names. It will remind you of what God does for us.*

—◆—

God, it’s reassuring to know that I’m not just a face in the crowd to you, but rather your child whom you know by name, care about, and desire to hear from. I lift up to you all that is on my heart today.