

A person wearing a bright red hoodie and dark pants stands with their back to the camera on a dark, rocky shore. They are looking up at a massive, powerful waterfall that cascades down the frame. The water is a deep blue-grey color, and the overall atmosphere is dramatic and awe-inspiring. The text is overlaid on the upper and lower portions of the image.

GOD'S STORY OF
HOPE
&
HEALING

SCRIPTURE EXPLORING GOD'S HEALING POWER

GOD'S STORY OF HOPE AND HEALING



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God's Story of Hope and Healing

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GOD'S STORY OF HOPE AND HEALING

The Bible tells an epic narrative—a story that begins with a perfect Creator who makes a good and beautiful world. God populates this world with reproducing plants and creatures of all kinds, designed to live together in intricate, sustainable, and healthy communities. And God creates a man and woman who, in close relationship with him, are to rule and care for this world.

But the man and woman choose to disobey their Creator. The result is a world progressively broken by sin, conflict, sickness, and death. The man and woman, who were first created to live forever, will now—in due time—weaken, sicken,

and die. Through selfishness and sin, people are alienated from God, from each other, and from the beautiful world they were created to care for. Sickness and suffering and death become the destiny of all living things on earth.

But this tragic start to the story happens within the first few pages of the Bible. The rest of Scripture continues with a healing story—a story that's still playing out today. God called a man named Abraham, and then his descendants, to be a special blessing to the whole earth. And through his relationship with this chosen people, the Israelites, God reveals himself to the world and plants his seeds of transformation and healing.

The healing story begins through God's relationship with Abraham's extended family, a people through whom he plans to bless the world. In this relationship, God demonstrates his ability and desire to bring hope and healing to his suffering people. Through his prophets, God demonstrates his power to heal individuals in miraculous ways, and he speaks of healing that can come through a healthy relationship with God and other people.

This story of Israel culminates in the coming

of Abraham's greatest descendant—Jesus the Messiah. During his life on earth, Jesus heals the paralyzed and sick from their ailments; restores sight, hearing, and speech to the challenged; and frees those enslaved by evil demonic powers. He even raises people from the dead. No sickness or brokenness can stand against his healing touch or powerful word. God, through Jesus, demonstrates his ability to reverse the devastating effects of sin in our world, which includes the healing of injuries and sicknesses. This conquest over sin, sickness, and death culminates in Jesus' death and resurrection. It is there that Jesus overcomes the power of sin and death—forever!

Jesus next ascends into heaven, but the story of his healing power doesn't end there. It continues through his followers, who are empowered by God's Spirit to continue the work of healing in our broken world. The community of believers—the church—represents the presence of Jesus and is empowered to do his work.

Jesus was born not only as a descendant of Abraham but also as God's own Son. He came to reconcile the broken relationship between God and the human race. He came to reverse

the destructive burden of conflict, sickness, and death that all creation is still groaning beneath. He came to make the ultimate renewal of all creation possible.

The ultimate fulfillment of God's healing work is still on the horizon. We await the return of Jesus and the new heaven and new earth he has promised. There, Christ's transforming and resurrecting work will be completed for all who believe. All who follow Jesus will receive a new physical body—one that is no longer darkened by the shadows of sickness and death. We eagerly await our final healing at Jesus' return, a time when there will be no more sin, suffering, sickness, pain, or death. It will be a time when all things are made new and whole again, when everything and everyone alienated will once again be fully reconnected and reconciled.

A NOTE TO READERS

The pages of this book contain passages of Scripture that speak of God's healing work. Many of these contain an account of a miraculous healing, often mediated by a person chosen by God. The healing accounts of Jesus—the great Healer and the Son of God—represent the largest number of these. Other shorter passages, sometimes single verses, speak about various aspects of health and healing. Many of these shorter passages come from the First Testament wisdom literature and prophets, primarily from Psalms, Proverbs, and Isaiah.

In general, these passages are arranged in the order they appear in the Bible, starting in the

First, or Old, Testament and ending at the end of the New Testament. Each passage has a heading to orient you to its content and a verse range to help you to locate it in your Bible.

The Bible as a whole tells the story of God's healing work at a cosmic level. But the Bible is also filled with small-scale accounts of God's healing work in the bodies and lives of individual people. God demonstrates his love by healing diseases, injuries, or other physical, mental, or spiritual maladies. As we read these accounts, some principles begin to surface:

- God loves people and is concerned for their health and welfare.
- God demonstrates that he has the power to heal any physical, mental, or spiritual problem.
- God demonstrates that he has power even over death.
- Healings in Scripture often come after those who need healing ask or pray for help.
- Healings in Scripture often come after friends or family members intercede.

A NOTE TO READERS

- Healings in Scripture often come through the prayer and guidance of a gifted servant of God.
- Sickness is sometimes shown to be connected to sin or broken relationships.
- Healings are often connected to a person's strong faith in God.

Since all people in our fallen world will die someday (unless, of course, Jesus returns first), it is clear that physical healing in the present is not God's plan for everyone. But that doesn't mean that God does not love us or desire our ultimate healing. He certainly does. And for all who die in Christ, eternal life awaits. But for those of us still living, God expects us to call out to him in faith for help when we or someone we love is suffering. And remember that with God all things are possible.

Explore in this book what Scripture reveals about God's compassion and power to heal.

HEALING AMONG GOD'S FIRST TESTAMENT PEOPLE

God Heals Abimelech and His Family at Abraham's Request (Genesis 20:17)

Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children.

A Promise for God's People in the Wilderness (Exodus 15:22-26)

Then Moses led the people of Israel away from the Red Sea, and they moved out into the desert of Shur. They traveled in this desert for three

days without finding any water. When they came to the oasis of Marah, the water was too bitter to drink. So they called the place Marah (which means “bitter”).

Then the people complained and turned against Moses. “What are we going to drink?” they demanded. So Moses cried out to the LORD for help, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. Moses threw it into the water, and this made the water good to drink.

It was there at Marah that the LORD set before them the following decree as a standard to test their faithfulness to him. He said, “If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and keeping all his decrees, then I will not make you suffer any of the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you.”

A Promise of Health for God's People from Mount Sinai (Exodus 23:25-26)

“You must serve only the LORD your God. If you do, I will bless you with food and water, and I will protect you from illness. There will be no

miscarriages or infertility in your land, and I will give you long, full lives.”

Healing for Israel in the Wilderness (Numbers 21:4-9)

Then the people of Israel set out from Mount Hor, taking the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom. But the people grew impatient with the long journey, and they began to speak against God and Moses. “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?” they complained. “There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this horrible manna!”

So the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many were bitten and died. Then the people came to Moses and cried out, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take away the snakes.” So Moses prayed for the people.

Then the LORD told him, “Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!” So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to a pole. Then anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed!

A Promise for God's People upon Entering the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 7:12-15)

“If you listen to these regulations and faithfully obey them, the LORD your God will keep his covenant of unfailing love with you, as he promised with an oath to your ancestors. He will love you and bless you, and he will give you many children. He will give fertility to your land and your animals. When you arrive in the land he swore to give your ancestors, you will have large harvests of grain, new wine, and olive oil, and great herds of cattle, sheep, and goats. You will be blessed above all the nations of the earth. None of your men or women will be childless, and all your livestock will bear young. And the LORD will protect you from all sickness. He will not let you suffer from the terrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all your enemies!”

A Call to God's People to Make a Life-Giving Choice (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that

you and your descendants might live! You can make this choice by loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. And if you love and obey the LORD, you will live long in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

God's Promise to Joshua upon Entering the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 31:8)

“Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.”

The Prophet Elisha Resurrects a Young Boy (2 Kings 4:18-37)

One day when her child was older, he went out to help his father, who was working with the harvesters. Suddenly he cried out, “My head hurts! My head hurts!”

His father said to one of the servants, “Carry him home to his mother.”

So the servant took him home, and his mother held him on her lap. But around noon-time he died. She carried him up and laid him on

the bed of the man of God, then shut the door and left him there. She sent a message to her husband: "Send one of the servants and a donkey so that I can hurry to the man of God and come right back."

"Why go today?" he asked. "It is neither a new moon festival nor a Sabbath."

But she said, "It will be all right."

So she saddled the donkey and said to the servant, "Hurry! Don't slow down unless I tell you to."

As she approached the man of God at Mount Carmel, Elisha saw her in the distance. He said to Gehazi, "Look, the woman from Shunem is coming. Run out to meet her and ask her, 'Is everything all right with you, your husband, and your child?'"

"Yes," the woman told Gehazi, "everything is fine."

But when she came to the man of God at the mountain, she fell to the ground before him and caught hold of his feet. Gehazi began to push her away, but the man of God said, "Leave her alone. She is deeply troubled, but the LORD has not told me what it is."

Then she said, "Did I ask you for a son, my lord? And didn't I say, 'Don't deceive me and get my hopes up?'"

Then Elisha said to Gehazi, "Get ready to travel; take my staff and go! Don't talk to anyone along the way. Go quickly and lay the staff on the child's face."

But the boy's mother said, "As surely as the LORD lives and you yourself live, I won't go home unless you go with me." So Elisha returned with her.

Gehazi hurried on ahead and laid the staff on the child's face, but nothing happened. There was no sign of life. He returned to meet Elisha and told him, "The child is still dead."

When Elisha arrived, the child was indeed dead, lying there on the prophet's bed. He went in alone and shut the door behind him and prayed to the LORD. Then he lay down on the child's body, placing his mouth on the child's mouth, his eyes on the child's eyes, and his hands on the child's hands. And as he stretched out on him, the child's body began to grow warm again! Elisha got up, walked back and forth across the room once, and then stretched himself out again

on the child. This time the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes!

Then Elisha summoned Gehazi. "Call the child's mother!" he said. And when she came in, Elisha said, "Here, take your son!" She fell at his feet and bowed before him, overwhelmed with gratitude. Then she took her son in her arms and carried him downstairs.

Elisha Heals Naaman, an Aramean General, of Leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-19)

The king of Aram had great admiration for Naaman, the commander of his army, because through him the LORD had given Aram great victories. But though Naaman was a mighty warrior, he suffered from leprosy.

At this time Aramean raiders had invaded the land of Israel, and among their captives was a young girl who had been given to Naaman's wife as a maid. One day the girl said to her mistress, "I wish my master would go to see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy."

So Naaman told the king what the young girl from Israel had said. "Go and visit the prophet," the king of Aram told him. "I will send a letter

of introduction for you to take to the king of Israel.” So Naaman started out, carrying as gifts 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and ten sets of clothing. The letter to the king of Israel said: “With this letter I present my servant Naaman. I want you to heal him of his leprosy.”

When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes in dismay and said, “Am I God, that I can give life and take it away? Why is this man asking me to heal someone with leprosy? I can see that he’s just trying to pick a fight with me.”

But when Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes in dismay, he sent this message to him: “Why are you so upset? Send Naaman to me, and he will learn that there is a true prophet here in Israel.”

So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and waited at the door of Elisha’s house. But Elisha sent a messenger out to him with this message: “Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored, and you will be healed of your leprosy.”

But Naaman became angry and stalked away. “I thought he would certainly come out to meet me!” he said. “I expected him to wave his hand

over the leprosy and call on the name of the LORD his God and heal me! Aren't the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than any of the rivers of Israel? Why shouldn't I wash in them and be healed?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage.

But his officers tried to reason with him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do something very difficult, wouldn't you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he says simply, 'Go and wash and be cured!'" So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times, as the man of God had instructed him. And his skin became as healthy as the skin of a young child, and he was healed!

Then Naaman and his entire party went back to find the man of God. They stood before him, and Naaman said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant."

But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept any gifts." And though Naaman urged him to take the gift, Elisha refused.

Then Naaman said, "All right, but please

allow me to load two of my mules with earth from this place, and I will take it back home with me. From now on I will never again offer burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the LORD. However, may the LORD pardon me in this one thing: When my master the king goes into the temple of the god Rimmon to worship there and leans on my arm, may the LORD pardon me when I bow, too.”

“Go in peace,” Elisha said. So Naaman started home again.

King Hezekiah's Sickness and Healing (2 Kings 20:1-11; also 2 Chronicles 32:24-26)

About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: “This is what the LORD says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness.”

When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, “Remember, O LORD, how I have always been faithful to you and have served you single-mindedly, always

doing what pleases you.” Then he broke down and wept bitterly.

But before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, this message came to him from the LORD: “Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of my people. Tell him, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the LORD. I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my own honor and for the sake of my servant David.’”

Then Isaiah said, “Make an ointment from figs.” So Hezekiah’s servants spread the ointment over the boil, and Hezekiah recovered!

Meanwhile, Hezekiah had said to Isaiah, “What sign will the LORD give to prove that he will heal me and that I will go to the Temple of the LORD three days from now?”

Isaiah replied, “This is the sign from the LORD to prove that he will do as he promised. Would you like the shadow on the sundial to go forward ten steps or backward ten steps?”

“The shadow always moves forward,” Hezekiah replied, “so that would be easy. Make it go ten steps backward instead.” So Isaiah the prophet asked the LORD to do this, and he caused the shadow to move ten steps backward on the sundial of Ahaz!

King Hezekiah Prays for the Healing of His People (2 Chronicles 30:17-20)

Since many of the people had not purified themselves, the Levites had to slaughter their Passover lamb for them, to set them apart for the LORD. Most of those who came from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun had not purified themselves. But King Hezekiah prayed for them, and they were allowed to eat the Passover meal anyway, even though this was contrary to the requirements of the Law. For Hezekiah said, “May the LORD, who is good, pardon those who decide to follow the LORD, the God of their ancestors, even though they are not properly cleansed for the ceremony.” And the LORD listened to Hezekiah’s prayer and healed the people.