

A - Health

1. A Matter of World Views

A. *Your training: The Naturalistic Worldview*

Everyone who is trained as a healthcare provider in a secular institution is trained through the lens of a naturalistic worldview. Fundamental to this worldview is an attempt to deny the existence of a personal God. Naturalists seek to explain the origins and maintenance of life through physical processes and thus deny any spiritual component to existence. Therefore, according to this worldview, there is no existence after death and no higher meaning to life other than “survival of the fittest.” However, most people in America, prompted by a fundamental need for meaning and purpose in life, do not hold to such a stringent worldview and adopt a vague, general belief in a higher power and a spiritual side of life but deny a personal creator to whom they must be accountable.

B. *The Biblical World view*

The Biblical worldview stands in direct contrast with the naturalistic worldview. Fundamental to the Biblical worldview is a loving Creator. Genesis tells us that “In the beginning, God” existed. He preexisted all creation, created everything, and will exist eternally. The Bible explains further God’s motivation for creating us. God regarded each stage of His creation as “good,” and He regarded His creation of man as “very good” (*Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31*). *John 3:16* tells us that God created people because He loved them.

C. *Why does this matter?*

Your worldview affects more than you might realize. It guides how you think, how you live, and how you react to your circumstances. Most people’s worldviews are vague and poorly thought out. They often contain inconsistencies and contradictions. Therefore, if you think about it, you may find that you have a “Sunday” worldview that contradicts your “everyday” worldview. We see this problem in business, when men or women who seem Godly and loving at church are ruthless in the business world. Unfortunately, we also see it in the medical field. Christian health care professionals practice medicine from a naturalistic world view, yet outside medicine they follow a Christian world view. Let me give some clinical situations that will help you see if this problem exists in your life:

D. *Clinical Scenarios*

1. A patient develops a rare cancer that is terminal. She asks you, “why did this happen to me?” What would you say?
2. A patient presents with depression. In explaining the diagnosis and treatment, what would you say?
3. A 16-year-old girl comes to your office because she missed a period. When you determine that she is pregnant, she tells you that she wants to get an abortion. How would you handle the situation?
4. You have known an 86-year-old patient with inoperable prostate cancer for many years. It has metastasized to the bones, and he is admitted to the hospital for intractable pain. You have difficulty controlling the pain, and he repeatedly asks you to give him an overdose of pain medicine so that he can die. What would you say and do?

These are difficult questions for any health care provider, Christian or non-Christian. But a provider who works from a naturalistic worldview will probably answer them differently from one who practices from a Biblical world view.

Our purpose in this Bible study is to present a Biblical worldview for medicine that will directly impact your practice of health care.

2. Biblical Health

A. *Shalom*

Though we tend to think of the definition of this Hebrew word as “peace,” it means much more. *Shalom* has a variety of meanings, such as “welfare, health, peace, completeness, safety, and prosperity.” Overall, the word, in its most general sense, means “wholeness.” As we study this word and other health-related words in the Bible, we come to realize that the Biblical concept of health is based on a holistic approach which includes physical, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects. It turns out that the biopsychosociospiritual model of health care that has become popular in the last 20 years is actually thousands of years old and what God intended all along.

What do each of these components of health include?

1. Bio: Physical health
2. Psycho: Mental health
3. Socio: Interaction with society, friends, and family
4. Spiritual: Sense of purpose, faith, love, forgiveness, prayer, worship, and stillness.

Fundamental to the concept of *shalom* is a right relationship with God:

Ezekiel 37.26-27: I will make a covenant of peace (*shalom*) with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.

B. *Our design*

1. In God's Image: *Gen. 1.26-27*: Unlike the rest of creation, God created human beings in His image. He made us relational. We are to have an intimate relationship with Him above all else.
2. Unity in Diversity: *Gen. 2:18-25*: God also made us relational with each other. God created Eve because “it is not good for the man to be alone.” Thus an aspect of being created in the image of God is unity in diversity. Through marriage a man and woman become one flesh, yet continue to be two people, mirroring God's existence as one God, yet three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. Spiritual and Physical: *Gen. 2:7*: God breathed life into Adam and Eve, unlike the rest of creation which He simply created. In Hebrew, “breath” also means “spirit.” This verse helps us to see that human beings, unlike the rest of God's creation, are spiritual as well as physical beings.
4. Eternal: *Gen. 2:16-17*: God designed human beings to live eternally. Death, decay, and disease were not part of man's original design, but only occurred as a result of their disobedience.
5. Houses of God: *John 14:24, Gal. 2.20*: God designed our spirits to house His Spirit. Only when He lives in us do we function properly, spiritually alive and dependent on Him.
6. The Glory of God: *I Cor. 10:31, 2 Cor. 3:18*: God created us to radiate His glory. His glory refers to His communicable attributes, the fruit of the Spirit that Paul described in Gal. 5:22. We can only radiate His glory when His Spirit lives within us and shines gloriously through us.

In summary, God created Adam and Eve as the prototype for human beings' intended design. Therefore, true *shalom* involves functioning as God intended us to function, in intimate relationship with Him, housing His Spirit, radiating His glory, and unified with one another.

C. *Our Fall*

Adam and Eve rebelled against God, resulting in the fall of creation. As a result, God banished them from the Garden of Eden and sentenced them to death as He had warned (*Gen. 2:17, 3:16-24*). Since then, human beings have been dysfunctional. *Shalom* has been lost. God's intimate relationship with human beings has been broken.

Without God's indwelling Spirit, all have sinned and fallen short of His glory (Rom. 3:23). As a result, all human beings are subject to disease, decay, and death. None are immune.

D. *The promise of Shalom Restored*

The concept of shalom is a common theme in the Old Testament. The Jews fully knew what had been lost in the Garden of Eden, and they hoped and prayed that God would one day restore it. Through the prophets, God revealed that *shalom* would be restored, that His people would once again be whole. Some examples of such promises can be seen in the following verses:

Ezekiel 37:26-27: I will make a covenant of peace (*shalom*) with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

Psalms 29:11: The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace (*shalom*).

Psalms 37:11: But the humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity (*shalom*).

Isaiah 66:12: For thus says the Lord, "Behold, I extend peace (*shalom*) to her (Jerusalem) like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you will be nursed, you will be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees.

E. *Promise Fulfilled*

The writers of the New Testament picked up on the theme of shalom, using Greek words with similar meanings. However, there was one key difference. The New Testament authors referred to it in the present tense, not the future tense. An amazing transformation had occurred. Through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, a new era had dawned. God revealed how this occurred through His prophet, Isaiah:

Isaiah 53:5: But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well being (*shalom*) fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed (& I Pet. 2:24).

In order for our right relationship with God to be restored, Christ had to be sacrificed on the cross for our sins. God, in His holiness, cannot intimately associate with sinful human beings. Only when Christ took our sins upon Himself on the cross could God look upon us as holy and associate with those who trust in Him.

Col. 2:10: and in Him you have been made complete. How are we complete?

1. Peace with God: *Rom. 5:1*: Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. See *John 14:27*, *Phil. 4:6-7*.
2. Christ lives in us: *Gal. 2:20*: I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
3. God gives us fruit: *Gal. 5:22*: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
4. Our responsibility: *Eph. 4:22-24*: You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Through the establishment of a right relationship with God through faith in Christ, we are made complete and whole: spiritually, physically, psychologically, and socially.

Though this *shalom* will not be fully realized until we reach heaven, God wants it to begin when we become Christians. He wants us to function according to His intended design, dependent on Him and radiating His glory. Our new functionality in Christ begins to heal us spiritually, psychologically, socially, and sometimes even physically. Though our physical bodies are destined to decay and die, we look forward to the day when God will give us new spiritual bodies which will live eternally (*1 Cor. 15:35-58*).

3. Application

A. How do I get this wholeness and peace?

It has already been freely given to you when you became a Christian. God's Spirit set up His home in you. You were incomplete and dysfunctional, and now you are complete and functional. Your life can be compared to an old car that was broken down. God, the Divine Mechanic, has restored you to full working order.

B. But why do I still feel fear, unrest, and discontentment?

1. You may not be taking hold of the gifts that God has given you. Just because the old car has been restored and repaired does not mean that it will run. The driver must get in, turn the key, and then know how to drive it. Similarly, God tells us, in His strength, to take hold of the gifts that He has given us and put on the new self (*Eph 4:22-24, Col. 3:15, Rom. 12:18*).
2. We tend to confuse God's peace with the world's peace. In *John 16:33*, Jesus tells us that the world will give us trouble and unrest, but Jesus will give us a supernatural peace that overcomes any circumstance in which we might find ourselves.

C. How can I extend shalom to my patients?

We will be talking more about this in the rest of this study, but to summarize, we can only give when we have been filled (*John 7:37-38*). When we earnestly seek God, He will bear fruit through us (*Matt. 6:33, Gal. 5:22*). Let God fill you with His richness, and you will overflow with His love for others.