

Samuel Rodriguez Says There's Only One Kind of Healing We Need

During the coronavirus pandemic, masks became symbols of life or death. Once used only by healthcare professionals in dire situations or by first responders going into hazardous scenes with smoke, gas or toxic chemicals, they are now worn by the general public to prevent exposure to harmful germs and polluted air.

As COVID-19 transmission was scrutinized, doctors and scientists realized the essential benefits of wearing masks in almost all situations involving close proximity to others. Masks prevent particles of saliva and other microscopic, airborne viral agents from making contact with our faces and gaining entry into our mouths and nostrils. Along with hand sanitizer and antibacterial soap for conscientious cleansing, they became essential items for survival. To go without a mask meant increasing the risk of contracting an invisible enemy with the power to ravage your body and steal your life.

Once businesses and stores began to reopen, masks provided a kind of shield as people returned to familiar locations forever changed. Slowly and gradually many people abandoned masks with cautious optimism. But while they no longer masked their faces to shield them from the coronavirus, they continued to mask their hopes for a return to normal. We all knew nothing would ever quite be the same. And even for those of us who were blessed with ongoing health and safety, healing from the effects of the virus is still required—for minds, hearts and spirits.

We need the kind of supernatural healing that can come only from God. Healing to restore grieving families and those

battling depression. Healing for the financial blows dealt by employment and a faltering economy. Healing for anxious millennials and fearful elders, for distraught leaders and struggling survivors. Healing to move on from a season that created lingering scars.

Impediments to Healing

Long before the coronavirus sent us urgently searching for vaccines and treatments, for ventilators and masks, people often told me they were unable to slay the giants in their lives because of their limitations, their losses, their wounds. They felt inhibited, impaired and impeded from being the kind of conqueror God calls each of us to be. While the kind of wounding may vary with each individual, the lingering effects are often similar: fear, doubt, anxiety, depression, worry, anger and uncertainty.

New fears brought on by the pandemic trigger old traumatic reactions. We don't know if we will remain healthy, if our loved ones will recover, if we will have enough money, if we can continue to live in our present homes. Our bodies fight exhaustion as depression and anxiety take their toll. We feel consumed by the ever-churning sensationalism of the 24/7 news cycle, afraid to ignore it for long but equally terrified to keep checking.

No one escaped the pain, suffering, discomfort and inconvenience caused by COVID-19. Regardless of our age, where we lived, our level of education and income, our race and cultural ethnicity, whether Christian or atheist, no human being escaped feeling the impact of the pandemic.

Similarly, all of us have wounds, including followers of Jesus. But the crucial difference for believers is our wounds lead us to rely on God's power and not our own. We discover that our injuries, wounds and scars become prisms facilitating and magnifying what the Lord can do through our lives. They

can even become beacons showing others the majesty and magnificence of supernatural healing and spiritual wholeness.

When we experience what we cannot do for ourselves—what no human being can do for us—then everyone around us sees God at work in our lives. Our humility keeps us tethered to God's healing power in us and through us!

There are laws that govern healing, however. God makes it clear that we have to be willing for Him to work in our lives. We have to remove the masks we hide behind as well as the filters we use to distance ourselves from Him. We have to face the spiritual obstacles that are within our power to remove in order for God's Spirit to work freely in our lives and bring about healing. If our relationship with God is not in order, then we get in the way of our own healing. We must be willing to be healed and able to align our hearts and lives with the Holy Spirit.

Keep in mind, too, that the devil wants you sick, broken and wounded. He wants to take you out and leave you limping instead of walking by faith and running in the power of your redeemer. This is the power Jesus won for us through His death on the cross and resurrection as He defeated sin and death once and for all: "Jesus of Nazareth was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with great power. He did wonderful things for others and divinely healed all who were under the tyranny of the devil, for God had anointed him" (Acts 10:38, TPT).

God's Word outlines three deterrents to our healing: unforgiveness, unbelief and unrepentance. Forgiveness is inherent in how we relate to God and to others. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus instructed us to pray, "Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us" (Matt. 6:12, NLT). Because God has shown such great mercy and amazing grace to us in the midst of our sinfulness, we are to share it with those around us. When we refuse to forgive others, we are basically elevating our standards above and beyond the grace and mercy

of our perfect Holy God! When we refuse to forgive *ourselves*, we are doing the same thing and allowing our pride, guilt, shame and fear to paralyze us.

Similarly, our unbelief applies to how we live our lives as much as to what we believe. In other words, do we walk our talk? It's not only our own doubts that get in the way of God's healing presence and power in our lives; it's also the doubts of others. The unbelief of those around you can become as contagious as the COVID-19 virus and infect your thinking with doubts, worries and anxieties. Your relationships reflect what you believe and reveal how you practice your beliefs.

When you harbor sin in your life and refuse to surrender it, you create an infection that blocks the divine flow of God's healing power: unrepentance. Instead of admitting your sin and turning back to God and obediently following His ways, you follow your own path. Even after you have been saved by the blood of Christ, if you refuse to follow Him and obey God, then your rebellion becomes a barrier to all that His Spirit wants to do in your life. You can't be healed unless you follow the Holy!

God's Remedy

The remedy to these three impediments is revealed in Scripture as well:

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. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven.

"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results" (Jam. 5:14-16).

Notice the factors mentioned here that open the door to healing: prayer and anointing, repentance and confession. Notice, too, the importance of relationships within the community of believers. If you're sick and in need of healing, ask the elders of your church to pray over you and anoint you with oil. Confess your sins to one another and lift up your brothers and sisters in prayer, calling upon the name of the Lord for His healing power. When you turn to God, forgive others as well as yourself, and believe in the power of His Spirit, you know that you will be healed! {eo}

Excerpted from Chapter 3 of *Survive to Thrive* by Rev. Samuel Rodriguez.

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