



LOOKING AT LIFE

Failing Health

What Can You Do?





Failing Health: What Can You Do?

ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT FALLING SICK?

Are you burdened by how it's getting more and more expensive to see a doctor and buy medicine? Do reports of new outbreaks of disease bother you? Are you worried about the health of an aged parent or sibling whom you are taking care of? If any of these things have crossed your mind: rest assured, you're not alone. In survey after survey across Asia and worldwide, health issues are always among the top items on the list of people's concerns.

All of us worry about our health; it's only natural. After all, good health allows us to enjoy a high quality of life. When we're healthy, we can live productively, do what we want, and spend time with those we love.

But when we're sick, daily life can become a struggle. We become weak and unable to achieve our full potential as a parent, a student, or a professional.

We can't do what we enjoy doing or want to do. It can be expensive, as we have to visit the doctor, buy medicine, and seek treatment. If we suffer from a chronic ailment or disease, we may become dependent on others both physically and financially, because we may be unable to work to pay for our own treatment. Worse, we may not be able to take care of our own family, and instead become a burden to them. As an often-used saying puts it simply and succinctly: "Health is wealth".

Most of us will try our best to build up this "wealth" in our bodies. We live healthily by exercising, taking vitamins, eating properly, and going for regular check-ups. We try to prevent disease by inoculating ourselves and practising proper hygiene. When we do fall ill, we seek treatment immediately. And we buy insurance so we can pay for this treatment if needed.

Unfortunately, while all these efforts are worthwhile, they aren't perfect. Sooner or later, we will fall sick. We can't avoid the common illnesses like flu, cough, and colds. We're always at risk of catching infections. Many of us can't avoid getting hit by chronic diseases as we grow older. And when we

do fall sick and seek treatment, we find that medicine and technology do not offer us a guaranteed cure. Scientific advances and discoveries may enable us to prolong life and discover new medicines and treatments, but there will always be diseases that remain incurable.

Does this mean that there is no solution to all our fears and worries about falling ill? Is there a way of coping with them, or some sort of answer that can give us comfort and assurance?

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Understanding Our Own Worries

BEFORE LOOKING AT WHAT WE CAN DO, what might help is to first understand our own fears and where they come from. This insight can help us address the source of our worries.

You might find that one issue is not having full control over your health. And it's true—no matter what we do to stay healthy, we will always lose the battle against disease at some point in our lives. We have no real power over it. Another is the fact that disease may result in death. The biggest risk of being ill is that we may not recover.

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And as we grow older, we will become more and more vulnerable to disease and physical deterioration. It's hard not to fear death, and to be reminded that we are ultimately both frail and mortal.

These were issues that Paul Kalanithi struggled with when he was diagnosed with stage four lung cancer at the age of 36. The gifted neurosurgeon had a brilliant career ahead of him, and did not smoke. Yet he was hit by this common cancer. As a doctor working in a top hospital in America, he had access to the best medicine and treatment by top oncologists. But they did not manage to

stop the cancer from growing, and he passed away in 2015.

In his award-winning autobiography *When Breath Becomes Air*, which he wrote after he was diagnosed, Paul had this to say about trying to figure out the meaning of life and death during his heartbreaking journey through cancer: “The tricky part of illness is that, as you go through it, your values are constantly changing. You try to figure out what matters to you, and then you keep figuring it out.”

Our fears and worries about disease and death are natural. In fact, they show us that there is a limit to the value of health—simply because health itself is not a sure thing. We cannot control it, so we cannot rely on health alone to be happy.

What this means is that even as we attempt to address our worries about health, we need to look at other sources of joy and satisfaction in life, such as good relationships and a sense of purpose. We need something that will offer a more sure and secure hope, so that we can find joy even when we are sick. We also need something that will address not so much health itself, but the ultimate consequence of illness—

death. We need something that is more reliable than life itself.

What could this be? Where can we find such a solution that offers us lasting hope and assurance?

An Eternal Solution

WE WOULD LIKE TO INVITE YOU to consider this answer from the bible, the book on which the christian faith is based.

It tells us about the Creator God, who formed our universe and everything in it—the earth, night and day, and the human race. This God created each one of us, so he knows how our bodies operate and how they fail. The Bible explains that our bodies fail because of this thing called “sin”. Sin means missing God’s perfect standards, and it’s what happened when the human race chose to reject His authority over their lives, and to live the way they wanted. Sin separated us from God, who is holy, and also resulted in disease and death.

God, however, continues to love us dearly. Having created each one of us individually, he seeks to have a relationship with each one of us, just like a parent seeks to be close to their

child. And because he made our minds and our hearts, he understands how we suffer when we fall ill, and our fears about death. He wants to comfort us and give us the assurance that he is always there for us, no matter what happens. God is thus the perfect answer to our fears and concerns.

And there's more. God also wants to give us something that is even greater than life itself: everlasting life after death. The Bible tells us that after our frail physical bodies die, we will go on to a new life in God's presence. This

new life will be free from disease and suffering, and it will never end. This may be hard to understand now, but it is what God promises to give every one of us, if we turn to him. This gift gives us hope, because it is a firm assurance that no matter what happens to us in this life, disease and death will not have the final say. God promises us that we will be with him forever.

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At this point, you may ask: How do I know all this is true? And if it is, how can I accept God's gift?

The Bible tells us that some two thousand years ago, God sent his son Jesus to earth as a human being. Jesus came to show us that if we turn from our sinful ways and turn back to God, we will go on to life after death. He said: "Those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

Because Jesus lived as a man, he was also subject to human frailties. He knew what it was like to feel weak. But he showed us that he had power over disease and death, which he demonstrated by healing many sick people and raising several who had died to life.

What all this means is that if we acknowledge our sin, ask for God's forgiveness, and believe in God's ability to give us eternal life through Jesus, we will no longer need to fear the consequences of disease and death. We will also no longer need to worry about having no control over our own lives,

because we will have the confidence that God is in full control.

Of course, you may ask: What about now? How will God help me with my present-day worries about health and disease?

Again, the Bible assures us that if we turn to Jesus and follow him, we will enjoy his love, care, and companionship every day. He promises to be with us through sickness and health, and he will help us to cope with our worries about our health. When we feel fearful or anxious, he will give us assurance and peace. When we feel physically weak or ill, he will strengthen us mentally and emotionally. When we feel at a loss, he will comfort us and give us guidance to make wise decisions.

This is a truth that Nellie, who must go for dialysis every other day because her kidneys have failed, has discovered personally. At first, she thought of ending her life because there seemed little to live for and she had no family to take care of her. But friends rallied around to comfort and encourage her, and showed her that she had a role to play in encouraging other people, even when she was in hospital. God, she says, has given her physical, mental, and

emotional strength to cope with the daily discomfort and pain of treatment.

Of course, we will still have to cope with health issues. We will still face the ever-present risk of illness, and still have to bear with the inevitable consequence of disease. But if we follow Jesus and trust him to take control of our lives, we will find peace and comfort to overcome our worries, fears, and weaknesses. And we will be able to see beyond good health and find something of much greater value than health and mortality—we will have hope.

Would you like to know more about Jesus, what he offers, and how you can find him?

*Talk to a Christian friend and find out more about Jesus. We also have A Story of Hope, a booklet that can tell you a bit more, available without charge. Simply complete and return the attached request form. You can also check us out online at **www.ourdailybread.org** and view the many other printed and digital resources we have available.*

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