

*Below is the revised version of a sermon I presented at the Assemblies of God National Fine Arts Competition, August 2018. This sermon was inspired by my story of living with CF and the struggle of wondering why a loving God would choose to leave me with CF instead of healing me.*

Hello, my name is Pearl S, and I'm a member of Newport Mesa Church.

My question for today is: Why does God sometimes choose to heal a person, and why does he sometimes choose not to heal them?

When I was four years old, I was diagnosed with a genetic mutation known as cystic fibrosis, also known as CF. Because of my CF, I have to do about an hour of medical treatments every day. Growing up in the church with CF, I've had a lot of people praying for me. *Surely*, God would listen to all of those people and heal me, right? Well, I'm 16 years old now and I still have CF. I still have to do my medical treatments. I am still not healed. Why? Why doesn't a God who we describe as just and loving, simply heal everyone who gets sick?

Well, God is perfect. He's got a perfect reason behind everything he does—including his choices with healing. Today I'm going to be highlighting three reasons—three possible reasons why God might not heal his precious people right away.

1. It might be a test.

In the Bible, Job is described as a “man that was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil” (Job 1:1b). Yet when we read through the book of Job, we find that God gave Satan permission to take away all of Job's possessions, and later on, even his health. All of the affliction Job endured, even bad health, was not necessarily a punishment for some especially evil sin of Job's. But instead, it was Satan attempting to get this blameless and upright man to curse God. Job's sudden poverty and bad health acted like a sort of test for Job to see just what kind of man he *really* was. It doesn't have to be just Job. If someone gets sick, perhaps Satan is testing them to see how firmly they are rooted in Christ.

2. It may be a ministry.

During his time on Earth, Jesus was good friends with Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus. However, when Jesus heard that Lazarus had fallen ill, he didn't rush to heal him. As a matter of fact, Jesus took so long in coming to Lazarus that by the time he finally arrived, Lazarus was already dead. Yet as this story progresses, we see a purpose for this death. When Jesus was at the tomb, there were many other people there too. These people knew what had happened. They knew Lazarus was dead. They watched as Jesus brought a definitely dead Lazarus back to life! And... they believed! John 11:45 says that “many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.” God was able to use the death of a beloved man to bring many others to belief in him. Even today, God is able to use sickness in this way. Maybe God is paving the way for many people to come to him by allowing sickness or disease to come into someone's life.

3. It may be a reminder.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7b-9, the Apostle Paul writes:

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."(NIV)

Paul had many reasons to boast: he was a Pharisee, a Roman citizen, he was an important man! Yet he had some sort of "thorn." Scholars today don't know what this thorn stands for; one idea is that Paul is using it to refer to poor eyesight or some other physical affliction. But whatever this "thorn" refers to, we know it was something that God wouldn't take away. This "thorn" was a sort of reminder to Paul that he wasn't perfect. He couldn't do everything by himself and he needed God's help. It served as a reminder that although he had myriad reasons to boast in himself, his boasting truly belonged in God. God may allow someone to get sick, to have a "thorn," to help that person draw closer to him instead of them trying to handle everything by themselves.

If we draw closer to God and let him work through our sickness or disease, he can do amazing things through us, for his power is made perfect in weakness. Any weakness, illness or not, God can use in mighty ways! But first, we must surrender to him and his plans for us.

Maybe I have cystic fibrosis as a sort of test to show that even someone with a lifelong sickness can be a Christian firmly rooted in God. Maybe I have CF as a ministry so God can perform a miracle and use my sickness to draw people to him. Maybe I have CF to remind me that I can't do everything by myself and I should always rely on him. Or, maybe I have CF for a different reason.

Why does God sometimes choose to heal a person, and why does he sometimes choose not to heal them? I don't know. But... I do know that he's got a perfect plan for each and every person. No matter what you're going through, he hasn't forgotten you. He does love you. There is a reason behind every sickness every disease and every weakness. I may not understand why God has chosen not to heal me, but I find peace in the midst of my medical treatments knowing that I have CF for a reason and can trust God to use me mightily.