

"Healthy Christianity"

There is a big difference between a Christianity that is healthy and a Christianity that is unhealthy. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we're considering what it means to be a healthy Christian.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Lord is in the business of saving souls and giving an abundant spiritual life. Abundant lives are filled with many good things. When Christians are healthy, one can see the evidence of that health. Galatians 5:22 to 23 says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." We want this kind of life for everyone who calls Jesus "Lord." Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

3 John verses 2 to 5 says, "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth." What if the healthiness of your spiritual life was reflected in your physical health? Would you be healthy or would you be sick? Does your soul prosper? Are you spiritually healthy? Paul reminded the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 1 and verse 3 that we have been blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Well do you have the blessings of Christ?

A healthy Christian loves the Lord and loves what is good and right. He's generous to others, caring toward those in need, and seeking opportunities to share the gospel with anyone who's willing to hear. A healthy Christian knows he is forgiven and is gracious to others. A healthy Christian puts God first and doesn't compromise His faith to please people. A healthy Christian walks in the light and fixes his eyes on the Lord.

We offer this study on healthy Christianity free! And if you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website at, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Psalm 1, and examine what it means to be a healthy Christian.

Our reading today comes from Psalm 1, all six verses. A beautiful idea in contrasting the difference between those who live for the Lord and those don't.

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.
The wicked are not so,
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.

That's a reading from God's word. Let's pray. Father we hope that we can always be people who meditate on Your word and do Your will. Help us to stay away from things that are sinful and wicked and help us to love the things that are good and righteous. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

When we go to the doctor, the doctor measures our blood pressure and blood oxygen, takes our temperature, checks our weight, tests our blood and urine, and asks many personal questions. He wants to know every detail about our bodies and our ability to function normally as a human being. When things function as they should, we think of ourselves as healthy. In the same way, when things function spiritually the way God intended, we can regard our spiritual lives as healthy.

David wanted to know about his spiritual health and prayed to God in Psalm 139:23 to 24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way." Now God already knew David's heart and He didn't need to search it. David, however, needed to look at his heart to see what God already saw. David wanted to correct whatever was wrong and make it right. Healthy Christians make healthy churches. Unhealthy Christians hurt the church. And here are some measures of what it means to be a healthy Christian:

First, Christians should be spiritually healthy in their devotion to God. Healthy Christians are people of prayer. They "pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:17 to 18). They give thanks, they pray for their neighbors and for the nation, and they praise God for all He has done. As Christians, they confess and repent of their sins and ask God's forgiveness. They seek to be right with God.

And when they are troubled, they pray to God for help. Philippians 4:6 to 7 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

They worship regularly with the church. Healthy Christians follow the teaching of Hebrews 10:24 to 25: "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." They want to be with their brothers and sisters worshiping God. They want to encourage and be encouraged. They generously give to see the will of God done at church and around the world. And they remember each Lord's day the body and blood of the Jesus in the Lord's Supper.

Because God is with them every day, they also worship in private at home, or in their cars, and wherever they go and whatever they do. They pray and sing and read Scripture. They regularly talk about what they have learned from Scripture. Sweet Jackie and I like to sing hymns on our way to worship. Healthy Christians keep a Bible handy not just on a shelf. Many Christians have Bibles on their smart phones, so they can consult it anytime!

Second, Christians should be spiritually healthy doctrinally. The apostle Paul urged Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:13, "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus." Yes, there is a pattern of righteousness found in Scripture, and Christians need to follow it. Paul warned Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:3 to 5 that, "If anyone advocates a different

doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain." Healthy Christians contend for the faith, yes, but unhealthy Christians love to fuss over controversial questions. Sincere questions are one thing, but hateful controversy has no place in Christianity.

Healthy Christians don't just read the Bible; they study it! 2 Timothy 2 and verse 15 urges us, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." You see they let God's word settle their beliefs. Healthy Christians meditate on God's word day and night. They don't take a passage out of context and make a law out of it. They look at all the Scriptures and all that they have to say on any topic. And they draw out what the Scripture actually says rather than reading into the Scripture current cultural trends or their own ideas. They're like the Bereans. Acts 17:11 says, "Now these (the Bereans) were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." Healthy Christians don't buy into someone's claim to be a modern-day prophet, especially when the things they prophesy contradict Scripture.

Third, Christians should be spiritually healthy in their relationships with others. John 13:34 to 35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, (Jesus speaking and) that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." You know it's the mark of a disciple of Christ to love others. Loving others is essential to loving God. 1 John 4:7 to 8 says to Christians, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

Now unity in Christ starts with believing the truth of Christ; but it also calls for the right attitudes. Ephesians 4:1 to 3 says, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Now tolerating the insignificant weaknesses and flaws of others is one thing, but unity in Christ doesn't mean tolerating willful sin and immorality. Loving others doesn't mean approving sin rather than calling them to repentance. Jesus loved everyone, but He called everyone to repentance. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 5 for tolerating instead of judging a man caught up in incest. And Jesus rebuked the church at Thyatira in Revelation 2 for tolerating Jezebel for teaching people to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit act of immorality. When Christians speak out against sin, they're following Christ, who also spoke out against sin and called for repentance.

Healthy Christians watch their words. They control how they speak to others. Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear." You see healthy Christians want to be a blessing to others rather than be mean-spirited. An unwholesome word could be gossip, could be slander, could be profanity. Ephesians 5:4 says, "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."

Healthy Christians control their anger. James 1:19 to 20 says, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the

righteousness of God.” Oh we get hurt or we see unjust things happen. It’s easy to get mad, but watch out. Ephesians 4:26 to 7 says, “Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.” Angry people often do foolish things that can cost them dearly. Proverbs 16:32 says that, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.” Rule your spirit.

Ephesians 4:31 to 32 says, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Healthy Christians who know God’s grace show grace to others. They forgive rather than become bitter and hold a grudge.

Colossians 3:12 to 14 says, “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

Fourth, Christians should possess spiritually healthy moral lives. When a person becomes a Christian and is forgiven of his past sins, he should abandon evil and live for the Lord. Romans 6:1 and 2 says, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” No we can’t. Grace is not a license to sin. We must never presume grace permits us to sin all that we please. Romans 8:12 to 13 says, “So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” Spiritual death or separation from God still takes place when Christians willfully sin against God, and they disregard His laws, or they refuse to repent.

1 Timothy 1:8 to 11 says, “But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.” And those who disregard God’s law and His truths are guilty of sin and do not stand in God’s grace or favor.

Fifth, Christians should be spiritually healthy in their walk with God. 1 John 1:5 to 7 says, “This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” You know people are either walking in the light or they’re walking in darkness. Sadly, some Christians leave the light and follow the darkness, losing fellowship with God. They don’t stand in His grace or favor. If they wish to come back to the light, they must confess their sins and change their ways.

1 John 2 verses 3 to 6 says, “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says ‘I know him’ (that is ‘I love Him’) but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.” God’s judges us by whether we keep His word. And keeping His word is how we perfect our love for God. If we say we abide with God, we must walk like Jesus walked. Are you spiritually healthy?

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we are thankful that through Your word we can measure our own lives to whether or not we are healthy toward You. Help us to love You and follow Your word, to serve You always. In Jesus name, Amen.

We all face the struggle of living in this sinful world. And we're pulled in many directions. We have to decide whether or not to love God and Him alone more than anything else. 1 John 2:15 to 17 says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." And if we choose this world, we'll one day see it perish. Only the way of God lasts.

What would you do if you found out today you were physically unhealthy? You'd go to the doctor to find a solution, wouldn't you? What would you do if you find out today that you are spiritually unhealthy? To whom would you go? You must go to the Lord and to the Scriptures to find God's healing grace and salvation.

To become a Christian put your faith in Jesus Christ and in the gospel. The gospel is the good news of His death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection from the dead. And when you see all that Christ has lovingly done for you, it calls you to love Him and come to Him. If you love God, you realize that you must change your ways, repent of sin, and follow Christ. Confess Jesus as the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And when you're baptized, God washes away your sins, makes you His child and He adds you to His church. Why not get right with God today.

We hope that today's study about healthy Christianity has helped you focus on doing God's will. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. You can also watch SEARCH on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, like the programs. We offer free Bible Correspondence courses. We're not asking for money. We want to help you draw close to God.

Show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week. Keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.