

What Is a Chronic Illness?

- **Chronic illnesses** are persistent, unhealthy conditions of the body that linger over a long period of time.
- **Chronic illnesses** are often linked to physical weakness, frequent discomfort, and persistent pain.

Too frequently, this cup of suffering holds not just physical stress, but also emotional distress because of a decrease in caring relationships, social opportunities, and spiritual understanding. ...

*“My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak.”*
(Psalm 31:10)

What Is an Impairment?

- **Impairments** occur when any part of the body is unable to experience normal functioning.
- **Impairments** are physical disabilities that limit the bodily function of limbs or lessen motor ability (normal movement of the body).
 - Impairing the limbs: paralysis due to polio, a stroke, or spinal cord injury; amputation due to severe injury or disease
 - Impairing the senses: Hearing loss or deafness; vision loss or blindness; smell and taste losses

The Lord gives this promise regarding impairments and the return of Jesus ...

*“Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.”*
(Isaiah 35:5–6)

Can Any Blessings Come from Afflictions?

When blasted by the winds of adversity, the heart that is sheltered in the hands of God produces a life that is full of meaning and purpose

- Suffering can soften your heart so that you want to obey God’s Word. (Psalm 119:67)
- Suffering can open your heart to make you more teachable. (Psalm 119:71)
- Suffering can mellow your heart to make you more compassionate. (2 Corinthians 1:3–4)
- Suffering can strengthen your heart to make you more mature. (James 1:2–4)
- Suffering can humble your heart to keep you from becoming conceited. (2 Corinthians 12:7)
- Suffering can reveal your heart’s weaknesses so that Christ can strengthen your heart and be your sufficiency. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- Suffering can give you a desire for eternal glory rather than temporal glory. (Romans 8:18)

*“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial
because, having stood the test,
that person will receive the crown of life
that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”*
(James 1:12)

God does not delight in your suffering, but He uses it to refine your faith and to develop Christ’s character in you. His delight is in making you a delight and a blessing to those around you, and He does that by conforming you to the character of Christ. He tests your faith in order to prove it to be genuine, thus resulting in the praise, glory, and honor of Jesus Christ.

*These [trials] have come so that the proven genuineness
of your faith ... may result in praise, glory
and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*
(1 Peter 1:6–7)

The 5 Stages of Sorrow

1. **Denial** ... avoiding the painful reality
(Job 8:20)
2. **Anger** ... opening up honest emotions
(Job 10:1)
3. **Bargaining** ... attempting to change reality
(Job 13:20–21)
4. **Depression** ... feeling despair over the situation (Job 7:16)
5. **Acceptance** ... gaining a positive outlook
(2 Corinthians 9:8)

Questions and Answers

“Is it okay to pray for miraculous healing?”

Yes. Absolutely. It is biblical to present your request to God for full restoration. It is also biblical to pray as Jesus did, “... yet not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). If it is God’s will, you will receive what you asked ... but, again, only if it is God’s will. It is for us to submit our will to His will since He is God and worthy of our obedience. Yes, it is biblical that we ask, but always on the condition that our will lines up with His will and not vice versa.

*“I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart.”*
(Psalm 40:8).

“Is a physical affliction the result of sin?”

Sometimes yes; sometimes no. Based on the Bible, sickness can be the consequence of sin or can be permitted by God to accomplish His higher purpose.

- A consequence of sin: (1 Corinthians 11:27–30)
- Not a consequence of sin: (John 9:1–3)

Dos & Don'ts for Family and Friends

- **Don't** assume all cancers are life-threatening—some are benign.
Do ... Educate yourself by researching and asking questions, “What have the doctors said? What do you know about this illness already?”
- **Don't** inflict additional pain by pushing their involvement in certain activities.
Do ... Demonstrate patience by saying, “Take your time. You don't need to rush.”
- **Don't** presume to know everything that should be done while dispensing unsolicited advice.
Do ... Listen. “How can I help? With meals, errands, transportation, or something else?”

- **Don't** expect one doctor to have all the answers.
Do ... Extend an offer to take notes. “Would it be helpful for you if I went to the doctor with you and took notes?”
- **Don't** belittle or patronize them.
Do ... Say, “Please let me know if things become too much of a struggle so that we can find what might work better for you.”
- **Don't** fail to meet personal needs privately and unobtrusively. However, allow them to do as much as they can for as long as they can.
Do ... Say privately, “Please know that I'm here if you need me to assist in any way.”
- **Don't** demand answers and explanations from God.
Do ... Realize, every step of the way, He promises to direct your path. The Bible says ...

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.”*
(Proverbs 3:5–6)

Key Verse to Memorize

“For my power is made perfect in weakness.”
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

Key Passage to Read

2 Corinthians 12:7–10

Keys to Accepting Affliction ... Coping with Limitations

*“My soul is weary with sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word.”*
(Psalm 119:28)

- Your troubles are temporary—your glory is eternal.
(2 Corinthians 4:16–18)
- Your body is designed to experience decay.
(Genesis 3:19)
- Your afflictions are allowed by God in order to teach you.
(Psalm 119:71)
- Your temptations are made bearable by God.
(1 Corinthians 10:13)
- Your suffering enables you to see God. (Job 42:5)
- Your life is being conformed to the image of Christ through your affliction. (Romans 8:29)

- Your crushed spirit will be sustained when you are indwelled by the Spirit of God. (Proverbs 18:14)
- Your transformation will be completed by God. (Philippians 1:6)

Any illness can be a great burden
or a gift of blessing.
When we allow difficulty to draw us
closer to the Lord,
the gift tag reads, "Grace included,"
signed, God.
—June Hunt

Learning to Live

- **Learn to Cry.** (Psalm 56:8)
 - Crying is not a sign of weakness, but a much-needed, emotional cleansing outlet.
 - Tears help me identify my feelings and are noticed by God.
- **Learn to Let Go.** (Proverbs 3:5–6)
 - Give up expectations of life as I once knew it.
 - Trust God with my future.
- **Learn to Rest.** (Deuteronomy 33:12)
 - Get physical rest whenever possible.
 - Rest in the adequacy of God.

- **Learn to Adjust.** (Isaiah 40:29)
 - Modify my activities and adapt them to fit my needs.
 - Count on God's strength to replace my weakness.
- **Learn to Laugh.** (Proverbs 17:22)
 - Refuse to take myself or my condition too seriously.
 - Enjoy the humorous things that happen in life.
- **Learn to Be Disciplined.** (Proverbs 15:22)
 - Rely on my doctor's advice to develop the habit of regular exercise or activity.
 - Work up a plan with a professional nutritionist to help meet my nutritional needs.
- **Learn to Give Thanks.** (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
 - Show gratitude to family and friends who help and support me.
 - Praise God daily for who He is and for His love and care for me.

*"I have been crucified with Christ
and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.
The life I now live in the body,
I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me."
(Galatians 2:20)*

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling Library* contains our *Biblical Counseling Keys*, providing *God's Truth for Today's Problems* on 100+ topics.

The *Quick Reference Guides* contain excerpts from our *Biblical Counseling Keys* and offer immediate, concise answers with *biblical hope and practical help*. For more comprehensive help and additional resources, refer to our *Biblical Counseling Keys on Chronic Illness/Disabilities*.

If you would like more information, biblical counsel, or prayer support, contact:
1-800-488-HOPE (4673)
www.HopeForTheHeart.org

The information in this resource is intended as guidelines for healthy living. Please consult qualified medical, legal, pastoral, and psychological professionals regarding individual concerns.

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®
Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™
Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Related Topics ...

- Aging Well
- Caregiving
- Death & Heaven
- Euthanasia
- Grief
- Suicide Prevention
- Terminal Illness



*Together ... Changing Minds.
Changing Hearts. Changing Lives.*

P.O. Box 7, Dallas, TX 75221