

# *Prescriptions for the Heart*

## **Coping with a Chronic Illness**

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A chronic illness is commonly defined as a disease or long-term medical condition that can significantly alter the lifestyle and or quality of life of an individual. There are many different types of chronic illnesses each with its' own set of life changing symptoms. What most chronic illnesses have in common is that they typically require the patient to adapt to changes in their lifestyle. Coping with these changes can be very stressful. This prescription for the heart offers a Biblical guide to help you adjust to the lifestyle or quality of life changes that may occur as a result of a chronic illness. It is our prayer that God's word will encourage and help you to adjust to these changes in your life.

This information is provided as a free service of the Christian Medical & Dental Associations and your doctor.

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### **A prescription for coping with a chronic illness**

Coping with the symptoms of a chronic illness can become very challenging, especially if these symptoms are progressive and/or uncomfortable. One of the best medicines for coping with the symptoms of your chronic illness is to strengthen your spiritual relationship with God. The Bible offers sound advice about seeking God's help through prayer when coping with a chronic illness.

When faced with uncertainty in life due to a chronic illness our perspective of what is important can change very rapidly. Coping with a chronic illness can become very frustrating and discouraging when one has difficulty adapting to these changes. At these times, it is important to have a strong foundation of faith to rely on.

In the Bible, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, taught " May God who gives patience, steadiness, and encouragement help you to live in complete harmony with each other"<sup>1</sup> A positive attitude supported by faith can make a big difference when coping with the stress of a chronic illness.

Faith in God can help you overcome the fear and uncertainty of a chronic illness. Faith in God can help replace fear with hope. God gives us the strength and the ability to place our faith and trust in Him to deliver us from trials. God promises to give courage to those who believe in His saving grace and life after death. "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."<sup>2</sup> However, we are only human and sometimes we will become worried or depressed as a result of a chronic illness.

If you become discouraged by a chronic illness look to your faith and prayer time to help lift your spirits. In the book of Psalms King David prays, "When anxiety is great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Holy Bible: New International Version. 1984 (Romans 15:5). Zondervan: Grand Rapids

<sup>2</sup> The Holy Bible: New International Version. 1984 (Hebrews 6:19). Zondervan: Grand Rapids

<sup>3</sup> The Holy Bible: New International Version. 1984 (Psalm 94:19). Zondervan: Grand Rapids

Many times a doctor can only treat the symptoms of a chronic illness and not provide a cure for the illness. However, the combination of proper symptom management and faith can help many patients live happier and healthier lives. Faith can help to change our attitudes about our lives and enable one to feel hopeful and well.

In the Bible a man brought his son to Jesus to be healed. When he asked Jesus if He could heal his son Jesus replied, "Anything is possible if you have faith." The father instantly replied, "I do have faith; oh, help me to have more!"<sup>4</sup> It is our prayer that your faith will be strengthened as you cope with a chronic illness. Here are some additional resources that you may find helpful.

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### Resources that can provide additional help in coping with a chronic illness

The following resources have been reviewed by the Christian Medical Association and have been found to contain sound spiritual and medical advice that can assist someone who is suffering from a chronic illness. These books can be found at your local Christian bookstore or you can order them directly from the Christian Medical Association at **888-231-2637**.



**Life on Hold:** by Brunvoll & Seiler. When David Seiler and his daughter Laurel Brunvoll confronted the sudden onset of cancer in their wife and mother, they found themselves in unfamiliar territory: fear, setbacks, treatments, and waiting... *endless waiting...* The result of their trial is *Life on Hold*, a sensitive practical handbook for others making their way through the difficult journey of life-threatening disease. This moving story shows you how to live well and trust God in the face of serious illness-- your own, or that of a person you deeply care for. Paperback, 288 pages.



**Power over Pain:** by Eric M. Chevlen, M.D. and Wesley J. Smith. Power over Pain provides readers with the information they need to take control over their pain - and regain control over their lives. The authors succeed in clearly and simply explaining the complex physiology and pharmacology of pain. But, they go further, providing pain sufferers with terms, tips and tools required to effectively work with their doctors to get the relief they need. Paperback, 235 pages.



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<sup>4</sup> The Holy Bible: New International Version. 1984 (Mark 9: 22-24). Zondervan: Grand Rapids