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Viewpoints

Viewing life as Christ's cross-scarred hand points out the blessings he's overseeing.

The Placebo Effect - April 26, 2013

Allergies are starting to spring up as spring finally yawns its way across Michigan. Thousands of allergy sufferers and I have started watching the pollen forecast, and we're reloading our prescriptions. But what if our allergy treatments are fake?

Did you know that in a survey of 793 General Practitioners, a stunning 97% "admitted that they had recommended a sugar pill or a treatment with no established efficacy." But this is not fraud, because these doctors are employing the Placebo Effect.

When doctors participate in experimental drug research programs, they are sometimes committed to giving their patients dummy medicine. This placebo (fake) medication is important because it enables scientists to compare the health of those who received the dummy drug against those who received the real medicine. But this scientific research method has a side effect: the persons taking the fake pills can also show improvement.

While the Placebo Effect makes it hard for researchers to figure out the medication's real results, scientists started to champion the Placebo Effect as a treatment for healing. As a neuroscientist from Columbia University explained: "Your expectations can have profound impacts on your brain and your health." In other words, research shows how the power of one's hope in a medicine to accomplish good not only has positive psychological effects, it also has positive physical effects. In 2007, UC San Francisco Medical School provided asthma patients with either a placebo or salmeterol (a drug used for severe asthma). The placebo effect objectively improved lung function by about 20% in those receiving fake medicine.

Scoffers claim that the Bible is nothing but a placebo: sugar-coated, empty words that have no true power. Maybe you've been poisoned by these scoffers, and although you still think the Bible is special, it's only because its sugar-coated words induce a mere Placebo Effect.

But what if, my friends, the Bible is real medicine, powerful and active? What if it's the one prescription, written by God, that medicates the heart and soul? And this is, in fact, what it is!

Regular readers of the Word know that faith, hope and confidence are spiritual gifts that affect more than one's emotions. Souls are touched. And bodies are also embodied in a heavenly energy. Consider David. After speaking of anguish, distress, failing strength and bones growing weak, the Psalmist interrupts himself: "But I trust in you, O LORD... my

times are in your hands" (Psalm 31:14-15). Now that's not just any hope, but God-given inspiration. Bible-anchored faith. Spirit-enthused confidence. God-prescribed medicine.

But there's more! For then David praises the LORD for his "wonderful love" (v.21) and even finds the energy and strength to encourage others: "Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD" (v. 23). Spiritual hope and expectation works the works of God. So he who had failing strength and weakened bones was revitalized spiritually, emotionally and physically. David's uplift was not a Placebo Effect, but a Spirit-enthused energy.

How much more blessed than David are we who live on this side of the cross! David believed forward in time to see the cross in "black and white" detail. We look back in time to the cross in "plasma TV" richness. So in the blood that pooled at the foot of the cross, we see the reflection of heaven's goodness and wisdom. In the emptiness of Jesus' tomb we are loaded up in the riches of righteousness and holiness. Through the faith, hope and confidence that Christ's promises produce, Jesus works positive spiritual effects that spill over into psychological effects that spill over into physical effects.

Obviously in the medical world, placebos have found a place (maybe even in my allergy treatments). But Jesus Christ doesn't use or need placebos. He gives himself in and through his word of promise! "He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God" (Revelation 19:13).

Source Material (Links may become inactive over time.)

[The Placebo Effect is Present In Every Medical Intervention](#) @ The Guardian
[Placebos Proven...for Asthma Relief](#) @ Placeboeffect.com

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Blessings to you and your loved ones, Pastor Mike Nitz

