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## Biblical Concepts of Restoration as a Foundation for Lifestyle Change

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## Abstract

The Bible is filled with rich images of healing and restoration—it is a consistent and persistent theme in both the Old and New Testaments. Examples from Genesis, the Law of God, the Sanctuary, the story of Daniel, the New Covenant, the Gospels, Paul’s writings, and the book of Revelation are provided. This understanding of restoration and God’s role as the Master Restorer stands in sharp contrast to many historical and contemporary perspectives. It sets lifestyle change into a context and is fundamental to developing a wholistic and comprehensive approach to lifestyle medicine. One significant role of an advanced practice nurse (APN) in promoting healthy behaviors is to approach lifestyle change with a Biblical foundation, particularly for people of the Christian faith. Using the Disconnected Values Intervention Model and a Biblical foundation for lifestyle change, APNs can appropriately integrate spirituality into patient care and help patients see the link between Scriptural messages of restoration and a strong commitment to making healthy lifestyle choices. Biblical aspects of restoration are examined in the context of teaching four Doctorate of Nursing courses taught at Southern Adventist University (SAU) that emphasize a lifestyle approach to disease prevention and management. The positive impact of teaching these courses from a Biblical foundation can be seen in student survey responses. In addition, student course evaluations were high. Preliminary research findings from a pilot study to evaluate the impact of this course design model on student perception of Biblical worldview are also positive. It is concluded that the four lifestyle courses in SAU’s Doctorate of Nursing Practice program provide many opportunities to guide students in discussion about the Biblical underpinnings of the Christian worldview as it relates to lifestyle change and equips them to apply their faith in the role of an advanced practice nurse.

**Keywords:** restoration, Biblical foundation, lifestyle change, advanced practice nurse, Disconnected Values Model

### Biblical Concepts of Restoration as a Foundation for Lifestyle Change

General health has improved worldwide, thanks to significant progress against infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria, and gains in fighting maternal and childhood illnesses. However, epidemiological trends reveal an aging of the world's population and a concerning increase in disability attributable to non-communicable disease. According to a study of all major diseases and injuries in 188 countries, people around the world are living longer, but many are also living sicker lives for longer (Vos, et al., 2015). In the United States, five of the top seven causes of death are related to chronic, lifestyle-related diseases (Hoyert & Xu, 2012). The challenge today is to identify more effective ways of preventing and treating preventable chronic disease.

The recognition of the central role of behaviors such as tobacco use, poor diet, physical inactivity, and inadequate sleep has resulted in lifestyle change as the first line of therapy in many well-established chronic disease practice guidelines. The enormous potential effects of lifestyle change on mortality, morbidity, and health care costs has led to the specialty of lifestyle medicine, "the systematic practice of assisting individuals and families to adopt and sustain behaviors that can improve health and quality of life" (Lianov & Johnson, 2010, p. 202). Lifestyle medicine is one of the emphases in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program offered at Southern Adventist University (SAU). In this program, students are taught the therapeutic use of evidence-based lifestyle interventions, such as diet, exercise, and stress management. This paper will examine the Biblical, philosophical, and practical aspects of restoration in the context of four DNP courses taught at SAU: 1) NRS-728: Introduction to Lifestyle Therapeutics; 2) NRS-734: Educating & Motivating Lifestyle Change; 3) NRS-744: Exercise Modalities for Lifestyle Change; and 4) NRS-746: Nutritional Approaches for Disease Prevention and Management.

#### The Theme of Restoration in Scripture

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the verb "restore" as to bring back to or put back something to a former or original state (Restore, n.d.). The promise of restoration, "I will restore you to health and heal your wounds, declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 30:17, New International Version), is a repeated theme throughout the Bible, offering hope when all else seems to contradict it. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is filled with rich images of healing and restoration—it is a consistent and persistent theme in both the Old and New Testaments. This theme of restoration provides a foundation for correctly understanding sin and suffering, God's plan for His creation, and His unstoppable quest to save His people and restore them to His image.

#### The Master Restorer

In numerous Old and New Testament passages and stories, readers encounter the God who intends for His people to be well and who works constantly to save and restore a creation so deeply wounded by sin. It was Christ's mission "to bring to men complete restoration. He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character" (White, 1905, p. 17). Consequently, the Biblical perspective of health and healing is a message about the Master Restorer working in each dimension of the human experience to make man whole. This is the message that Ellen White received from a messenger by her bed one night when she was very ill and expected to die. She relates: "In the night season One stood by my bedside and said to me, "Christ is the Restorer; Satan is the Destroyer. I am your Redeemer, and I will heal you" (White, 1994, p.150). In a similar statement, White wrote, "the Lord Jesus appeared to me in a distinct form and His words were, "Satan is the destroyer, but I am your Restorer. Pain and affliction will try your faith, but be not discouraged. I am your Restorer" (White, 1990, p. 377).

#### Genesis

The early chapters of Genesis not only tell how life began, but it establishes the basic teaching on who God is and who man is in relation to Him. Humans were the apex of Creation, molded by God's own hand into His own image (Genesis 1:27). Mankind was blessed (Genesis 1:28), given a lifestyle for health (Genesis 1:29), and pronounced as good (Genesis 1:31). When intimacy with God was interrupted by sin, God reveals His heart and plan for redeeming and restoring man (Genesis 3:15). Ellen White wrote:

In the beginning God created man in His own likeness. He endowed him with noble qualities. His mind was well balanced, and all the powers of his being were harmonious. But the Fall and its effects have perverted these gifts. Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man. It was to restore this that the plan of salvation was devised, and a life of probation was granted to man. To bring him back

to the perfection in which he was first created is the great object of life—the object that underlies every other. (White, 1890, p. 595).

That first sacrifice, which provided man with animal skins to cover his nakedness, pointed toward the final sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Himself, and the eternal restoration that would ensue.

### **God's Law**

Restoration can also be seen in God's law, the manual for the Christian life. In the ten commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), God covers all dimensions of life as man is instructed to remember Him (spiritual health), foster healthy relationships (social health), and enjoy mental and physical rest. He also provided many public health principles in the book of Leviticus that are still in use today, such as personal hygiene, pure water supply, sewage disposal, quarantine, early burial, preventing the spread of venereal and skin diseases, diet, and pollution. Not only does God promise a peaceful, whole, happy life to those who keep these laws, but He also references Himself as man's healer:

If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in His eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you. (Exodus 15:26, New International Version).

### **The Sanctuary**

The message of restoration can be appreciated in the earthly sanctuary. In Exodus 25:8, God said, "let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (King James Bible). God wanted to pitch His tent in the midst of His people to help them (Psalm 20:1,2), reveal His glory and power (Psalm 63:1,2), and allow them to discover His ways (Psalm 77:13). A model of the heavenly sanctuary, the earthly sanctuary was a place where God's personal presence and character could be seen, and where He could reveal His plan of salvation and restoration. "Through the sacrificial service, Christ was to be lifted up, and all who would look to Him would live. The whole system of types and symbols was a condensed prophecy of the gospel" (White, 2010, p. 8).

### **The Story of Daniel**

In the familiar story of Daniel and his three friends faced with a decision to eat from the king's table, one can recognize the theme of restoration. "Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way" (Daniel 1:8, New International Version). The Hebrew word for defile, *ga'al*, means to defile, pollute, stain, or desecrate (Strong, 2007). Defilement is language of the temple. Long before the apostle Paul wrote about the body as the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 1 Corinthians 5:19,20; 2 Corinthians 6:16), Daniel and his three companions, accustomed to worshipping in the Jerusalem temple, realized that God now wanted to dwell in their hearts and bodies. They made a commitment to remain faithful to God and His laws in every dimension of their lives, and God blessed them with unsurpassed physical health, knowledge, and understanding.

### **The New Covenant**

In Jeremiah 31:31-34, God describes the new covenant made with His beloved people. In this covenant language, one can see God's plan to restore His people to His original intention. God's purpose is to restore man's right standing with Him by forgiving wickedness and remembering sins no more (Hebrews 8:12). He offers inner transformation by putting His laws in their minds and writing them on their hearts (Ezekiel 36:26,27). His desire is to restore the relationship with His people, so that they can experience a personal knowledge of Him, just as Adam and Eve enjoyed before the Fall.

### **The Gospels**

God's story of restoration can also be traced through the gospel narrative. The healings of Jesus were the centerpiece of His ministry on earth. In these healings, it is obvious that God's plan of salvation goes beyond spiritual restoration to include physical, mental, and emotional healing. The Greek word *sozo*, used over 100 times in the gospels, is translated as save and deliver (Strong, 2007). This is the meaning in verses such as Matthew 1:21

and John 3:17. However, the word *sozo* is also translated as protect, heal, preserve, be whole, and make whole (Strong, 2007):

And wherever he went--into villages, towns or countryside--they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed [*sozo*]. (Mark 6:56, New International Version).

Jesus taught that a thief had come to steal, kill, destroy, and to devour what God had created (John 10:10). But long before sin and its grim consequences entered the world, God already had a plan to restore fallen men to His original intentions. Jesus highlighted this plan as He shared the antidote to the wake of human suffering left by the enemy: "I have come that they may have life" (John 10:10, New International Version). The Greek word for life in this passage is *zoe*, meaning absolute fullness of life, a life active and vigorous, devoted to God, and blessed (Strong, 2007). Ellen White connected the restorative work of God with the promise of *zoe* life, writing, "Our Saviour is the restorer of the moral image of God in man. He has supplied in the natural world remedies for the ills of man, that His followers may have life and that they may have it more abundantly" (White, 1958, p. 289). Not only is man a recipient of God's work of restoration, but Jesus invites man's participation in His plan to restore all of creation to His image. In Luke 9:2, Jesus bid His followers to go out "to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick" (New International Version).

### **Paul's Writings**

Choosing life may sound easy, but Paul points out that man is "a slave to sin" (Romans 7:14). In Jesus Christ, however, man is rescued (Romans 7:24,25), no longer condemned (Romans 8:1), set free (Romans 8:2), and empowered by God's Spirit to live a new life in union with Christ (Romans 8:3,4). Furthermore, the apostle Paul emphasized the inner transformation that takes place in the mind (Romans 8:5; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5) and leads to a change in one's understanding of self, God, and righteous behavior (Keener, 2016). This new way of thinking (and, subsequently, new behavior) is evidence of the new identity that comes from being in Christ (Romans 6:11; Romans 13:14; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:22-24). This inner transformation is not a matter of self-discipline, but of submission to God (Romans 12:1) and a change in perspective that evaluates everything in light of eternity (Colossians 3:1,2). In fact, the heart of the experience is an ongoing relationship with Christ.

### **Revelation**

Finally, God's plan for the restoration of man and earth is found in the book of Revelation, the grand finale of His story in which God reveals the end of sin and Satan's domain, and the eternal restoration of man (Revelation 21, 22). In a vision, John sees that there will be "a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Revelation 21:1, New International Version). John also saw that the redeemed would see God's face (Revelation 21:4), have access to the healing properties of the tree of life (Revelation 21:2), and never again experience the curse of sin and death (Revelation 21:3). Those who have chosen life and cooperated with God's ways will experience final and complete restoration.

### **Significance of Biblical Concepts of Restoration for Lifestyle Change**

The Biblical concept of restoration puts lifestyle change into a context—a bigger picture than just preventing disease, feeling and looking better, or living longer. It also provides access to a God who heals and saves; who is bigger than the health issues faced today; who creates new health amid suffering; who is working nonstop to completely restore His people in every dimension of life so that they can spend eternity with Him. This understanding of restoration stands in sharp contrast to many historical (i.e., rationalism, empiricism, scholasticism) and contemporary (i.e., secularism, humanism, New Age) perspectives and is fundamental to developing a wholistic and comprehensive approach to lifestyle medicine.

### **Information-Motivation-Strategy Model**

There are many challenges to promoting lifestyle change in today's world. Not only are habits difficult to break, but factors such as stress, socioeconomic status, environment, and other issues create additional barriers blocking positive health behavior change. Numerous theories have emerged for understanding and effectively

promoting positive lifestyle change. Martin, Haskard-Zolnierrek, and DiMatteo (2010) developed the information-motivation-strategy model to promote health behavior change and patient adherence to treatment management (see Figure 1).

In this model, three factors are necessary: (a) information, (b) motivation, and (c) strategy. Information is what a person needs to know—susceptibility, severity, risks, benefits, guidelines, etc. Motivation is an internal process that creates the desire to change, and is related to one’s perceived level of importance or value. In other words, if a person places value or importance on health or on a particular behavior, he will be more motivated to make health behavior change. Strategy is the plan or approach to change that will help a person be successful in his behavior change attempt. It is closely related to one’s self-efficacy, or confidence in his ability to successfully change behavior. Martin, Haskard-Zolnierrek, and DiMatteo maintain that before a person can change, he must (1) know what change is necessary (information); (2) desire the change (motivation); and (3) have the tools to achieve and maintain the change (strategy that builds self-efficacy). A simple way of looking at the components of this model is “I know,” “I want,” and “I can,” therefore, “I act.”

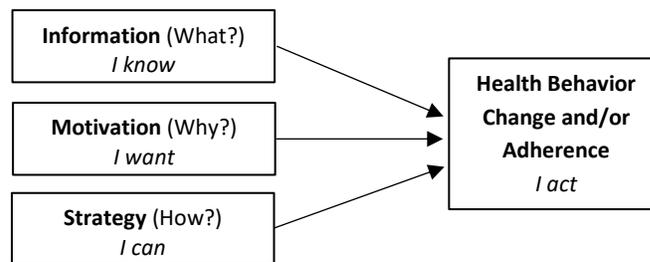


Figure 1. Information-motivation-strategy model (adapted). *Health Behavior Change and Treatment Adherence* (p. 19), by L. R. Martin, K. B. Haskard-Zolnierrek, & M. R. DiMatteo, 2010, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.

### Disconnected Values Theory

Anshel (2016) focused on the motivation aspect of change when he developed the Disconnected Values Intervention Model (see Figure 2). The goal of the Disconnected Values Intervention Model (DVM) is to encourage a person to replace at least one unhealthy behavior with one or more healthier behavior. The person is encouraged to consider the costs and long-term consequences of the unhealthy behavior. In addition, the provider helps the person to identify her deepest values and reflect on whether there is an inconsistency between her values and her actions. After acknowledging that the consequences of this inconsistency are not acceptable, an action plan is generated jointly by the provider and the patient that is intended to create at least one healthier behavior. Anshel maintains that behavior change is more likely to be permanent when one concludes that life satisfaction is linked to behaving in a way that is consistent with one’s deepest values.

### Role of Spirituality in Lifestyle Change

There is much evidence in the literature linking one’s spirituality with health. Koenig’s research and extensive review of the literature found that spirituality was strongly associated with superior health outcomes (Koenig, 1999; Koenig, 2008). He advocates for the application of religious and spiritual beliefs in promoting health behavior. Consequently, one significant role of advanced practice nurses (APNs) in promoting healthy behaviors should be to approach lifestyle change with a Biblical foundation, particularly for people of the Christian faith.

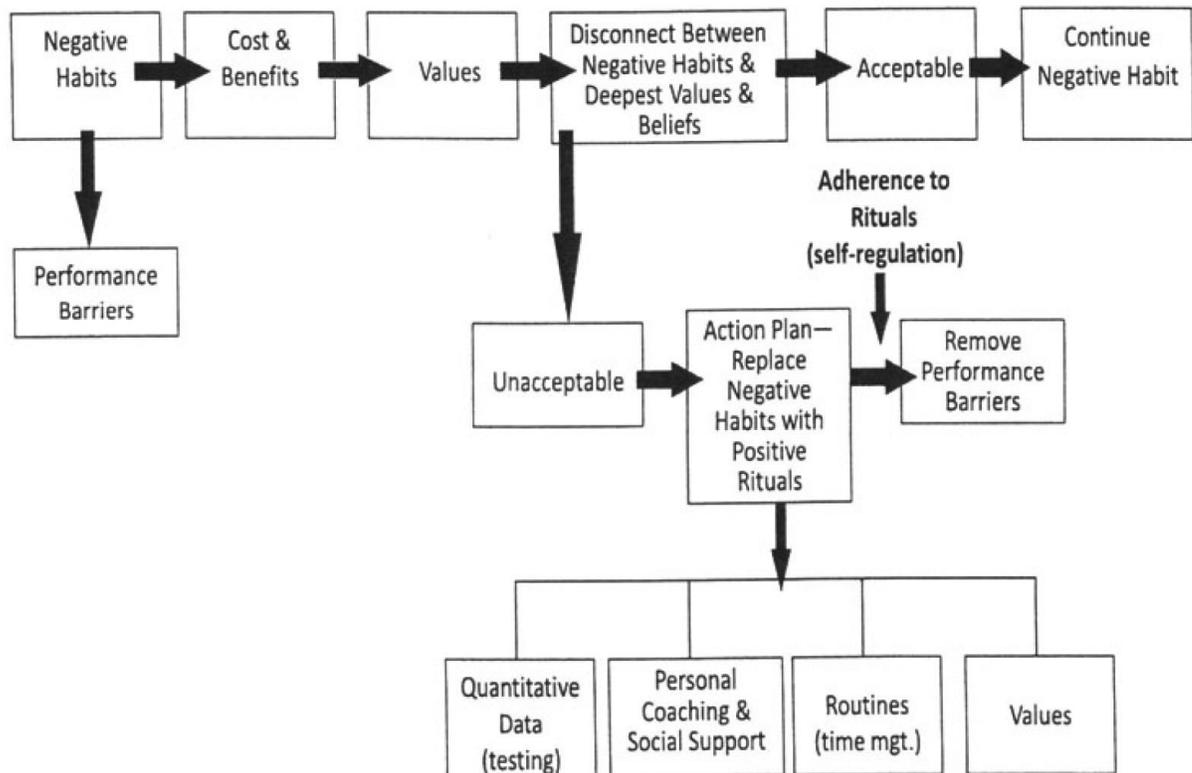


Figure 2. Disconnected Values Intervention Model. *Intervention strategies for changing health behavior.* (p. 184), by M. H. Anshel, 2016, New York, NY: Routledge.

For the Christian, there is a culture of wellness and a mandate, clearly articulated in Scripture, to develop and maintain healthy habits. In fact, above and beyond the dominant theme of restoration in Scripture, Anshel (2016) noted over 56 passages in the Old and New Testaments that specifically depict a healthy lifestyle, including 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 and 1 Corinthians 10:31. Anshel notes that,

It is bewildering—and wrong—for a person to proclaim a strong spiritual identity and observe the customs of their faith and yet not maintain healthy behavior patterns that would improve his or her devotion to a higher power. The consequence is less energy and poorer general health toward practicing one’s faith to a higher power. In addition, despite knowledge of their religious or spiritual text, these individuals appear to ignore or discount the importance of many passages that lend strong support for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Thus, it would seem logical that spiritual use of the DVM should include the link between meaningful Scriptural messages and a strong commitment to making healthy lifestyle choices. (Anshel, 2016, p. 156).

Using the DVM and a Biblical foundation for lifestyle change, APNs can appropriately integrate spirituality into patient care and help patients see the link between Scriptural messages of restoration and a strong commitment to making healthy lifestyle choices. They can be reminded that negative health habits keep them from fully carrying out God’s mission. Omartian (1996) asserts that “without good health you cannot do all that the Lord has for you to do and you cannot be all the Lord wants you to be” (p. 117). Patients can be encouraged to make lifestyle changes that will ultimately bring glory to the God they worship. As they submit to God and experience an ongoing relationship with Christ, God’s Spirit will transform their thinking and empower them to live

a new life. The abundant life that Jesus promised is not just for the future but, like salvation, can begin this side of the Second Coming.

### **Concepts of Restoration in SAU Doctoral Nursing Courses**

Koenig (2008), after significant research and publications on spirituality and health, recommends that health professionals consider patient spirituality or religiosity.

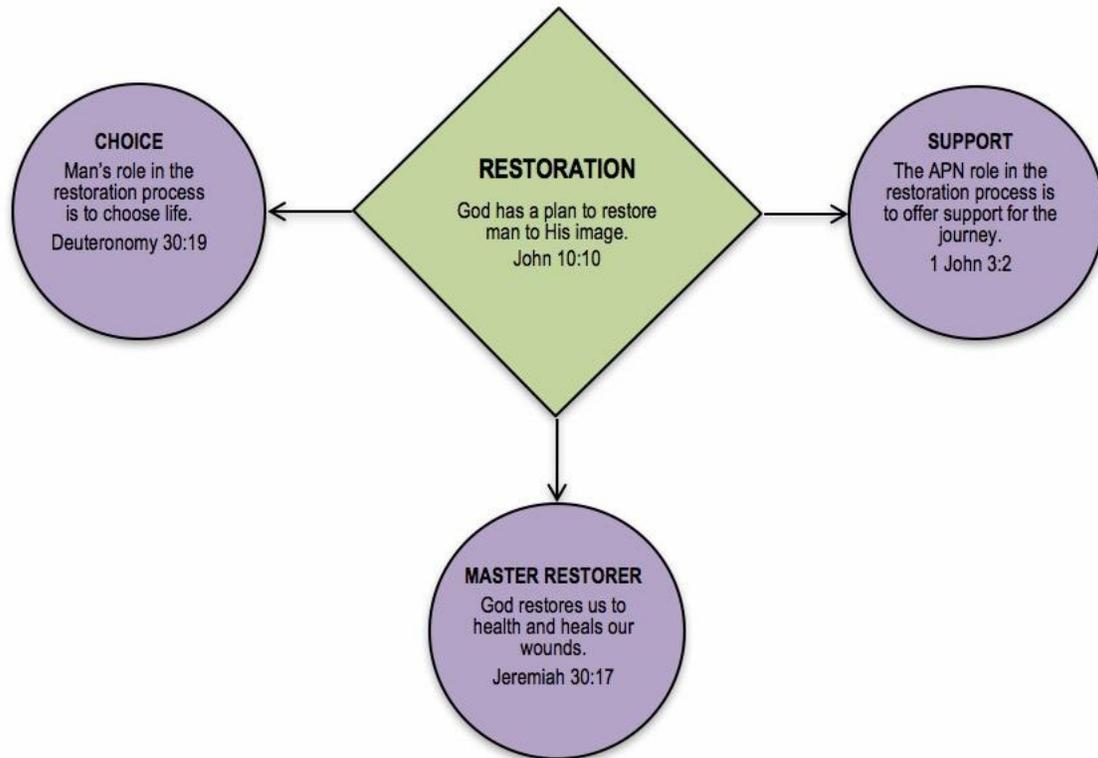
Integrating spirituality into patient care should be a priority because so many medical patients have spiritual needs, spiritual conflicts, or derive comfort from religious beliefs and traditions, this makes a strong argument for training health professionals to assess, respect, and make accommodations for patients' spiritual beliefs and practices (Koenig, 2008, p. 172)

Koenig contends that many patients would like to have faith included in their health care, and that spiritual needs should be recognized and addressed by their health care providers. And, as the DVM points out, one's spiritual beliefs may be linked to the individual's deepest values. This reasoning provides additional validation for designing and teaching the following DNP courses with Biblical concepts of restoration.

#### **NRSG-728: Introduction to Lifestyle Therapeutics**

In *NRSG-728: Introduction to Lifestyle Therapeutics*, a course taught in the first semester of the doctoral program, the foundation is laid for the DNP emphasis on a lifestyle medicine approach. Students explore current epidemiological trends in lifestyle-related disease, the biological basis and clinical evidence for the use of various lifestyle therapeutics in preventing and treating disease, and a Biblical perspective for health and healing (see Figure 3). The key Biblical concept in this course is *Restoration*, and thus God is introduced as the Master Restorer, who counters the enemy's infliction of pain and suffering with complete restoration (Jeremiah 30:17) and abundant life (John 10:10). Man's role in this restoration process is to choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19) and follow a formula for living found in the Genesis story of Creation. Each letter in the CREATION model describes a principle that promotes optimal health: Choice, Rest, Environment, Activity, Trust, Interpersonal Relationships, Outlook, and Nutrition. This model is useful for empowering patients to visualize the benefits of a healthier lifestyle, prompting steps in the right direction. APNs also play a vital role in this restoration process by promoting and supporting lifestyle change (1 John 3:2).

In the first lecture of the course, the story is shared of a man's passionate and diligent restoration of a 1947 Ford 2-door Sedan, interjected with pauses to connect the rich imagery of the story with the Master Restorer's work in men's lives to make them whole and restore them spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically—to give them *zoe* life. Weekly devotional videos continue the restoration theme with a verse-by-verse focus on the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23, whose ongoing presence and care for His sheep epitomize the very distinct and real presence of God in the lives of His children as He empowers them to live an abundant life.



*Figure 3.* Biblical course concepts and examples for NRSG-728: Introduction to Lifestyle Therapeutics  
This introduction to lifestyle therapeutics, viewed through the Biblical concept of restoration and the CREATION Health framework, enables the APN to become more aware of the substantial role that they may play in both individual and population-based health care and healthcare reform.

#### **NRSG-734: Educating and Motivating Lifestyle Change**

The course *NRSG-734: Educating & Motivating Lifestyle Change* is designed to ensure that the APN is able to not only advocate and prescribe change, but also effectively educate and motivate patients for lifestyle change utilizing theoretical concepts, motivational interviewing, and health coaching skills. The key Biblical concept for this course is *Guide*, meaning “to assist (a person) to travel through, or reach a destination in, an unfamiliar area, as by accompanying or giving directions to the person” (Guide, n.d.) (see Figure 4).

The importance of a guiding relationship is noted in 3 John 2, “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul” (English Standard Version). The ancient Greek word translated as well in this verse is *euodoo*. A compound word, *euodoo* was formed from the words *eu*, meaning good or well, and *hodos*, meaning road, progress, or journey (Strong, 2007). Therefore, *euodoo* means “to help on the road, succeed in reaching.” The Apostle John was praying that the believers would experience the guidance that they needed to reach their destination of physical and spiritual health. APNs have the privilege of providing guidance for their patients—to assist them to travel through unfamiliar areas and experience the restoration that God has planned for them.

A review of health behavior change theories reveals several common criteria for successful positive change: information (what), motivation (why), self-efficacy (how), and support (who). Each can be found in God’s Word. By guiding patients in the change process, APNs help to teach, inspire, empower, and support them in God’s plan to restore them to good health (Jeremiah 29:11). APNs need to be skilled in understanding behavior change and in partnering with clients to teach, inspire, empower, and support them in the process of undergoing these changes. The course content, as well as devotional thoughts, are organized around these four concepts.

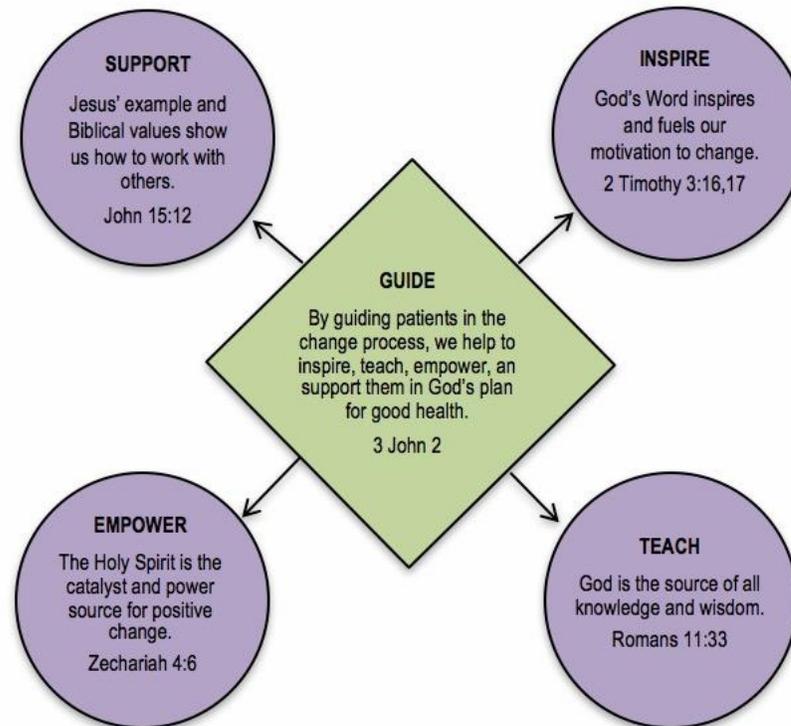


Figure 4. Biblical course concepts and examples for NRSG-734: Educating & Motivating Lifestyle Change

**Teach.** Before a person can change, he needs to know what change is necessary (information). In Romans 11:33 one can see the true source of information and knowledge, as Paul exclaims, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!” (English Standard Version).

**Inspire.** God’s Word also gives the desire to change (motivation). 2 Timothy 3:16,17 states that “all scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (English Standard Version).

**Empower.** In addition to information and motivation, an individual must have the tools to achieve and maintain the change (self-efficacy). Although confidence in one’s ability to change is essential, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is the catalyst and real source of power for positive change. In Isaiah 43:19, God says, “For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland” (New Living Translation). He also reminds in Zechariah 4:6 that change comes “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts” (English Standard Version).

**Support.** The Bible has a lot to say about God’s ideal for believers to live connected to others (support). In that way, they can lean on each other, journey together, and offer each other emotional support during difficult times. God valued this supportive approach so much that He provided a living example through the life of Christ. Ellen White wrote, “the Savior mingled with men as One who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me’” (White, 1905, p. 143). It was in these conversations with people that Jesus used teachable moments, asked powerful questions to help them recognize their need, and connected them with the most important things of life. As APNs offer patients a supportive relationship for educating and motivating lifestyle change, they are following this Divine pattern. Jesus

taught, “this is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12, English Standard Version).

*NRSG-734: Educating & Motivating Lifestyle Change*, taught through the Biblical concepts of guide, teach, inspire, empower, and support, enables the APN to become skilled in understanding behavior change, introducing patients to the real Power for change, and supporting them in the change process.

**NRSG-744: Exercise Modalities for Lifestyle Change**

The Biblical concept of *Strength* is emphasized in *NRSG-744: Exercise Modalities for Lifestyle Change* (see Figure 5). This course introduces the APN to basic concepts of exercise physiology, and teaches them to integrate physical activity assessment, prescription, and counseling as a regular part of their health care practice.

Although the Bible doesn’t mention exercise and physical fitness directly, the concepts of strength, training, and discipline are prevalent and congruent with the Biblical theme of restoration. With over 650 skeletal muscles in the human body, it is clear that God created man for strength and movement (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 139:13-18). In addition, the heart, a cardiac muscle, starts beating only a few weeks after conception to supply the body with oxygen and nutrients and to remove waste. All of the many physical activities of daily life require cardiovascular and muscular strength. Regular physical activity keeps muscles strong and reduces the risk for many chronic health conditions. While physical activity is undoubtedly important to health and fitness today, investing in spiritual growth and deepening a relationship with God has value both now and for eternity. 1 Timothy 4:8 states, “Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come” (English Standard Version).

Biblical concepts of strength are further organized in this course into receiving strength, loving God with strength, and promoting strength to others.

**Receiving strength.** Scripture teaches that God is the source of strength and that He promises to empower humanity with His strength (Isaiah 40:29-31). The Bible records many stories of God’s supreme strength displayed on behalf of His people. As they learn to rely on Him, they are fully filled with His endless current of divine power (Ephesians 3:20).

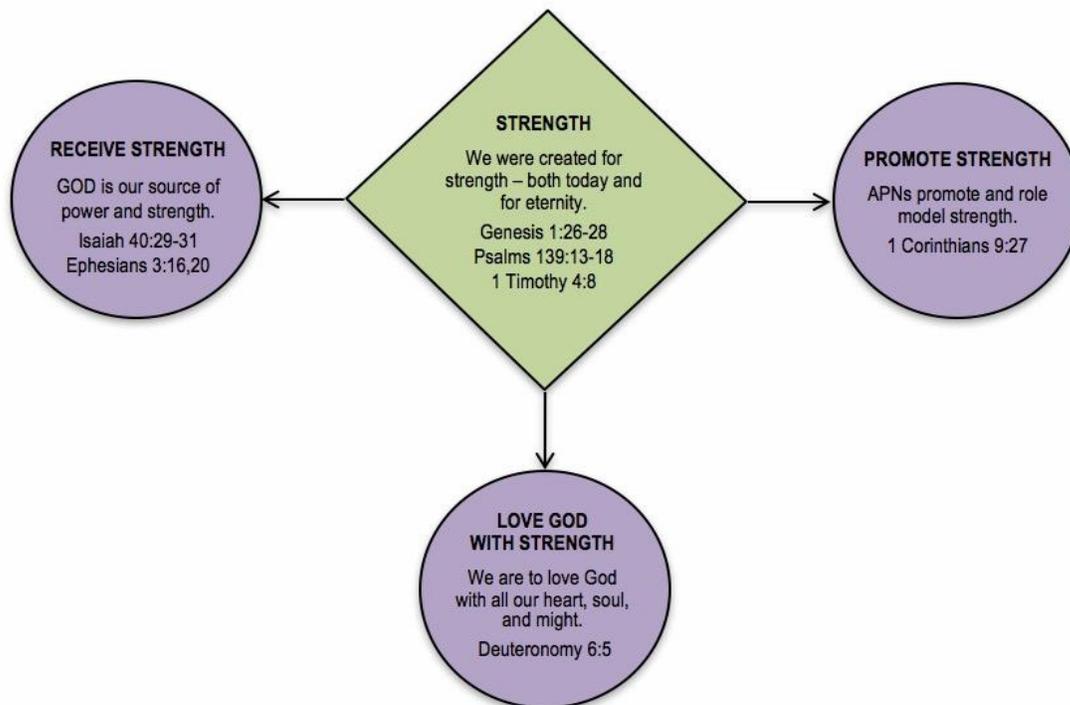


Figure 5. Biblical course concepts and examples for NRSG-744: Exercise Modalities for Lifestyle Change

**Loving God with strength.** Strength is also one of the avenues through which God's people are called to love Him (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). DeRouchie (2013) points out that the noun translated might or strength in Deuteronomy 6:5 usually functions as the adverb "very" in the Old Testament. Accordingly, one is to love the Lord with all his "very-ness." Interestingly, the Greek translation of this word is "power," and the Aramaic translation is "wealth." These translations are reminders that the strength of a person is not simply physical power, but what he has at his disposal. In effect, believers are called to love God with everything they have available.

**Promoting strength to others.** A final Biblical concept related to strength is that of encouraging leaders to practice what they teach. Paul wrote, "I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27, New Living Translation). This challenge is certainly relevant for APNs who seek to influence their patients to be more physically active.

Physical activity is integral in the prevention, treatment, and management of many of the most common chronic health conditions encountered in clinical practice. In this course, APNs not only learn to assess, prescribe, individualize, and evaluate physical activity programs based on patient need, but they are also equipped to explore and discuss Biblical perspectives of strength that provide a balance to the world's attention on physical fitness and performance. In addition, a focus on the Bible's strength passages (Morgan, 2016) during the weekly devotionals equip APNs to encourage patients to tap into the only Source of Strength needed for meeting life's challenges.

#### **NRS746: Nutritional Approaches to Disease Prevention and Management**

Often, the most powerful medicine prescribed is the food that makes up a patient's diet. *NRS7-746: Nutritional Approaches to Disease Prevention & Management* is a course that is designed to provide the APN with an evidence-based approach for plant-based nutritional medicine in the prevention and management of chronic disease.

*Nourish* is the key Biblical concept emphasized in this course (see Figure 6). Nourishment is essential for physical, mental, and spiritual restoration. The definition of the word *nourish* is to sustain with food or nutriment; to supply with what is necessary for life, health, and growth; to strengthen, build up, or promote (Nourish, n.d.). In the beginning, the Creator established an ideal diet to nourish the human body and promote optimal health (Genesis 1:29). But no matter how healthy one's diet, eating it will not enable him to live forever. Man lives in a fallen world in which sickness, suffering, and death are a part. This is why Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35, New International Version). He envisions eternity for those He loves. His Word, the Bible, contains the guidelines for living a happy, healthy life here on Earth, and it also contains the spiritual diet to enable us to live forever (Matthew 4:4). Many Biblical passages pointing to the link between food choices and physical and spiritual health have been validated through research (Daniel 1:11-21; 1 Corinthians 10:31). Undoubtedly, both physical and spiritual food are gifts from a loving God for man's restoration, and one of the reasons He invites him to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8, New International Version). The word translated as taste means "to perceive; to try something by experiencing it" (Strong, 2007). Just like tasting and savoring and enjoying one's food, God intends that a relationship with Him be experienced personally—to know first-hand that He is good. This introduction to evidenced-based therapeutic nutritional theory and clinical practice, coupled with a Biblical concept of nourishment, provides a foundation for a deeper understanding of the relationship between food and health, and offers a wholistic perspective that empowers the APN to help patients transition to a healthier, whole-food, plant-based way of living.

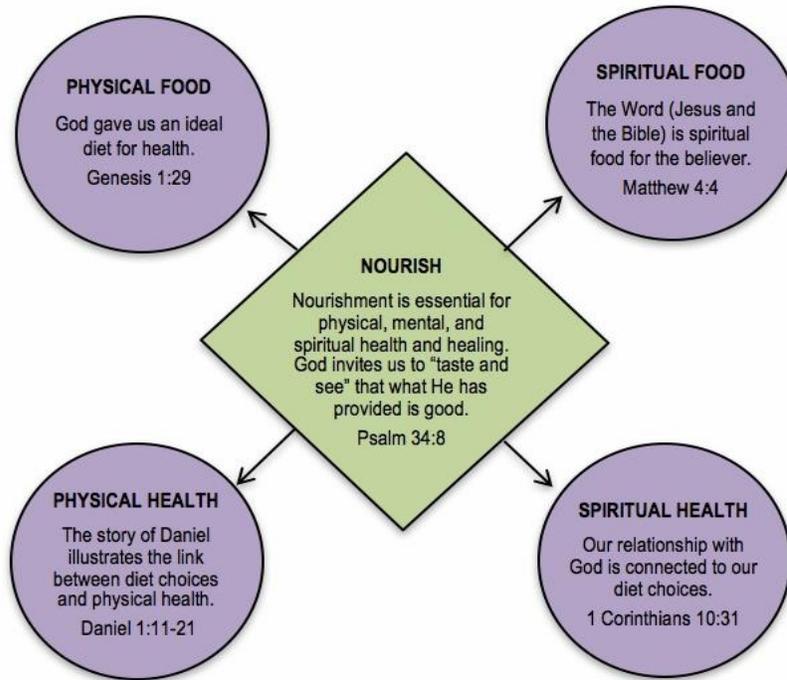


Figure 6. Biblical course concepts and examples for NRSG-746: Nutritional Approaches for Disease Prevention and Management

**Evaluation of Teaching from a Biblical Foundation**

In addition to an examination of the Biblical framework for these four lifestyle courses, it is important to evaluate the impact of teaching them from a Biblical foundation. Is it worth the time to design and teach a course from a Biblical foundation? What is it contributing to student learning? An outcome evaluation was assessed through the student course evaluations. In addition, the impact of teaching from a Biblical foundation can be seen in student survey responses.

**Student Course Evaluations**

A review of the scores for question seven of the Student Course Evaluations submitted at the end of the Fall 2014 through Summer 2016 semesters was reviewed. Students were asked to rate the following statement on a five-point Likert scale: “The instructor helped me see the subject matter from a Biblical perspective.” As noted in Table 1, student evaluation scores for this question were 4.80 or higher for each of the four courses. Although this question does not measure change in attitude or behaviors, it does indicate that the Biblical concepts presented in these courses were discerned by the students.

Table 1 Student Course Evaluations

Course	Score
NRSG-728 Introduction to Lifestyle Therapeutics (Fall 2014)	5.00
NRSG-734 Educating & Motivating Lifestyle Change (Winter 2015)	5.00
NRSG-744 Exercise Modalities (Summer 2015)	4.80
NRSG-728 Introduction to Lifestyle Therapeutics (Fall 2015)	5.00
NRSG-746 Nutritional Approaches (Fall 2015)	5.00

### Student Survey Responses

In April 2016, student feedback was solicited via email to those who had taken courses redesigned with a Biblical foundation. Although not anonymous, the students were told that their response was optional. The following questions were asked: (1) Did the Biblical foundation outlined in the course syllabus come through during the semester? and, (2) How, if at all, did it impact your thinking and understanding of the material learned? Following are some of their responses.

- “I have so appreciated the applications you make to Biblical foundations. The verses are very applicable to the topics and I am very thankful that I have chosen to attend SAU where the Bible is used as an authority on the topic of health and lifestyle. I am grateful for your worship talks that keep us focused on the true issues and our missions in this world.”
- “Your [teaching] approach brings Biblical content and current science into synergistic relevancy on each topic taught.”
- “In [NRS734] you connected the principles of coaching people toward healthy lifestyle changes with gifts so well that when you asked for one take away point I responded with one of the gifts—the gift of presence, and tied it into my spiritual walk, my family life, and my practice. Each gift—perspective, presence, clarity, and support—are a different type of guiding. You taught me that I cannot direct another person's journey toward health, but I ... assist the person's journey toward health using the gifts and tools you introduced. Your devotions always help me to see the God perspective.”
- “I was very blown away by the concepts presented in the CREATION model [in NRS728]. Out of a single word, a powerful message arises that is simple to grasp, and yet complex enough to address some of the most sordid aspects of our fallen nature--disease, suffering, disasters, and death... Restoration ... that word alone yields hope and a chance to taste a sweet life once again physically, psychosocially, and spiritually.”
- “I will always remember your first lesson on restoration and the PowerPoint with the car. That lecture blessed me so much I came away from the intensive knowing I had chosen the right University... You definitely got your point across that God loves us and wants to restore us to a state of physical, emotional, and spiritual health ... and helped me understand the material from the Lord's perspective.”
- “The Biblical concept of restoration that you presented at the beginning of the Intro to Lifestyle Therapeutics course was powerful! I have thought about that presentation many times since...I believe this Biblical concept set the foundation for the entire course... I feel so blessed to be working on my degree at a university that has this focus, and with professors who weave Biblical concepts into courses in very meaningful and practical ways.”

This sampling of student responses illustrates the positive impact that teaching from a Biblical foundation can have on a students' worldview. The Biblical concepts introduced in devotional presentations and course lectures helped students to undergird lifestyle change with Biblical principles. Additionally, their personal lives and professional practice were impacted in meaningful ways. These informal survey responses indicate that teaching the courses from a Biblical foundation was effective.

### Biblical Foundations for Faith & Learning Research Study

To date, 70 professors have attended training presented by SAU's *Center for Teaching Excellence and Biblical Foundations of Faith and Learning* to learn how to design courses using SAU's own Higher Education Biblical Foundation Course Design Model. However, there has not yet been any formal research to evaluate the model's effectiveness. A pilot study was launched in the Fall 2016 semester to evaluate the impact of this course design model on student perception of Biblical worldview. In this study, students are asked to complete an online survey consisting of Likert and open-ended questions prior to accessing course materials at the beginning of the semester, again at the completion of the semester, and once again six months later. To date, only 20 responses have been collected from the DNP students. However, preliminary research findings are positive.

### Benefit

Students were asked to answer the following statement on a five-point Likert scale: Do you feel that you have benefitted from taking a course that was designed and taught from a Biblical foundation? Eighty percent (80%) of students marked “strongly agree” to this question.

#### **Like Best/Least**

Students were asked, What did you like best about taking a course designed and taught from a Biblical foundation? Their responses included the following: (a) “God is the author of all knowledge and wisdom. The principles of subjects taught in class are made clear when presented from a Biblical perspective.” (b) “I am very pleased to connect my lifestyle and my goals to help others with a Biblical Foundation.” (c) “Godly application to the subject.” (d) “Helped me get closer to God.” There were no responses to the question, What did you like least about taking a course designed and taught from a Biblical foundation?

#### **Impact on Worldview**

Students were asked, In what ways has participating in a course designed and taught from a Biblical foundation impacted your worldview? Their responses included the following: (a) “I choose to follow Christ. By knowing God's perspective in a matter, I can adjust my thoughts and actions to fulfill His desires.” (b) “It has strengthened my faith and has helped me see a clearer Biblical worldview.” (c) “It solidified and validated my purpose and approach to incorporate my beliefs [into practice].” (d) “It helped to connect my worldview with important and meaningful spiritual applications.”

#### **Personal Impact**

Students were asked, In what ways has a course designed and taught from a Biblical foundation impacted you personally? Their responses included the following: (a) “I have been transformed, my faith increased, and spiritual growth and maturity accomplished.” (b) “It has helped me to be more healthy and live life fully.” (c) “Drawn me closer to Christ and helped me to connect various aspects of health with God's ultimate design.” (d) “It has helped me bring my relationship with God into every aspect of my life.” (e) “I'm making healthier choices.”

#### **Professional Impact**

Finally, students were asked, In what ways has a course designed and taught from a Biblical foundation impacted your professional role as an advanced practice nurse? Their responses included the following: (a) “I am designing a workshop to teach the principles of CREATION health to students at our University.” (b) “[It has] transformed my nursing practice to be aligned with God's health principles.” (c) “These courses have helped to provide a rationale for the importance of spiritual assessment and intervention in the practice setting.” (d) “It has helped me to incorporate a Biblical approach to health into my own role. I believe it is an important aspect of nursing that must be shared.” (e) “It encourages me to see restoration in my patients as intended by God.”

#### **Conclusion**

The Biblical perspective of health and wellness is a message about the Master Restorer working relentlessly to make man whole and restore him—not just spiritually, but emotionally, mentally, and physically. Mankind is invited to participate in God's work of restoration by choosing life (Deuteronomy 30:19) and cooperating with Him who provides everything needed for life and godliness (Exodus 15:26; 2 Peter 1:3). Furthermore, this message of restoration is to be shared. “We should teach others how to preserve and to recover health ... and we should point them to Him who alone can restore” (White, 1923, p. 31). The four lifestyle courses in SAU's DNP program provide many opportunities to guide students in discussion about the Biblical underpinnings of the Christian worldview as it relates to lifestyle change and equips them to apply their faith in the role of an advanced practice nurse.

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