

Whether Flu or a Cold or Strep Throat, Have All to the Glory of God

On the front of our church is a plaque that bears the words, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). The beauty of this verse is that its great power lies in its smallest word: the Greek word *ti*, which means “anything.” Thus, the verse literally reads, “So, whether you eat or drink or do *anything*, do all things to the glory of God.” I do not think *anything* is excluded from “anything.” This means that our calling—indeed our joy—as Christians is to plot and scheme to contrive of ways to bend everything we do toward the glory of God. Going about our business with integrity, doing our taxes honestly, eating breakfast gratefully, studying the Scriptures deeply, choosing forms of entertainment wisely, making love to our spouses passionately, remaining abstinent steadfastly if we’re unmarried, etc.—properly pursued, these are all means to glorify God. Even sickness is meant to provide us with a new and uncommon means with which to glorify our Father.

When Leslie and I returned to Illinois after Christmas break, I was laid low with a nasty case of the flu. It was by far the most all-inclusive sickness I have experienced since high school, complete with a 103° fever, a headache that made my eyes throb, piercing cold chills followed immediately by sweltering waves of heat, a painful cough and scorched throat, etc. But as I languished in bed, crying (quite literally) for my wife, 1 Corinthians 10:31 was brought to my mind and I was given a moment of pause to remind myself that even in sickness, God means for me to delight myself in him by glorifying him. I cannot say that the next days of sickness were entirely pleasant, but I did have the unspeakable pleasure of experiencing the goodness and grace of God in a new and unexpected way. So, let me offer a few suggestions from personal experience that might help you, during this cold and flu season, to magnify the worth and beauty of God—even in illness.

1. Reflect on our utter frailty. Sickness is a powerful way to remind ourselves that we are not so strong and self-sufficient as we think we are. But God *is* all-sufficient and tenderly cares for us in our weakness so that *his* strength might be magnified (2 Cor 12:10).
2. Reflect on the reality of hell. Jonathan Edwards once resolved, “when I feel pain, to think of the pains of martyrdom and hell.” Hell is where people suffer unbearably, with no healing available, and with no gracious, forgiving and merciful God to whom they can pray. Let the thought of hell drive us toward brokenhearted repentance.
3. Reflect on the kindness of God in providing people to care for us. As Leslie was applying a cold compress to my forehead, it occurred to me that I have never in my life had to deal with a particularly nasty illness without my mother or my wife by my side. Both of them have been God’s grace embodied in loving helpers when I have hurt.
4. Reflect on the wonder of the human body and God’s marvelous construction of it. Most of the symptoms we experience in sickness are actually outward evidences of the mechanisms of our complex immune systems fighting off disease, which happens without any thought or intention on our part!
5. Above all, see sickness, insofar as it prevents us from doing many of our typical daily tasks, as an opportunity to spend extended time in prayer and meditation. I so often

forget how wonderful it can be simply to lie on my back, thinking about and conversing with my beloved Father.

For the glory of God in all things,
Bryan C. McWhite