

A Case for Biblical Oncology

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A series of articles for Christians with Cancer

My grandmother was born in New Jersey in 1900. Although she was born into a very English family (surname Thompson, mother née Morgan), she was raised from infancy by a French nanny. So, unlike most Americans of English heritage born in the United States, she grew up speaking French. She shared with me that, throughout her life, French was her “language of reference.” What that meant to her was, to say things in English she first perceived what she was going to say in French, and then mentally and verbally, converted it to English. In her entire 86 years of life, her language of reference never changed, even after the French nanny was long gone.

I believe the concept of language of reference has significant implications in many areas of life. For example: After high school, I entered an engineering school for my undergraduate degree in mathematics. My courses consisted almost exclusively of math, science and engineering topics. I took a couple of semesters of humanities and German, but I never had a course in psychology or abnormal psychology. After college, I went on to graduate school and studied computer science at the Master’s level. Again, I did not study psychology of any type. I then entered seminary to study for the ministry. There was

no study of psychology there either—only the scripture and what it had to say about the human condition. Unlike the majority of my seminary classmates who had liberal arts degrees and had studied psychology in college, scripture became my language of reference for the human condition, not psychology. As a result, when I began counseling in a church environment and decided to read psychology to see what it was all about, psychology did not shape my thinking. Rather, psychological concepts either fit into my language of reference or they did not. The bible was my language of reference and, like my grandmother’s language of reference, remains so to this day. This gives me, I believe, a unique perspective on the place and value of psychological concepts as they relate to counseling.

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This same concept applies to my study of the etiology of cancer. Not having taken any medical courses in college, when I began reading books about the development of cancer such as Weinberg’s *One Renegade Cell*, I could see those developmental processes, or hallmarks, of cancer very

clearly through my language of reference. As a result, the approach I saw to counteract those processes, *The Cancer Cure Experiment*, grew out of my language of reference: the Word of God. This gives me a very unique perspective and insight into the spiritual aspects of both the formation and cure of cancer.

So, the medical practitioner, with his or her medical language of reference operates as a medical oncologist. This role is obviously necessary in the research and treatment of cancer; but I maintain that it is not sufficient. The background I bring is that of a *biblical* oncologist, with a biblical language of reference for the research and treatment of cancer. This role is necessary as a complement to medical oncology, although much less obvious to the majority of people; but it too is not sufficient. Whereas one approach comes at the problem of cancer from a medical perspective, the other approach comes at the problem of cancer from a spiritual perspective. The two approaches can—and should—meet together to provide a complementary approach for the treatment and cure of cancer. After all, from the biblical oncologist’s perspective, both the practice of medicine and a biblical approach to healing are tools given to us by our Creator.

What is biblical oncology? It is the unlikely combination of two well understood terms. Oncology is the study of, and more importantly, the treatment of, cancer. Biblical oncology is the study and treatment of cancer

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from a biblical perspective of the origin and progression of cancer, and the potential for victory over cancer. Just as biblical archaeology brings a different perspective to archaeology, so biblical oncology brings a different perspective to oncology. And also, just as non-biblical archaeology does not view biblical archaeology as invalid, neither should non-biblical (medical) oncology view biblical oncology as invalid. In fact, both biblical and non-biblical oncology bring the strengths of their perspectives and treatments to bear on cancer.

What are the strengths of biblical oncology? Biblical oncology draws its strengths from its biblical worldview and its understanding of the origin and development of cancer, as well as the potential for victory over cancer. Whereas medical oncology sees the origin of cancer rooted in genetic disorder, perhaps a result of, or influenced by, neo-Darwinian or Lamarckian evolution, biblical oncology views the origin of cancer from a spiritual perspective: cancer is a result of the activity of evil on a microbiological level.¹ Even some non-biblical oncologists cite an unbelievable malicious intent² to cancer; however, only biblical oncology identifies that threat: Satan, who is the “thief [who] comes only to steal and kill and destroy.”³ A Biblical oncologist believes that Satan can and does work “in and through” our genetic processes to destroy us. The fact that cancers are so common indicates to the biblical oncologist that there is more involved in the development of cancer than a combination of evolutionary chance activities that result in malignancies.^{4,5}

But the understanding that there is an enemy

seeking destruction does not faze the biblical oncologist, because he or she knows that there are many demonstrated victories in the bible over those seeking destruction of God’s creation. The biblical oncologist understands the biblical paradigms of victory and applies them to the strongholds of cancer that have been identified as “hallmarks of cancer” by medical oncologists.⁶

Thus, the biblical oncologist wields tools to combat cancer that are complementary to the tools available to the medical oncologist. One of the advantages the biblical oncologist has is that while medical oncology deals with disease conditions that are constantly changing (somatic hypermutation⁷) and in need of the development and use of new treatment regimens and modalities,⁸ for the biblical oncologist the enemy never changes, and the biblical victory paradigms never change. The biblical oncologist can continue to provide treatment and hope regardless of the stability of the medical situation of the patient.

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What are the treatment paradigms that guide the biblical oncologist? There are seven scripture passages, and seven names of God—one for each of the strongholds, or hallmarks, of cancer—useful for ministering to the cancer patient:

1. Self-sufficiency in Growth Signals – The Temptation, Fall and Redemption (Genesis 3:1-13, 19, 22; Romans 5:8, 17) – *Jehovah Tsidkenu*: The Lord is My

Righteousness

2. Insensitivity to Growth Inhibitors – Daniel in the Lion’s Den (Daniel 6:1-27) – *Jehovah Shalom*: The Lord is My Peace
3. Inflammatory Microenvironment – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3:13-29) – *Jehovah Mephalti*: The Lord is My Deliverer
4. Tissue Invasion and Metastasis – Moses with Aaron and Hur while Joshua fought the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16) – *Jehovah Nissi*: The Lord is My Banner
5. Evasion of Apoptosis – Noah and the Flood (Genesis 6:5, 7-8, 11-13; 7-21-23, 8:15-17, 9:1-2) – *Jehovah Makkeh*: The Lord Who Smites
6. Sustained Angiogenesis – Joshua and Jericho (Joshua 6:1-27) – *Jehovah Jireh*: The Lord is My Provider
7. Limitless Replicative Potential – Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20:1-30) – *Jehovah Sabaoth*: The Lord is My Protector

These seven biblical paradigms are directed toward individual hallmarks of cancer for the purpose of “pulling down strongholds”⁹ that cancer has developed to overcome the body’s protective defenses that were established by God.

Each of the seven biblical paradigms exhibits

the use of four tools of prayer as weaponry to overcome the evil that seeks the body's destruction. The four tools, or "horsemen," of prayer used by the biblical oncologist are:

1. Prayer that Soars (Worship)
2. Prayer that Sees (Envisioning Victory)
3. Prayer that Strengthens (The Word of God)
4. Prayer that Sustains (Perseverance)

As each weapon of prayer is wielded on a daily basis against the individual strongholds, the body's defenses are strengthened and the inner spirit is encouraged to overcome the enemy's attacks. The biblical oncologist is trained not only to pray in this manner for the cancer patient, but also to teach the cancer patient and his or her family to pray in this way as well.

As the patient and his or her family are encouraged and are given useful roles in the healing process, the enemy no longer has free reign in the body. Jesus Himself spoke about binding the strong man.¹⁰ Jesus "has entered the strong man's house and tied up the strong man. He has plundered the strong man and liberated those the strong man had bound...His power is real and righteous. His power is unleashed to liberate us."¹¹

Just as the Psalmist says in Psalms 107:20, "He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions,"¹² the biblical oncologist is the bearer of God's good news and delivers His word to those who are wrestling in a war with an enemy seeking their destruction. God's word is not the medical oncologist's tool, but it is the biblical oncologist's weapon of warfare,

"mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds." Without the wielding of these weapons, we fight the battle against cancer with only one arm. Why should we ever do so when we are promised that:

"God's word is the biblical oncologist's weapon of warfare, 'mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds.'"

The strong right arm of the Lord is raised in triumph.

The strong right arm of the Lord has done glorious things!

I will not die; instead I will live to tell what the Lord has done.¹³

May it be so!

Notes

¹ “In my earlier years I never stopped to think just exactly how God might be involved in the continuous creation of life, how His angels, at His bidding, might be constantly working at the DNA level to make modifications even as Satan's dark angels were constantly working cleverly and ‘diabolically’ to tear down the marvelous beauty of God's design.” Ralph D. Winter, *Reflections on World Missions*. May 1, 1998. Retrieved October 18, 2016, from *Mission Frontiers*, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/editorial-comment57>.

² “If we were looking at a man-made thing, we would conclude that a fiendishly ingenious mind must be behind it.” M. Ridley, *Genome*, p. 239.

³ John 10:10. New International Version.

⁴ “Evolution reflects God’s creative design and Satan’s perverse influence,” Gregory Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, p. 300.

⁵ “There are good theological reasons for denying that God is the immediate cause of genetic mutations, because if he were, he would be the immediate cause of genetic diseases such as cancer. God is not the author of disease and suffering. Rather he is the implacable foe of disease and suffering. The healing works of Jesus and the cost of Calvary are the guarantee that he is committed ultimately to destroying not only evil but also disease (Isaiah 53:3; Revelation 21:4).” G. Finlay, *Human Evolution: How Random Process Fulfills Divine Purpose*, p. 110.

⁶ Hanrahan, D. and Weinberg, R. A. (2000). The Hallmarks of Cancer. *Cell*, pp. 57-70. Also

Mantovani, A. (2009). Inflaming Metastasis. *Nature*, pp. 36-37.

⁷ “Somatic hypermutation (or SHM) is a mechanism inside cells that is part of the way the immune system adapts to the new foreign elements that confront it. SHM diversifies the receptors used by the immune system to recognize foreign elements and allows the immune system to adapt its response to new threats during the lifetime of the organism,” “Somatic Hypermutation.” *Wikipedia.org*.

⁸ For example, “The commonest type of ovarian cancer evolves at a startling rate, which may allow cancer cells to ‘dodge’ the current standard treatment,” Evolving Ovarian Cancer Cells ‘Dodge’ Treatment with Chemotherapy, <http://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-12-evolving-ovarian-cancer-cells-dodge.html>.

⁹ 2 Corinthians 10:4b. The King James Bible (Cambridge Edition).

¹⁰ “No man can enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.” Mark 3:27. The King James Bible (Cambridge Edition).

¹¹ “Binding the Strong Man,” <http://www.heartlight.org/wjd/matthew/0611-wjd.html>.

¹² New American Standard Version, 1995.

¹³ Psalm 118:16-17. New Living Translation.