

[Theme Music: upbeat smooth jazz bassline.]

Katie Axelson: Welcome to Have Hope; Will Travel, I'm your host Katie Axelson. Today we're going to take on the topic of healing. The entire topic, right now, in one podcast episode... Just kidding, that episode would be like three hours long and podcasts are time-stamped so you already know this episode is not three hours long. We're going to talk about it probably for a couple of weeks which means if I don't hit your topic today hit me over on Instagram at @KatieAxelson. Come and say, "Hey Katie, when are we going to talk about fill-in-the-blank." Because we can't take on the whole concept of healing in one episode, so we'll talk about it in chunks. But I also know the topic of healing can be really triggering for people and if that's you, take a step back and spend the time with the Lord. Also, know that I'm producing this episode three years -- almost three years -- into a hip injury that took us two years to even get a diagnosis on. So I'm with you. Also recognize that our member of the Have Hope; Will Travel ministry team battles through her chronic pain, and she's going to share her story in the next episode. So healing doesn't always look like what we expect, but I genuinely believe that it is always God's will to heal.

Sometimes God heals through miracles, those are awesome! We've got some stories we're going to share of miraculous healings today as well. I had an article in Divine Purpose magazine this month, I talked about when I did not have the faith to heal, God still healed. I was praying over somebody and I didn't have a mustard seed of faith and I saw him healed. You can find the whole story at DivinePurposeMagazine.com. It's always God's will to heal and sometimes He does it instantaneously in a miracle. And sometimes God heals through medicine. It is an incredibly powerful tool that he has given us in modern medicine and I have personally experienced the power of healing through medicine in ways that I could never even imagine. And it's nothing short of miraculous, the way that brains work, to be able to know "Oh, this is going to help this issue." It's remarkable.

And sometimes God heals the hearts of the brokenhearted because healing didn't happen in the way that we thought. Because we still have pain. Because our loved one still died. I've seen and experienced healing and all three capacities. And my rule of thumb when it comes to pursuing healing is "Say a prayer, and take an Advil." Because frankly

I don't really care which works. Healing still coming through that prayer, through that Advil, it doesn't matter to me. Healing still comes. The first time I ever experienced prayerful healing is one of those "say a prayer, take an Advil" nights. It was at a ministry training where a fire hose us with information literally all weekend long, Friday, Saturday, Sunday. On Saturday around dinner time they finally gave us a break: all of 30 minutes. Which was just long enough to realize how terrible we felt. It was spring, my allergies were awful, I couldn't intake any more information, my head was throbbing. We still had a training session that night. The responsible adult decision would have been to go to bed and get notes from somebody in the morning. But that's not what I did, I've got some people-pleaser tendencies and they were in full force that night. I remember sitting on the couch getting ready for the training session with my head in my hands -- because this was before coronavirus and we were allowed to touch our faces -- with

my eyes closed, having a conversation, trying to maintain some semblance of order. It was one of those conversations I could have that didn't require my brain. Because that's all the power I had.

And as I walked to the last training session I took an Advil and I whispered to myself, "Jesus, you're going to have to do something." I was desperate. I didn't know what else to do, it was not the first time I had taken medication that day, it was time for the next dose. The first set didn't really help. I had very little hope for that Advil that I swallowed. We get to the session and the session leader says, "Who here has a headache?" and my hand shot in the air so fast. And then he said, "If you've got a headache come up to the front." That's not what was supposed to happen! Speakers always ask if their audience has a headache so they can judge where their audience is and decide "I'm going to make this quick," but they never actually do. If they say they're "going to make this quick," that's a good cue for the fact that it will not indeed be quick, she said with a microphone in her hand.

So of course I try to pull my hand back down and hide but that wasn't going to happen, my team already knew I felt terrible. The speaker knew me by name, he'd already seen my hand. So he said "Come up to the front," so I went up to the front. And those stage lights were really helpful for my headache. [Katie's voice is sarcastic.] And he said, "We're going to pray over you guys who aren't feeling well today." And that's when it clicked: I was at a ministry that believes in prayerful healing. I'm just a Lutheran girl, I don't know how this works. No: you take an Advil, you sit back down, you move on, you push through, whatever it is that you do. You don't pray for healing.

And I realized that I was about to experience something that I did not have the emotional capacity or the physical capacity to try to experience that particular night. So I came up with a strategy. My strategy was to look like I was really into my worship, because who's going to interrupt the woman who's worshipping her heart out even though she's got a throbbing headache? Hands are up in the air, I am so into it, singing every lyric at the very top of my lungs - in my head I'm making a list of things I do not want to experience. Jesus I don't want to experience this, Jesus I don't want to experience that, Jesus, definitely none of this, Jesus we're not going there.

And that worked for about twelve seconds. And a woman grabbed my hand, and she said "I'm going to anoint you with oil," and in my head I went "crap." That was not on my list of things I do not want to experience today. And my face must have said that was okay, because my mouth sure didn't say anything. And so she prayed for me and she put some oil in my head and she left. Okay, whew I survived that one. But now what do I do? Because I've been prayed for, so do I go sit back down? But my head still hurts, so do I stay here? And the stage lights are really bright in my eyes, so do I go sit down? But the speaker knows me by name so if I do it wrong I'm going to get called out. What do I do? I know, people-pleasing tendencies, just a little bit.

And so as I was standing there trying to decide what to do, the speaker came and wrapped his sweaty arms around me and prayed for me again, and then he's about to leave and he turns to

me and he's like three inches from my face -- I know everyone's just a little stressed because we're in a pandemic and that is way too close -- it was really close to time too, and he goes, "How's your head?" And I said better which was true, there was definitely improvement. And he said, "But is it gone?" Meaning my headache, not my head, I still have my head.

And I said "yes." It was a lie. I definitely one hundred percent lied. I have since told him this story and apologized and we're good. But I ran back to my seat and I hid. And it was just one little three letter lie that got me out of a really awkward situation.

And that's where the story ended for several years. I've told that story many, many times. And it wasn't until two or three years later when I was reflecting on that night again, and realizing that that's actually not the end of the story. Because when we got back to our bunks that night, all the other women were complaining about how long that last session went, it actually went an hour over when it was scheduled. And they're going "Oh my gosh, he should have just landed the plane." And somebody else goes, "Yeah I couldn't take it anymore I just had to leave." And they're like, "They should have let us out an hour ago, now we're not getting any sleep tonight." Just back and forth complaining. And I'm looking at 'em one at a time and my brain is just struggling to process what they're saying. Because I hadn't even noticed the session had gone so long, usually I'm really on top of things like that. I actually was glad he hadn't landed the plane, because I was thoroughly enjoying the session for literally the first time all weekend. My headache was gone.

Whether it was the Advil or whether it was the prayer or whether it was the oil, frankly I don't care. The headache was gone. And for the first time all day I felt good. I wasn't ready for bed, I wanted to keep the day going. I was thoroughly enjoying that session that went so far long.

And I think that's a picture of Jesus. Because He healed that night so that I could receive the ministry that was being offered, not just in the time of prayer. Those stage lights really were not nice for my eyes. But through the rest of the session. My world changed that day. I had an encounter with Jesus.

In Luke 5, Jesus has an encounter with a man with leprosy. I'm reading from the NIV today simply for the deep theological reasoning of that is the Bible here in front of me. Starting in verse 12, it says:

"While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Jesus heals this man. Did you catch what the man said, requesting the healing? He said, "Lord if you are willing." Not Lord if you can, Lord if you're able. "Lord, if you are willing." And y'all know, I like the Passion translation. In the Passion translation, Jesus' response is, "Of course I'm willing." And then Jesus sends him to do the cleansing acts that the law of Moses required of him. The Jewish law has a lot of different details and there are some details this man needed to work through. Jesus also says don't tell anyone. And when I read this, I hear Dumbledore in my head where he says, "What happened between you and Professor Quirrell is a complete secret, which means naturally the whole school knows." Because that's what we see in Scripture! That the news about him spread all the more.

So the crowds of people came to hear him -- this is Jesus -- to be healed of their sicknesses. I don't ever see in scripture a time when someone approaches Jesus and asks for healing and Jesus says no. There's a little bit of an awkward moment where He sort of calls a woman a dog, and there's the John 11 thing where he doesn't immediately go to Lazarus. Lazarus ends up being dead for four days which is actually really significant because in Jewish culture you checked on a body on day three to make sure the person was really dead. So on day four, Lazarus is dead-dead. Not just maybe-dead: dead-dead. And Jesus brings him back to life. So it didn't happen immediately but it still happened. We see in the Old Testament too, Numbers 21 when the Israelites are being attacked by snakes, he creates the pole with the snake on it -- not Jesus-he, Moses-he -- creates the pole with a snake on it and everyone who looks upon it is healed. That actually became the symbol for Medic these days. It's always God's will to heal.

"Yeah but Katie, Timothy had this stomach problem and Paul, he had a problem that we don't know a lot about." Yeah, I know. I don't know why God heals some and doesn't heal others. I don't know why that headache went away that day and I still have a hip injury. I don't know why we're still in a pandemic. But this is where we have to trust that it's always God's will to heal. Because God is always good. We're not going to unpack the theology of why bad things happen today. That is a different podcast for a different episode. But we're going to lean into what scripture tells us about God, because right away in Genesis from the very Creation we see scripture saying that we were made in God's image. And I don't think that physically means we look like God - He's got one head, two eyes, a nose, a mouth, two arms, two legs, blah blah blah. Jesus does. But God the Father? I don't know. Maybe He does.

But I think that scripture says that we were meant to be like Him. Have you ever noticed that in Genesis 1, God speaks things into existence? And then in Genesis 2 he picks up some dirt and he forms Man. God got His hands dirty creating us. He's invested in us. He breathes into Adam's nostrils the Breath of Life. Our very breath is the Breath of God. The Greek word for breath is "pneuma," where we get pneumonia from. It's also the word for "Holy Spirit." In Hebrew it's "ruach" similar connotations. The Holy Spirit is every breath we breathe. So when we're

struggling to breathe, whether it's physical or metaphorical, we have to remember that God's desire is to heal and he's healing through our very breath.

I recognize that as I'm producing this we are in the middle of a pandemic for a respiratory virus. Coronavirus is very real. I've got a sister who's an ICU nurse, I've got another good friend who's a physician. I am very well aware of the horrors of the Coronavirus, and I'm doing everything I can to prevent the spread. You can follow along on Instagram if you want to see, I actually test myself for Covid every week, it's a little bit of a weird thing.

We're in a pandemic but it's still God's will to heal. A couple years ago before Covid-19, I developed what I can only refer to as an allergy to night. Every night around 9 p.m. I would start coughing and wheezing. At first I thought I was just getting a cold but it didn't go away. It stayed all night long, for several days. Everyone who heard me asked if I was okay. I always said yes, but usually I actually wasn't. I would cough and wheeze through the night and it was around 8 a.m. when it would wear off. I'd be totally fine. I had no symptoms during the day, I was perfectly fine, I was working out, I was active, absolutely fine... until 9 pm. It didn't matter where I was, I could tell time by it. I knew it was 9 p.m. because I would start coughing and wheezing and I could not catch my breath. Days turned into weeks so I went to the doctor and I said "Hey, this is what's going on," but of course my appointment was not between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m. and the doctor was like, "You are fine."

And I was like, "But I'm not." And he said, "Well you live in a house built in 1970, and you have a cat, so either replace all the carpet in your house, move, get rid of the cat, or take an allergy pill."

And I was like, "Well that's helpful." I didn't go back to that doctor. But I did start taking Benadryl almost every night. I kept it on my bedside table because if I started coughing and wheezing and the Benadryl was downstairs, I couldn't breathe to go down and get it. I started living like someone who has a cat allergy. I didn't sit in soft seating, I made sure to clean off my clothes anytime I left, I washed my hands way more than I ever thought possible -- and then we had a pandemic and now I'm learning I can wash them more -- I would leave places before 9 o'clock because I didn't want to hear people ask me if I was okay. I usually wasn't, I really should have been in the emergency room many, many times. It woke me up throughout the night. And when it woke me up, I couldn't read, I couldn't pray, I couldn't do anything but sit there and stare at the clock. Because at 8 a.m. I knew it was gone. Sometimes I fall asleep in the chair, sometimes 8 a.m. would hit, I'd crawl back in bed and sleep soundly for several more hours. I did all the things the internet said to do, and the only conclusion that I could come to is that I was allergic to night.

I'd had people pray for me, I had tried all the things, I learned that your breathing is actually the weakest at 4 o'clock in the morning and conveniently that's what I was waking up every day. The whole thing didn't make any sense. But it was driving me bonkers. One day I happened to mention it to a pastor friend who's also a nurse, and she goes "Katie that doesn't even make any

sense,” and I said “Yeah, I know. Welcome to my life. Come spend the night at my house and I'll show you because I definitely cough and wheeze from 9 a.m. to 8 a.m. every single night.”

And she goes, “Katie you can't be allergic to the cat, you've had cats your whole life.” And I was like, “Yeah I know, I'm just trying to keep my roommate's cat out of my bedroom.” And she's like, “This happens everywhere you go at 9 p.m., not just when you're at home right?”

And I was like, “Yep.”

And she goes, “That's demonic.” And she knows more about health than I do, so I just trusted her. And she goes, “It's going to go away tonight.” And so I humored her and I let her pray over me as if I hadn't already saw prayerful healing. And I leaned on her faith because I didn't have any of my own. But she was right. The coughing and wheezing stopped that night. It has never happened since.

I saw God heal in that moment. I didn't have the faith to believe it, I leaned on her faith. And God still healed. And I praise Him for that, and He grew my faith that day. Because I knew how real that coughing and that wheezing was. I knew how little sleep I was getting, because it kept waking me up. I knew how obnoxious it was to keep Benadryl on my bedside table, I knew how difficult it was to keep this cat out of my space. And yet all the sudden it didn't matter anymore. All that mattered was Jesus. And I was free.

I don't know why God sometimes heals and sometimes doesn't. Because I was healed from that “night allergy” in an instant but I still have a hip injury. And I've seen four doctors and five physical therapists and we finally know what it is, but it's still achey. All the time. I do my exercises every single day and it still hurts. I sought prayerful healing for it several times but especially about a year ago. I was prayed for after church, and I felt my hip heal. I don't know how to explain it, other than things I used to not be able to do I could do. I used to not be able to go for a walk. I literally could walk for 25 minutes and I had to stop. Swimming in the Red Sea, I didn't think I was gonna be able to get back to the boat. I can walk for forty-five minutes to an hour now but I still can't go for a run. I'm still constantly achey. And when I went for an MRI, as I pulled into the parking lot, somehow I hit the volume on my stereo and the music is going full blast and I'm like, trying to park the car. And when I paused to turn the volume down, turn the car off, I said “Jesus what was that all about?” And He said, “What was the line?” And I said, “Nothing is impossible for you, God.” That was the lyric that was blaring through my speakers as I was parking at the clinic for an MRI.

And I said, “Okay. I'm going to lean on the faith that nothing is impossible, that we're gonna finally get an answer for why my hip hurts. And it's going to be clear, that it's not going to be a huge issue.”

And when I went to the MRI they ask what kind of music I wanted to listen to and I said worship music. Now listen, to me worship music and Christian music are two different things. Like, I kind of wanted to be like, “Can you just play this playlist, because I don't want to hear other stuff that

some people might put on a worship playlist.” And I actually was really excited about having an MRI because I was like, I’m an introvert I can just lay here with Jesus for an hour. This is going to be awesome. Yeah, I can stay still, that’s totally fine.” They gave me one of those nice warm blankets. It was actually a really good experience. Well there were some silly parts of it too, I’ll tell those stories on Instagram because I’m already distracted enough.

So the first couple songs are like Good Good Father and Oceans and worship songs that I have sung a bajillion times. So I’m lying there just remembering floating on the Sea of Galilee singing Good Good Father, the hills, the mountains; everywhere that I’ve sung Oceans. “Spirit lead me where your trust is without borders,” yeah I passed a lot of borders singing that song. And then we get to the end and there’s a song that I hadn’t heard in a really, really long time. It’s a song that I would not have put on a worship playlist yet but there it was: it was a song from a band called MercyMe called Bring The Rain. Back in high school I knew every single word fifteen years ago, haven’t heard it since then. And the line that caught my attention that day is “Maybe since my life was changed long before these rainy days, to turn my back on you oh Lord, that’s never really ever crossed my mind.” And it occurred to me that I was so frustrated with this hip, that I was so frustrated that I couldn’t go for a walk, -- I’m thirty years old, I should be able to walk as much as I want -- that I was mad at God about it. And so I spent the rest of the afternoon repenting and telling him how much I trust Him and how much I love Him and how much even if my hip is not healed He is still good. And he is still faithful.

And I got the MRI results: well we had a diagnosis. And it was honestly the best one that we could have had for the potential outcomes. But it’s one of those injuries that just has to eventually go away. There’s not a lot that can be done for it. There’s a surgery option but it’s not a super great long-term solution. And so I’m still doing physical therapy. I don’t know how much money I’ve spent on PT co-pays. I’ve been seeing this particular therapist so long that we’re running out of things to talk about.

But I can go for a walk. I can play tennis. It doesn’t love it, but I can do it. I can’t go for a run but frankly I don’t like running anyway so it’s not that big of a loss. So I thank you say, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus that even though my hip is not fully healed I can do more things than I used to be able to do. Thank you Jesus, that even though I still have pain I know that it’s nothing serious. Thank you Jesus that you have healed me. Because what I experienced in the physical and what I know in the spiritual don’t line up right now. But I’m going to trust what I know in the spiritual, and the spiritual says that my identity is that of the daughter of the Lord. The spiritual says that my identity is beautiful, and perfect, and made whole, and made new. And even though I don’t experience that yet in the physical, I can still say thank you Jesus. Because it’s not my effort, it’s not my words, it’s not even my faith that’s healing. It’s God’s goodness and his love. So even on the hard days I say thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus.

I just finished re-reading a book called Overcome by Jason Redman. He’s a Navy SEAL who was severely injured in combat and he talks about how once he got to the point in his recovery when it was healthy for him to return to the gym, he wanted to quit. Because he had fought so hard for recovery but the gym was triggering. He’d been in the best shape of his life when he

was injured and now going to the gym was a painful memory of how his body used to work and how broken it had become.

He would never be able to do most of the things he had used to be able to do. He had no motivation. But if he wanted to continue to heal he needed to learn to move forward. So he sought to figure out what his new one hundred percent would be. His old one hundred percent was his body before the accident. His new one hundred percent, he didn't yet know. So he's safely pushed his own limits to find it. And finding one hundred percent became his motivation. He couldn't compare his former body to his new body but he could push the limits on his new body to explore and uncover what he could do. Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus.

Someday I hope that I can run again. "Run again" as if I ever ran the first time. Someday I hope that my hip doesn't cause me as much trouble as it does right now. But for now, I'm going to find a new one hundred percent. And it might look different than it was yesterday. Everyday can't be a personal-best. But I went to spin class and my hip didn't hurt. I played tennis and my hip let me play. I went for an hour-long walk, and I didn't limp home. Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus.

I don't know where you sit right now, what kind of healing that you're waiting for from the Lord. But I encourage you to spend some time with Him, to tell Him what you want the new one hundred percent to be. And then to use the means He's provided to go after it. Whether that means is Physical Therapy, whether that means is medication, whether that means is having more days off than normal, a lighter schedule, whether that means is pushing your limits. Whatever it looks like, I want you to pursue it. And I want you to pursue the Lord and I want you to meet with Him while you're journeying through healing. And celebrate and praise Him for the moments when He has healed spontaneously. Say a prayer and take an Advil. Let Him meet you in the places where it's still hard. Let Him be the source of your healing in whatever capacity that looks like. And just say thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus.

Don't ask God to heal you. Declare that He has healed you. Declare like the man that we see in Luke 5 say, "Lord if you are willing." We know God is willing. "Of course I am willing," Jesus says. So declare it and say, "Thank you Jesus for your willingness to heal me."

Declare healing over your body and over your mind at whatever capacity that looks like for you today. Even if your circumstances don't change God is still worthy of being praised today. He's not withholding healing, waiting for you to figure out what the spiritual diagnosis is or for you to forgive somebody or for you to solve some problem. Sometimes that happens, but if it does you probably already know what's going on, it's not like He's like, "Hey, go figure out this puzzle. You don't have any idea what it looks like and I'm not going to tell you."

No. That's not God. He's a good Father who wants to see you thriving. Who wants to see you doing the best that you can in the circumstances that you're in. Sometimes our circumstances don't change but healing can still come. I know for me, on days when I've got a lot of hip pain or

I've got a headache or the nights when I couldn't breathe, a prayer that I found really powerful reminded me of God's goodness and let His breath flow through me.

And it said, "Jesus I bring my body into alignment underneath my soul. I bring my soul into alignment underneath my spirit. I bring my spirit into alignment underneath the Holy Spirit." And then I let Holy Spirit run through my body. It takes my mind off of my pain, even if the pain doesn't go away. It renews my mind, scripture talks about that, renewing your mind. It invites Holy Spirit to breathe in and out of me, like we talked about the word ruach.

Holy Spirit, breathe in and out of me. It's a pause, it's a refresh. It's not a condemnation of "now my body needs to obey God, and if it doesn't obey God there's something wrong with me." No. It's a pause and a stepping point and a reminder that God is still on the throne and He is still love, and He still loves me. And I am still submitting myself to Him. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus.

And praise God. Let Holy Spirit rule and reign in your body. And then take an Advil or whatever your drug is a choice, preferably a legal one. And thank God for the chemists whose brains were able to create that particular combination. And thank God for the doctors and the nurses who were able to say, "Hey this is what's going to help you." And thank God for the pharmacists who are able to make sure you've got the prescription that's been provided for you. And thank God for the way that He works even when we have pain. And thank Him that we know He is good even when we haven't experienced his healing today. We know that He is love. Declare it over yourself, declared it over your life, declare it over your body, declared over the people in your world. And let's continue to fight for that new one hundred percent together.

[Theme Music plays briefly: upbeat smooth jazz bassline.]

If you found this podcast to be helpful, if you found it challenging, if you found it encouraging, let me know. You can find me on Instagram @KatieAxelson. I'm also on Facebook Katie Axelson Writer and of course my home base on the internet is KatieAxelson.com. I'd love to hear your story. Have you experienced prayerful healing? Are you waiting for your prayerful healing? How are you pushing to find your new one hundred percent? How many more questions can I ask you that you might all need to answer right now?

We're in this together, my friend. And as I mentioned earlier we've got a story of chronic pain coming again in two weeks. I'm so excited to get to share Casey with you, because she's an important member of our team and I absolutely love the work that she does. And I absolutely love what she has to share with all of us. I'm so glad she stepped in front of the microphone for this one episode. If this podcast resonated with you, leave a rating, leave a review, send it to a friend, say "Hey, how can I pray for you? Hey, how have you experienced prayerful healing?"

Hit that subscribe button, we'll see you again in two weeks.

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