



This is the *Health Matters* podcast.

### **Live Joyfully Despite Chronic Illness with Kimberly Rae**

I'm your host Kimberley Payne and this is the show for women who want to improve their spiritual and physical health.

In this episode, we'll be talking about health from the perspective of someone who lives with an incurable chronic condition.



This week we're going to be talking with Kimberly Rae. Kimberly is an Amazon bestselling author who lives with Addison's disease, talks about health from the "other side" in her Sick & Tired series, including *Laughter for the Sick & Tired* and *Why Doesn't God Fix It?* Her insights into life with illness will encourage those who have a chronic condition and help those who are healthy better understand. Find out more at [www.kimberlyrae.com](http://www.kimberlyrae.com). Welcome Kimberly.

#### **Kimberly**

Thank you. Thanks for letting me be here.

#### **Kimberley**

Glad to have you here. This is a little bit different take on spiritual and physical health because this is on the other side, like I said, for an unhealthy person. How is life different for a chronically unhealthy person than somebody who is healthy?

#### **Kimberly**

It's interesting to me that for a lot of us it doesn't show. They say that one out of every two people—at least in the country that I'm in—have some type of chronic condition but for a vast majority of them it doesn't show. We look like we're healthy but our lives are totally different because of illness. It's hard to explain how much it affects our daily life and our choices and everything except I'm a visual person so to me and those of us who remember what it likes to have young children being at that baby age when

your whole schedule has to adapt to the baby's schedule and when you go someplace you have to bring all this paraphernalia to make sure you are well prepared for the food and the diapers, and what if this happens and what if that happens and if the baby starts crying you can't say, "I'm taking a break right now I'll get to you later." You have to deal with it when the need arises. Life with chronic illness is that way. Our schedules are totally defined by it, our activities and our choices. We have to say no a lot when we want to say yes. We have to stay home when we want to go places. We have to admit that we need things when we don't want to. It's not something that we choose or that we want—we'd get rid of it if we could—but it's something that God's chosen for us and so we have to learn to live with it. It's hard sometimes trying to explain this is my new life now. This is different than my life was before but I don't look any different.

### **Kimberley**

Right, yeah, I know that my neighbour deals with Crohns and she suffers from a lot of pain—she's in a lot of pain a lot of times—and you're right, her schedule every so many weeks she has to go for treatment for four hours at a time. But looking at her, you'd never know. I would have no idea that she suffers in such a way.

Now for you personally, how does illness affect your day-to-day life?

### **Kimberly**

It's basically kind of like a part-time job. We used to be on the mission field and we had to leave because I got Addison's, and I also have hypoglycemia and asthma and scoliosis and a cyst on my brain. And now I'm dealing with chronic pain from a genetic condition too. So it's like I have a whole collection of problems (I'm hoping my collection is finished). From 6 a.m. in the morning I have to set my alarm to get up, take pills, and eat my very specific diet. Every three hours I have to go through this certain routine and you don't get any days off. Ironically you don't get any sick days from being a sick person or vacation. And I can't do the things I used to be able to do. At first I thought I couldn't be the person I used to be. That was hard because I wondered why is God shelving me. Why is He taking all these things away that I was doing for Him? I can't even sing in the choir now because I never know when my asthma's going to flare up and I can't sing, or my Addison's going to flare up and I can't show up. So for me it is my life. It kind of is who I am. There's a saying that says we have to make illness something we have not who we are and everything that we are. Sometimes it's hard to draw the line between the two because it does run your life in a way.

### **Kimberley**

Wow, so your life is very different. So you were healthy at one point and then you developed these things?

### **Kimberly**

Well I remember having problems even as a kid. And things kind of piled up through the years but they never could figure out what it was. So you know when you have all these symptoms but nobody has a definition for it. You kind of wonder if it's all in my head? Am I making this up? We have this tendency to want to just push through it, keep going, it'll go away, and so you do. You keep pretending that you're

fine, and you keep trying to keep functioning and then I ended up in the hospital in ICU and almost dying etc. And so I have to finally take it seriously and say okay I can't keep pretending that I'm okay anymore.

### **Kimberley**

People who have chronic illness, can they still maintain a healthy lifestyle?

### **Kimberly**

It depends on what you have and how much. It's kind of like the difference between—this may sound awful—someone who loses a finger doesn't have as many limitations as someone who loses their arm. And so some people who have a chronic illness, something like asthma, well they might have seasons where they don't have any symptoms and they don't have trouble so they can go outside and they can keep functioning and exercise the way they want to. But then they might have a flare up because it's pollen season and so now they have to stay indoors and they can't walk outside, they have to walk inside. You're always just changing and adapting. I have an entire calendar for my medical condition. I'm writing down what medicines I'm changing, what I'm trying, what's not working, what is working etc. So for some of us health is something we touch every once and awhile and it's something to strive for but I don't ever expect to be healthy for a long period of time. It's more like trying to be as stable as possible with what I have. But some people—a lot of people—do have conditions that they can still maintain a very healthy lifestyle and they're just limited in slight ways that aren't too bad.

### **Kimberley**

Now did you go through the grieving process when you "lost your health". Do you know what I mean? When all of a sudden your expectations for what your life should be change. Do you go through grieving?

### **Kimberly**

Yes, yes. And God bless you for even thinking of it. Because you do, you've lost who you used to be. Your life has totally changed. That's one of the things I write about in my books, it's okay to allow yourself to grieve because you have a loss. And grieving is one of those things, like someone who's lost a loved one, they have this first initial stage of it and then on holidays or special occasions or things down the road it might hit them at strange times. It's the same thing with illness. I find holidays difficult sometimes because I have to do so much prep work for it and it's so difficult it takes so much, it costs a lot for me to get together with a bunch of people. So when everybody else is enjoying a kind of vacation, I'm working extra hard so I can be part of it and sometimes it just hits you. This is my life now and it's not the life I wanted. And you have to go through that whole process that I still trust the Lord. I know He chose this for a reason. I know He still loves me. He's not punishing me. Just going through that all over again and recognizing, okay I accept this because I trust Him.

### **Kimberley**

I would think that it would be very easy to become very bitter and angry and looking at your neighbour and saying, "How come they don't have to struggle every single day like I do?" As a Christian you hear about faith and some people say, "Well, you don't have enough faith. That's why you're not getting healed." What would you say to that?

## **Kimberly**

That's what I've been pretty much told. That's the hardest time. When you have to struggle with not getting defensive. To be honest it sent me straight to the scriptures, which is never a bad thing, because I wanted to know is that what God thinks? In "Why Didn't God Fix It" I had written all of these chapters on things that I learned and encouragement but when I finished the book (or thought I finished it) I realized you know what there's a couple of verses in the Bible—the ones that people use—that I didn't touch because I didn't know what to do with them. If you believe in anything, ask and you'll receive it. When two people agree on something. You know, what do you do with those verses? When you are sick you ask the Lord and God said no. What does that mean? Does that mean that I don't have enough faith? So I realized if I'm going to write this book, if I'm going to write it right, I'm going to have to go there. And so the back of the book is an entire study through the book of Matthew where I went through every single verse where somebody was healed and I studied what did it mean, what was it for, what did He say. I discovered the most amazing thing—it wasn't a bad thing that I studied, it was a wonderful thing—because one of the things that I realized was that Jesus healed for different reasons and He did it in all sorts of different ways but there was never one time when He said a person could not be healed because they individually did not have enough faith. Sometimes it was a friend's faith. Sometimes it was a father's faith. The only time He said he wasn't healed because you didn't have enough faith was when the disciples didn't have enough faith not the person himself. And a lot of times he healed people who were unconscious or even dead. So they couldn't have enough faith to be healed. So the measure of faith is not the parameters in the scriptures. What I discovered was that in the end, people that say that your life is supposed to be easy, it's supposed to be comfortable if you have enough faith say that everything will be fine, they're not actually following the scriptures. The scriptures say that we're going to have trials, we are going to suffer, we need to bear our burdens and if it means that you're living in sin when things are going rough than all of the disciples and John the Baptist and especially Jesus would fit in that category. So I've learned to go to God instead of saying, "Heal me, heal me, heal me" which I would love it if He did and I know He could any second if He wanted to go with the prayer that Jesus prayed. Jesus, even Himself, once prayed, "Take this away from me. I don't want to suffer this." But then He ended His prayer with, "Not my will but Yours." So I know that if I love God enough instead of saying, "Heal me to show everybody that I have enough faith" or "Heal me because I'm tired of this" or "Heal me so I can serve You better" but I need to say, "Your will is more important than mine". I get to be healed all of eternity. If He wants me to be sick here because for some reason I can honour Him better, than if I love Him I'll choose that.

## **Kimberley**

Wow, I love that. When I think about healing and God choosing not to heal I think about Paul with the thorn in his side. He asked three times—we don't know what the thorn was although I always think it was some kind of illness—and God said no. Then he said yeah in his weakness God will be strong.

## **Kimberly**

Yes, I'd rather glory in my infirmities and have the power of God rest on me. And that's one thing He taught me from leaving missions. I realized I was finding my identity in my service for God and to me that's what gave me worth. And I think God shut me down because He wants my message to be that your worth is in that God made you and Jesus loves you enough to die for you and it's not about how much you're accomplishing or whether you're accomplishing anything at all because you belong to Him,

you matter. And that's not the message I wanted to give to the world. I wanted to be all competent in doing all these things and impressive, and feel significant because I was doing something significant. But instead I am happy to learn to have my significance in Him. And that's not a bad thing. In the end, the Bible says it's good that I've been afflicted so that I learn your statutes. I am learning more about Him because I have to keep seeking Him through this illness than I would have if I was competent and healthy and could do all the things I wanted to do.

### **Kimberley**

How can we pray for those we love who live with illness?

### **Kimberly**

Oh God bless those who pray for those who live with chronic illness. It's interesting to me—what a good thing to ask—because you always will pray that they get better. But I would say that if you know someone with chronic illness the most important things to pray for would be for their spiritual and emotional health even more than their physical health. Because when this is forever and you think okay God please heal me but I'm pretty sure that He's not going to, this is my cross to bear. He said, My grace is sufficient, that we can kind of accept sometimes. But the emotional strain that comes with it, having to explain to people why you can't come and they say, "This is an exception. Can't you just do this" or "It's all in your head" or "Maybe you should just..." or "Try this oil" or whatever that will solve your problems. The emotional strain of trying to continually be fit when people want you be better. And then the spiritual battles. You know when you're up in the night and you haven't got enough sleep and the devil comes at you with all these thoughts. I would say that's the hardest part of chronic illness; the way it effects your mind and your heart even more so than your body. So we need prayer for endurance and strength and that we will accept that His grace is sufficient.

### **Kimberley**

Well, I really appreciate that because a friend of mine suffered a stroke and she's only in her 50s—early 50s—and what do you pray for? That definitely helps me and my prayers for her. As she miraculously physically is coming along tremendously but to know that emotionally and spiritually that I can still pray for that healing as well.

Now, we're going to move on to the BEEP round. Kimberly will give quick tips on the four disciplines of Bible study, eating healthy, exercise, and prayer or BEEP. So what do you have for us for a quick tip for Bible study?

### **Kimberly**

I would say the most important for all four of those is to set aside a time and make a plan. We know we have to do that if we're going to exercise yet we think that with Bible study and prayer sometimes well that's just going to come naturally because I should want to do all those things. And yet like exercise, whether we want to and whether we know it's beneficial or not, if we're going to set aside time and if we don't make a plan it's probably not going to happen. I was convicted of that myself thinking we're really in a transition stage and I had not made a plan and not set aside time and sure enough time is

slipping away. And so I need to start committing this is my time for Bible study, this is my time for prayer, think about what we're eating instead of just responding. So like with everything and like living with illness just responding with how you feel is not a good way to have a healthy lifestyle. Whether spiritually, physically or emotionally. So that's my advice, make a plan and stick with it.

**Kimberley**

Oh yeah, I'm not sure who first coined the term but I like it, "If you fail to plan then you plan to fail". So do you have a quick tip for eating healthy?

**Kimberly**

Well, don't go to the store when you're hungry. I actually have a chart of things to check off if I'm finding that I'm leaning towards something that's unhealthy—too much fat food, too much processed food or too much fried food or something like that—I start a checklist that I check off every day. I didn't do this, or I did do this. I planned ahead or I ate this instead of this. Because there's something about seeing that you checked it off and you're much more likely to do it if you have that accountability with yourself. And you're more likely to stick with it than well I messed up today I might as well mess up again tomorrow.

**Kimberley**

And your quick tip for exercise?

**Kimberly**

When you can fit it in, fit it in. I actually struggle with that because with my different conditions exercise usually flares something up for me so it's finding the thing that works for you and not feeling like you have to keep up with everybody else. I can't go walking with other people because I can't keep up. I've learned to stop trying to exercise with people even though it's enjoyable but for me personally I need to do what works for me. So whatever works for you that is okay.

**Kimberley**

And your quick tip for prayer?

**Kimberly**

Get alone. I have two kids and we're living in my parent's house right now while we're waiting for a house to come through and I just find that when I don't get alone with God I'm missing time with my best friend. And I'm missing getting the strength that I need. You think, "Well I don't have time for that because I have so much going on" but you need time, you need to make the time. Because you need it. His strength can't be perfect if you don't have it.

**Kimberley**

I understand that you have a gift for our listeners. Can you tell us about that?

## **Kimberly**

Yes, the book “Why Doesn’t God Fix It?” which is shining eternal light on the darkness of chronic illness and any suffering which if you don’t have health problems you probably know someone who does and you’ve probably gone through some kind of suffering at some point. So I hope it’d be an encouragement. It’s the one that has that section in the back going through Matthew about the healing, and health and wealth, and what scriptures say about that. I’m going to send a free pdf to the first 10 people to get on the website [www.kimberlyrae.com](http://www.kimberlyrae.com) and there’s a contact button there. If you click the contact button and drop me a little note that you heard the podcast and you’d like the book I will send you the book over email and I hope it will be a blessing to you.

## **Kimberley**

That’s fantastic. Thanks again to Kimberly Rae for her expert advice and thank you for joining us today.

This interview has been brought to you by *JumpStart* – a free 2 week challenge to blend positive healthy habits into your lifestyle. You can discover more about this free challenge and other health programs at my website at [www.kimberleypayne.com](http://www.kimberleypayne.com).

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This has been the Health Matters Podcast, believing that prayer & Bible study are to the spirit what exercise and healthy eating are to the body.

Blessings on your journey to health.

### About Kimberley Payne

Kimberley Payne is the host of the *Health Matters – Healthy Spirit Healthy Body* podcast. She is author of *Fit for Faith – a 7-week program to improve spiritual and physical health* and is a motivational speaker offering workshops and online courses based on her book. She hopes to inspire women to live happier, healthier lives that glorify God. She is happily married and lives with her husband in a village east of Toronto, Canada where she hikes and bikes. Visit her website at [www.kimberleypayne.com](http://www.kimberleypayne.com)

