FEATURE

Shalom as Wholeness: A Biblical Basis for Meeting Global Health Needs in the 21st Century

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Abstract. *Health is generally thought of as the absence of disease or physical infirmity. However, a great number of scientific studies show that there is an interdependence and interconnectedness between the physical, mental, spiritual and social dimensions of the human being. Consequently, there needs to be an emphasis on giving treatment and care to the whole person. This article proposes that a biblical understanding of the Hebrew word shalom provides a basis for emphasizing the need for health care beyond physical wellbeing. It also highlights some practical ways that Christians can contribute to meeting global health needs from the perspective of biblical human wholeness.*

Keywords: health, *shalom*, wholeness, global needs, Christians

Introduction

Health is a global concern. The year 2015 marked the deadline for the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the General Assembly of the United Nations on September 8, 2000. Listed among its concerns were the need to reduce child mortality (MDG4), improve maternal health (MDG5) and combat HIVS/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG 6). ("About MDGs: What they are", n.d.; Stearns, 2010). Having not fully met these goals, the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organization (WHO) made a transition in December 2015 from the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that have been set to be met in 2030 (World Health Organization, 2015). This decision shows a renewed commitment on a global scale to improve the health of communities, countries and the world in the next 15 years (Reinert, 2016). The third SDG aims at good health and well-being for all, including efforts to reduce maternal and child mortality rates, eradicating both

communicable and non-communicable diseases especially those that cause epidemics and preventing death caused by substance addictions, sexual behavior, road traffic accidents and hazardous chemical waste in air, water and land among others (World Health Organization, 2015).

While most of the time, health is primarily thought of as physical wellbeing, the following definition shows that health involves a lot more. The famous definition of health by the World Health Organization in 1948 points out that "health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease and infirmity" (Schneider et al., 2010, p. 16). The above definition implies that health comprises other dimensions of human life, not just the physical aspect. The purpose of this article is to show the all-encompassing scope of health needs through an understanding of the significance of the biblical Hebrew word: *Shalom*. It will also emphasize the role of Christians and some practical approaches that can be used in meeting these needs in the 21st century.

Defining *Shalom*: A Biblical Background

In order to understand health from the perspective of the word *shalom*, there is a need to grasp the full significance of the term. This section will present a brief survey of the word especially from a biblical perspective. The word *shalom* is traditionally used as a Jewish greeting in Israel, similar to the English greeting "hello" or "goodbye." While the word is usually translated as "peace," there is a deeper wealth of meaning in the word than this singular English translation can convey (Youngman, 2012).

While it is very usual for greeting in Israel, the term *shalom* is very common in the Semitic languages. According to Rata (2011, p. 8), the root for the word is "found in Akkadian (*s/salamu*, to be hale, whole, complete), Arabic (*salima*, to be healthy, safe, to keep peace), Ugarit, Phoenician, Aramaic and even Ethiopic". Rata believes that, from the view of the Old Testament, the meaning of *shalom* is closely related to being complete, whole, and fulfilled.

A survey of the Old Testament reveals that there are three major interrelated meanings of the word *shalom* (van Loon, 2004). First, it refers to general wellbeing (Jer 33:6-9; Ps 38:3; Gen 43:27-28; Num 6:24-26). This meaning connotes being "alright", "okay" or at peace, personally in body and mind. In addition, it is a word that wishes a person a super overflowing abundant wellness in everything (which is a result of blessings from God, the source of all *shalom*), (Landa, 2014; Rata, 2011, van Loon, 2004).

Second, *shalom* refers to positive social relationships within a variety of dimensions (1 Kgs 5:12; Ezek 34: 23-26; Isa 54:10). It includes relationships between friends, neighbours and nations (van Loon, 2004; Landa, 2014). While

the first meaning had an intrapersonal application, the second one deals with interpersonal relations. *Shalom* involves not only peace with oneself, it also has to do with prosperous harmonious relationships with people, community, nature and God.

Third, the word *shalom* means personal integrity and involves doing what is right, living honestly and ethically (Ps 34:11-14; 37: 37). According to the Old Testament, *shalom* comes as a blessing from God to those who live in total submission to Him expressed in faithful obedience to and fulfilment of His covenant laws recorded in the *torah* (the book of the Law of Moses) (American Baptist Policy, 1991; Louw, 2008; Rata, 2011). It can be deduced that s*halom* derives from righteousness (or right doing) - doing what is right according to God's law. "There can be no *shalom* without righteousness" (Rata, 2011, p. 19). Therefore, the basis or standard for *shalom* as integrity, for living ethically, from the biblical perspective, is what God commands or requires human beings to do as recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

Though this meaning of *shalom* is similar to the first because both make a reference to the personal aspect, there is a difference in another dimension. While the first meaning generally involves all dimensions of life, the third meaning specifically focuses on the moral aspect of the person. *Shalom* as integrity refers to the agreement or harmony between a person's beliefs and actions or practices. This is a consistent coherence, oneness and wholeness on both the inside and the outside of a person, a concord in the life between theory and practice (Handysides, Landless, Hardinge, & Kuntaraf, 2012).

In the New Testament, the Hebrew concept of *shalom* is equivalent to a variety of Greek words (Landa, 2014; van Loon, 2004; Louw, 2008). Some of these key words include *eirene* (a state of peace and tranquility as opposed to war (Luke 8:48; 1 Thess 5:23)), *hugies* (the quality of soundness from a proper balance of the whole being (John 5:6, 11, 14-15; 2 Tim 1:7)), and *soteria* (a condition of being saved and sound (James 5:15)) among others (Louw, 2008). These words are associated with healing, health and wholeness that proceed from God through Jesus Christ as His desire for all human beings. As recorded in Eph 2:13-16, the death of Jesus on the cross established the basis of divine *shalom* between God and humanity and between people of all nations including Jews and Gentiles (Martens, 2008). Healing and salvation as recorded in the New Testament were aimed at restoring God's *shalom* (fullness of life) at the personal level and the community. This emphasizes that health is not limited to physical well-being but extends to the whole being in every aspect of human life (Landa, 2014; Louw, 2008; van Loon, 2004).

There are a variety of synonyms for *shalom* which express the above-mentioned major meanings. They include: peace, welfare, safety, health, soundness, wellness, rest, satisfaction, fullness, tranquility, prosperity,

perfectness, completeness, wholeness, concord, and harmony (Hall, 2014; Landa, 2014; Rata, 2011; Youngman, 2012).

The biblical background of the Hebrew word *shalom* reveals that it can be defined as being healthy and in harmony with God, one's self (the body, mind and spirit of the individual), with others (groups and/or societies) and with the environment (nature/creation), (Hall, 2014; van Loon, 2004; Youngman, 2012). This indicates that health connotes much more than physical wellbeing and inevitably includes all the other dimensions of personal and communal life (Louw, 2008).

In addition to the already-stated WHO's definition of health, the Christian Medical Commission gives a definition of health that includes the aspects of *shalom* mentioned above. It states that "health is a dynamic state of well-being of the individual and society, of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being, of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with God" (Schneider et al., 2010, p. 16). In the context of this definition and the background of the biblical word *shalom*, human and global health must always be understood not only as consisting of the physical well-being of individuals but also as including every other aspect of life at both the personal and communal levels.

Shalom as Wholeness: A Basis for Human Health and Wellness

The *shalom* experience is to be completely healthy in one's whole being and to enjoy peace and harmony in all of one's relationships. This understanding of health is based on the biblical view of human nature. The Genesis account describes the creation of humankind beginning with the man Adam (Gen 2:7). Contrary to the macroevolution theory (tracing human origin to apes), God personally sculpted the human body from the dust of the earth and gave him the breath of life. The result of this divine creative work is described as *Nefesh Haya*. While these words have been traditionally translated as a "living soul," their variant meanings include "a living being" or "a living person".

The popular Christian understanding of human nature is that within the human body, there is an invisible entity called the soul that leaves the body at death. Hence, the soul is the inner unseen part of a human being – the part that makes up a person's individuality and identity. A brief etymology (historical study) of this view traces it to the Greek dualism which originated from Plato. This concept gradually influenced the meaning of the Greek words *psyche* and *pneuma* used in the New Testament to translate the Hebrew concepts of human nature in the Old Testament. Consequently, many Christians see the human being as a physical body filled and controlled by an unseen soul.

However, the following quotes present the biblical view of the human nature as opposed to the Greek dualistic view:

> The Western influenced dualism of 'spirit' versus 'body' in today's Christianity is totally alien to the biblical view of the person. When God formed Adam's body from the dust of the ground and breathed life into it, he became a *Nefesh Haya* (Gen 2:7), that is a living soul, a living being. This Hebrew word for 'soul' indicates the human individual as a totality, in complete integration. . . . humanity bears the divine imprint, not just as disembodied soul, a spark of divinity locked up in the flesh but as a person that, in every dimension of his being, relates to and reveals the glory of his creator in harmonious mode with the rest of his creation. (Landa, 2014, p. 57)

Also other writers suggest that the usage of the words, "soul", "spirit", "body" and "heart" express the wholeness of the human. Each word indicates the human as a whole, a complete human, a person who has a physical, mental and spiritual being (Kuntaraf & Kuntaraf, 2008). According to Galvez (2008), a human being "does not have a soul as a substance independent of the body that lives within the body. A human being is a soul. Soul refers to the whole person, its totality of life" (p. 21).

The points made above clearly show that from a biblical perspective, the word "soul" should not be understood from the context of Greek Platonic dualism which has become a dominant view among Christians. It is not a disembodied entity living within the human body. It is rather, a reference to the whole being or person including every aspect of the human life – the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social among others. This is in line with the definition of shalom as complete health presented in the preceding section.

This biblical view of the multidimensional unity of the human person finds solid corroboration in the field of science. A variety of scientific studies show the wholeness and interconnectedness of the different dimensions of the human person evidenced when one affected aspect affects the others. The subsequent paragraphs give a few brief examples of this point.

The first is commonly known as the mind-body connection which emphasizes how the mind affects the body and the body the mind. There is increasing evidence that keeping a positive mindset by reframing negative thoughts affects the body positively. Lowered emotional stress, reductions in blood pressure, improved symptoms of chronic conditions among others are some of the results of positive mind practices that are supported by research (Edington, Schultz, Pitts, & Camilleri, 2015).

In addition, research also supports that good habits that improve the state of the body (physical health) affect the mind. It has been shown that having a good

breakfast keeps the glucose levels "high during the day . . . giving the body and mind energy for work and performance, and preventing hunger, nervousness and irritability" (Galvez, 2010, p. 24). Physical exercise is also observed to have a good number of benefits for the human mind as well as general health. Regular exercise is good for the physical structure and the body systems. It also improves mental health by preventing and combating stress, depression and anxiety and lifting the mood. Exercise revitalizes the entire nervous system, stimulating the mental circuits, sharpening thought processes, and boosting memory by creating a suitable learning environment for the brain (Galvez, 2010, p. 23). Apart from improving the physical conditions of those ailing and recovering from diabetes, cancer, heart attack, stroke and osteoporosis, physical exercise has also proved beneficial to aging people by preventing and reducing the risk of dementia (a mental disease), (Kuntaraf & Kuntaraf, 2008). This fact emphasizes the need to keep both mind and body in the best conditions since they are closely related (White, 1923).

Good emotional health also affects the body positively. Research has shown that cheerfulness especially in the form of genuine laughter improves general health. As opposed to using pain killers, it has been observed that genuine laughter produces endorphins which are more effective natural pain relievers. According to Kuntaraf and Kuntaraf (2008), laughter exercises the lungs and stimulates the circulatory system increasing oxygen intake into the lungs, which is distributed by the blood to the cells. Laughter speeds up the heart rate, breathing and circulation, lowering the pulse and blood pressure. This confirms what the Bible says when it asserts that "A cheerful heart is good medicine" (Prov 17: 22).

Research also shows that good social support seen in healthy relationships with others is equally beneficial for physical health. Elizabeth Brondolo, a psychology professor at St. John's University in Stony Brook, New York and her colleagues conducted an interesting study that showed the measurable effects of support on blood pressure when people care for one another in the workplace. The study showed that there was a reduction in blood pressure among the people who felt more supported by their co-workers. In fact, persons with good social support had a lower blood pressure during the most stressful times as well as throughout the workday. This study definitely shows the importance of having social support at work (Handysides, et al., 2012).

Finally, spiritual health maintained through regular religious practices also affects physical and general health. "Today, a variety of studies demonstrate that religious belief and practice reduce mortality in hospital patients, help to achieve better post-surgery recovery, reduce the risk of dependencies, strengthen the immune system and result in fewer visits to the doctor" (Melgosa, 2011, p. 53). Spiritual health is a vital dimension of human life that should not be neglected (Dhar, Chaturvedi, & Nandan, 2013).

The above-mentioned scientific studies simply emphasize the interconnectedness and interdependent relationship between all the dimensions of the human being in relation to health (Schneider et al., 2010). This confirms the biblical anthropology of human origins grounded in the Genesis Creation account according to which the human soul is not separate from the body as Greek dualism asserts. The following quote makes it clear:

> The soul can be expressed through physical, mental, spiritual and social dimensions… The living soul is a whole: bio-psycho-socio-eco-spiritual. Therefore, every dimension of human life affects the other dimensions positively or negatively. So, the physical dimension affects the mental, social and spiritual dimensions, and vice versa. (Galvez, 2010, p. 22)

Based on the above findings, which show that what affects one dimension affects the other, "the human being [soul] as a total person is indivisible though comprising of several aspects" (Kuntaraf & Kuntaraf, 2008, p. 115). Since the human being is a multidimensional unit, health care needs to go beyond the physical and extend to the mental, the spiritual, the social, the political and ecological (Schneider et al., 2010). The care and treatment of human beings must focus on the healing of the whole person (Kuntaraf & Kuntaraf, 2008). This focus on wholistic healing is an important part of establishing *shalom* health in individual lives, homes, communities, nations, and the world at large.

Pursuing *Shalom*: Meeting Global Health Needs in the 21st century

The biblical concept of *shalom* hints at God's ideal for human health and wellness. This ideal is based on the biblical anthropology of the indivisible multi-dimensional nature of the human person. Because there is an interconnectedness in all the dimensions of the human person and one aspect affects the other, there is a need to meet human health needs as a whole and not a one-sided emphasis on the physical. It is a very important point to take note of by those working to help people live healthy lives (especially Christians).

Since *shalom* connotes complete health in every aspect of the human person, it establishes a different criteria for defining a healthy person. A person who is physically sick with a chronic illness but has learned to love God and lives at peace in his mind and in good relationship with others is healthier than a person who is physically and mentally fine but lives without meaning (Schneider et al., 2010). This comprehensive understanding of health as advocated in this article shows the need to work towards the goal of *shalom* in individuals and communities, including the consideration of human health needs on a global scale.

The set goals during the global summit mentioned at the beginning of this article (which will serve as a summary of global health needs in the 21st century) can be summarized as follows: (1) Eradication of Poverty and (2) Hunger; (3) Establishment of Good Health and Well-Being, (4) Quality Education, (5) Gender Equality; (6) Achievement of Clean Water and Sanitation; (7) Provision of Affordable and Clean Energy; (8) Achievement of Decent Work and Economic Growth; (9) Development of Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; (10) Reduced Inequalities and (11) Development of Sustainable Cities and Communities; (12) Promotion of Responsible Consumption and Production; (13) Advocacy for Climate Action, (14) Life Below Water and (15) Life on Land; (16) Promotion of Peace and Justice and (17) Establishing Partnerships for the Goals.

A simple survey of the above listed goals can be categorized into the major dimensions of health. In the list above, physical health is considered in SDGs 2 and 3; mental health is specifically addressed in SDG 4, while economic health is the aim of SDGs 1, 8, 9 and 12. Social health is the crux of SDGs 5 and 10, while environmental/ecological health is the burden of SDGs 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15. Political and community health appears to be the concern of SDGs 16 and 17. But as this paper posits, there is a strong interrelationship between all these goals, hence there can be no clear-cut separation of them from each other. Knowing the major focus of each goal, however, can help the Christian to narrow efforts to specifically improve the particular aspect of health that is considered.

While this section will not consider physical health because it has already received quite significant attention, some practical approaches for Christians to improve mental health, social health, economic health, community health and international health are considered here.

Mental Health

One primary way to provide for mental health is through teaching and education. This applies to both child and adult education in areas of need. This may involve creating opportunities for formal or informal education where there are none in the community. Where there are schools and other educational institutions, Christians and church communities can interact with the students in their settings and be involved in sensitizing, educating and challenging them to learn to improve their life and health and to help others around them (especially the vulnerable and the needy) do the same (Schneider et al, 2010). In addition, the church has the task of providing a suitable setting for the education of families and community members about health risks brought about by unhealthy lifestyle choices and to host intervention programs dealing with the pressing physical health challenges in the community (Jackson, 2012).

Provision of professional counselling for community members is one way the church can also meet mental health needs that will help combat threats to mental-

emotional health. These include worry, fear, grief, guilt and depression among others (Kuntaraf & Kuntaraf, 2008). While counselling involves different aspects of life, it primarily involves helping people make useful decisions that will positively affect the state of mind and behavior. It is a very practical way of showing care and providing for the mental needs of people in the community. Examples of people in need of counselling include "those who are physically or mentally ill, or struggling with addictions, [those who are] lonely, oppressed and marginalized, vulnerable older people, orphans and those with social problems such as divorce, unemployment and unplanned pregnancy" (Schneider et al, 2010, p. 32). Through education and counselling, Christians can help meet the mental health needs of their communities and the world.

Social Health

The church can educate family members on how to enjoy happy marriages and avoid abuse of partners and children. Divorce, domestic violence, and abuse have become rampant. A study done by the WHO showed that at least 1 in 7 homicides globally and more than 1 in 3 female homicides are committed by an intimate partner. In addition, such intimate partner violence causes symptoms of depression in both men and women and suicide attempts in women (Reinert, 2016). The church needs to help deal with these social issues, beginning with the home setting and then raising awareness in the communities. This can be done through the influence of Christians in their families, the church, at work and school. Communities can be sensitized and educated to be more loving and sociable. There is a need for the followers of Jesus Christ to renew their commitment to raise awareness, provide resources and encourage both community and church leaders to be part of the solution, especially to the problem of abuse in all its forms (Reinert, 2016).

Another way Christians can meet social health needs is by avoiding isolation from the people of the community. The church can act as a safe haven for others to meet together in small groups to share their feelings and to belong.

> Broken, rejected and suffering people need places where they can be comfortable in sharing their pain in an atmosphere of openness and acceptance. The local church can offer a forum where those who are afflicted can, in trust and with acceptance, let down their guard and share their stories. (Schneider et al., 2010, p. 30)

This is especially significant for people who experience social isolation, stigma and discrimination. In addition, support groups can also be created by the church to help people struggling with addictions. These, among others, are illustrative examples of Christians meeting the social health needs of communities.

Economic or Financial Health

This is one major area of concern among many today because of the high rate of unemployment and a lot of financial inequality in society. As seen in the SDG 1, the need to reduce or eradicate poverty is a pressing global need that is a great priority. Based on the mission statement of Jesus Christ in Luke 4:17-18, tackling poverty is also an important goal for Christians as they continue His ministry of bringing good news to the poor. While the "poor" in this text is a reference to those who were needy for spiritual wealth, it also includes those who have great lack of material needs for their daily life. This is corroborated by the idea of *shalom* as prosperity and welfare for everyone in every aspect of life, especially in relation to the basic needs of human life. This aspect was Jesus' desire for all during His ministry on earth. It should also be the aim of those who follow Him in contemporary times.

One major way Christians can help deal with poverty in their community is through financial literacy. For instance, the church can teach skills on how to make money and how to manage it well. These business skills and finances to support those skills are two of the greatest needs in order for people to survive financially in the world today (Valerio, 2003). "The Church should provide basic education to the poor on income generating skills that will enable them provide for themselves" (Ojewole, Audu, & Odeyemi, 2011, p. 97). Experts can be invited to give talks and orientation as part of education and training on the needed areas of economic development such as agriculture and small business trading. In addition, efforts can be made to organize and support cooperative groups or associations for farmers, traders or beneficiaries of these new small businesses. Through these groups, small loans can be offered to individuals and families to begin or to run personal projects or small businesses needed to improve the economic health. This can be done in conjunction with other local or global institutions that are financially stable and are interested in assisting to reduce poverty.

Another major way to fight poverty is to tackle it from the centers of power through advocacy. Christians can join to speak against the local, national, regional and global structures that oppress and exploit people, limiting their ability and opportunity to experience economic benefits that should come with equal distribution of available national resources. This does not necessarily mean Christians should campaign for political office or strive to legislate religious laws that nullify freedom of conscience. It implies, however, the need for Christians to speak through and to those in power (e.g., in parliaments and senates) to ensure justice for all.

> Christians recognize that the actions of governments and transnational corporations, in their quest for power and wealth, interfere with the bringing about of health, healing and wholeness.

> Therefore Christians must be aware that working for the liberation of the economically poor contributes to healing. This includes advocacy, in the sense of speaking with and on behalf of the marginalized and underprivileged, and strengthening networks and campaigns to put pressure on international organizations, governments, industries and research institutions. Such advocacy must also include all efforts towards the transformation of structures that produce poverty, exploitation, harm and sickness. (Schneider et al. 2010, p. 24)

By working with governmental and non-governmental organizations, Christians can help to alleviate suffering and provide opportunity for the needy to find relief (Kunhiyop, 2008). By so doing, believers in Christ can help meet the economic health needs locally and globally.

Environmental Health

More than people realize, the physical environment has an impact on other dimensions of human health. This has been observed in that,

> Natural sunlight in the work environment has been found to be positively correlated with employee well-being and job satisfaction. Research has shown that exercising outdoors in a pleasant setting, such as in a park, is associated with improvements in depression to a greater degree than jogging through urban environments. Physical activity in those pleasant settings also improves cognitive functioning, measured by direct attention. In addition, simply viewing images of natural settings and sitting in a room with live plants can increase prosocial behaviours, which are defined as voluntary actions that are intended to help or benefit another individual or group of individuals. (Edington et al. 2015, pp. 5-6)

Christians and church communities can contribute to taking care of and improving their environment by getting involved in regular community clean-up or sanitation activities, awareness rallies (marching through communities promoting clean and healthy responsible use and care of the environment) and speaking out against practices that endanger the beauty and posterity of the environment. "Christians must promote ethical standards that will protect the environment so that land, air, water and other forms of creation are not rendered useless or harmful to humankind" (Schneider et al. 2010, pp. 35-36). This may involve working with the community leaders and other concerned agencies that are already active in ecological conservation. By so doing, Christians can help meet the needs of environmental health.

Community and International Health

Rife among many communities and nations is the scourge of violence and war. A great number of people suffer and die through conflict, terrorism, civil war and other forms of political violence involving direct or indirect supply of weapons and other means of warfare. This leads to torture, imprisonment, displacement, and many other violations of human rights. These issues preventing *shalom* for individual and communal health (Schneider et al, 2010). On a local scale, the church can meet the needs of those in its community affected by the ravages of communal and political instability. This can involve designing specific seminars for church members and leaders affected by war. Such seminars can empower them to know how to deal with violence, emotional trauma, socio-economic needs, physical health and moral issues including spirituality (Wa-Mbaleka, 2016).

Christians can also act as agents of reconciliation, "peacemakers" between the warring factions. This will include promoting communication with and listening to the affected parties, building trust and confidence (Dada, 2008). Though this process is often painful, long and hard, it is an inevitable Christian mandate that must be pursued with much patient effort and prayer. "When civil ties break down, it is often [Christian] believers who can lead societies across bridges of reconciliation, reaching out to clasp hands with brothers and sisters on the other side" (Adeney, 2003, p. 99).

Reconciliation can also be extended to nations at war with each other. Amidst terrorism and cold war among countries, Christians have the responsibility to proactively prevent its increase in the international community by being the prophetic voice against civil injustice. Indeed,

> It is the duty of all in positions of influence to uphold the moral and legal principles governing relations between nations, and it is the duty of all citizens to hold their government accountable to these principles. In particular, the church, individual members of the church, human rights groups, the judiciary, the academic community, and international human rights organizations must call governments to account. (Durie, 2008, p. 118-119)

Tony Campolo, a famous Christian leader and professor of ethics, gives a proposal for pursuing peace in the Middle East between the Israelis and the Palestinians which illustrates the role of Christians in reconciliation. He suggests that Christians, Jews and Muslims in the United States can raise money together to purchase food, medicines and other needs for the Palestinians who live in the Gaza Strip. These needs can be sent and given safe passage to the Palestinians by the Israeli military who currently prevent any supplies from getting past them into the Gaza strip as a security measure (Campolo, 2014). This is an example of a way Christians can contribute to peace by working with others to establish peace

in international community. By working to provide the human health needs of the conflicting groups, Christians can serve as mediators through non-violence, love, and support to heal and restore community and international *shalom*.

From a biblical Christian perspective, it must be established that while physical, mental, social, economic, environmental and community health are important, they are incomplete without spiritual health—a right relationship with God based on His Laws recorded in the Bible. 3 John 1:2 implies that God's desire for humans is that they prosper (enjoy *shalom*) in every aspect of their lives as they prosper in their spiritual lives. As stated above, *shalom* derives from faithful relational obedience to God and His Laws as stated in the Bible. Since God is the only source of *shalom*, it implies that it cannot be experienced in other areas of life without Him.

The church must seek to help people realize their spiritual need by prayerfully meeting their other health needs beginning with the physical. "The fulfilment of man's physical needs can be an adjunct to fulfilling his spiritual needs" (Kuntaraf & Kuntaraf, 2008, p. 134). Jesus is noted for doing good to people by meeting their physical needs for healing and relief and commanding His disciples to do the same (Matt 9:35; 10:1, 8; Acts 10:38). This was Christ's approach as "He mingled with people as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, *ministered to their needs*, and won their confidence. Then He bade them follow Him" (White, 1905, p. 143, emphasis ours). God's desire is that, like Jesus Christ, the church should work "to stand courageously against all forms of injustice, to relieve human suffering of every kind, and to establish brotherhood among peoples of wide-ranging backgrounds" (Blake, 1999, p. 117). Christians in the 21st century are called to fulfil this divine mandate by ministering to the total health needs of people as they pursue God's desire for *shalom* locally and globally.

Conclusion

Health will always be a concern on a global scale as long as there are diseases of epidemic proportions that decimate world population. While it is good to pay attention to measures that will curb the spread and negative effects of these life-threatening scourges on physical health and well-being, it is also important to consider other aspects of human health. Every effort to help human health must not focus only on the physical health needs but must focus on the whole human being with all the indivisible aspects (Kuntaraf & Kuntaraf, 2008). Through research, health care professionals are beginning to foresee that in the next 25 years, their focus on health will be based on helping people "find the right resources to support their health and well-being in the workplace, in their communities, and within their own families" (Edington et al. 2015, p.10). It means that the future of the health profession is in promoting healthy lifestyle

choices, not only in terms of health as the absence of disease, but health in relation to all other dimensions of the human person that affect one's wellbeing.

Christians in the 21st century have a very important role to play as they work with world agencies, doing their best to meet the total health needs of the people around them as a means of participating in the work of establishing God's kingdom on this earth as they wait for its final consummation in imminent future glory. As they do this in response to the love of their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, and as an extension of the grace, healing and wholeness that they have received from Him, they become agents in fulfilling God's desire and vision for human life on earth as expressed in the Hebrew word *Shalom*.

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