



LET'S BEGIN HERE

In Scripture, we at times witness God miraculously healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, giving mobility to the lame, even raising the dead. Whether the healing was carried out by prophets in the Old Testament or Jesus Himself in the New Testament, often the question wasn't *if* God would heal but *how*. So, has God changed? The truth is that many believers today who suffer must accept the fact that they might not be healed in this life. Inevitably, deep questions about God's faithfulness and love surface when pain endures, illnesses progress, and the prognosis seems bleak: "Where is God when I'm suffering?" "Didn't Christ heal all kinds of paralysis and sicknesses?" "Is there unconfessed sin in my life?" "Should I visit a healer?" "What process does God use to bring about healing today?" Let's turn to James 5:13–16 to answer many of these questions about suffering and healing.



Getting Started: Patiently Resisting Revenge

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. The same way you'd gather ingredients before preparing a nutritious meal! Make certain you have handy a Bible dictionary and a concordance, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through James 5. Read these verses carefully, as if it's the first time you've read them.

Quotable

I believe in divine healing. I do not believe in divine healers. I believe in faith healing. I do not believe in faith healers. There is a great difference.

— Charles R. Swindoll





Helpful Hints

- Reading different Bible versions can help you to read the same passage with fresh perspective. If you don't have different versions handy, there are plenty of Web sites that can help you.
- Remember: *Observation* helps you put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture and begin to identify its central idea. Paying particular attention to James 5:13–16, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Write down your observations and discoveries.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

Using James 5:13–16, apply the four primary techniques or ingredients (*observation, interpretation, correlation, and application*) in the searching the Scriptures process to your study. Take some time first, however, to read any material you find in your commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and online tools that covers this section of James 5. *Pray* for the Spirit's guidance. Jot notes in the margins of your Bible or on a separate sheet of paper.

Observation: What do you see?

Use the space below to record your findings as you look closely at the text. Remember: Look for repeated words, commands, questions, emphatic statements, and images or figures of speech. Make notes as specific as you can at this stage.

James 5:13–14

James 5:15–16



JAMES

Hands-On Christianity

Suffering, Sickness, Sin—and Healing

James 5:13–16

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STUDY

Interpretation: What does it mean?

Reread James 5:7–12 from the previous lesson. What was James' point in this passage? Notice his focus on patient endurance. In your own words, how does James 5:7–12 prepare the foundation for understanding James 5:13–16?

Before we dig into James 5:13–16, let's explore five foundational truths about suffering:

- There are two classifications of sin: original sin (Romans 5:12) and personal sin (3:23).
- Original sin introduced sickness and death to the human race (5:12).
- Sometimes there is a direct link between personal sin and sickness (1 Chronicles 10:13 and 1 Corinthians 11:30).
- Sometimes there is no relationship between personal sin and sickness (Acts 3:2–8).
- It is not God's will that everyone be healed (2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

James 5:13–16

If you were to look up the Greek word for *suffering*, you would discover that it means “in distress” or “afflicted.” With this in mind, look at James 5:13. Who did James address in verse 13? How should these two groups of people respond to their circumstances? Why?

Finding Yourself in the Story

Many believers today suffer indescribable physical and emotional pain because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Others have witnessed the violent executions of loved ones, or have been separated from their families because of persecution. Take a few moments to imagine what it might be like for someone experiencing the anguish of persecution. What might they be feeling? How might this passage from James apply to their plight? Pause for a few moments and pray for the persecuted Christians around the world.



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MM14
3

JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
Suffering, Sickness, Sin—and Healing

James 5:13–16

If you have a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*, read the section about James 5:14–15 (119). If you do not have this commentary, here is an important quote that will help us understand James 5:14–15.

James prescribes a specific response by the elders of the church: prayer and anointing. . . . We find two distinct uses of anointing with oil in the Bible. One involves a religious or ceremonial act as a symbol for consecration—as in the anointing of David as king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:13). A second type of anointing was more mundane and common—for medicinal or hygienic purposes. . . .

Most likely James has the second use of oil in mind. The idea behind the use of both prayer and anointing is that the church should seek to come to the aid of both physical and spiritual needs of a sick person. The medicinal use of oil provided physical comfort and promoted the healing process. Note that James sees no conflict between prayer and medicine.

In verse 14, James addressed “the sick,” which refers in the original Greek to those who have no strength and who are “ill to the point of being incapacitated.”¹ What did James tell “the sick” to do? What character traits does a person exhibit (for example, humility and courage) when he or she follows James’ advice in verse 14?

In James 5:14, what does it mean for the elders to anoint and pray “in the name of the Lord”?

A better translation for *restore* in James 5:15 is “save” (119). If salvation (both spiritual and physical) is the ultimate goal of prayers for healing, how does that change our understanding of the phrase “and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him”?



JAMES
Hands-On Christianity
Suffering, Sickness, Sin—and Healing

James 5:13–16

What did James say will happen to “the sick” as a result of calling the elders and receiving anointing (representing the best medical care of James’ time) and then prayer? (See verse 15.)

Because sickness *sometimes* results from unconfessed sin, what can we learn and apply from James 5:16?

Correlation: How does it compare?

Read the following passages, and write a note or two as to how they help confirm the meaning of James 5:13–16.

Psalm 38:1–22

John 9:1–3

James 5:19–20



JAMES

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James 5:13–16

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THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY

SERMON NOTE

Suffering with no remedy in sight can discourage even the strongest saint. With so-called “faith healers” claiming divine power to alleviate sickness on one side and well-meaning believers on the other side refusing all medical treatment, it’s no wonder we’re confused on the topics of suffering, sickness, sin, and healing. How would you communicate the message of James 5:13–16 to a group of elderly individuals who might be enduring chronic pain or illness? How would you address their deep questions about God’s character? How would you emphasize the importance of prayer and confession in the midst of suffering?

Application: What difference does it make?

From the beginning of James 5:13–16 to the end, prayer is the point. Prayer connects a believer’s heart with the sovereign plan of God. If we have joy and health, we should sing praises to God. If we suffer with mental, emotional, or physical pain, we must pray for healing, confess our sins, and entrust ourselves to God’s perfect plan.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You are totally sovereign and full of compassion. Though You don’t always choose to heal the sick, You have promised to Your children resurrection life—a glorious life free of suffering, sadness, and sin. Father, help me to hope in Your Word and to place my trust in You, regardless of the depth or length of my trials. Bring peace to my anxious heart and hope when I despair. In the powerful name of Jesus Christ, our victorious Lord, amen.

Endnote

1. Frederick William Danker, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 142–43.



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6

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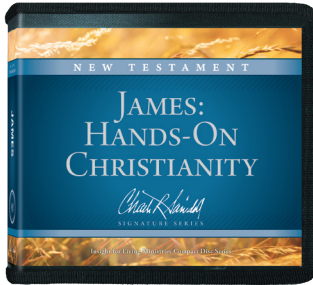
James 5:13–16

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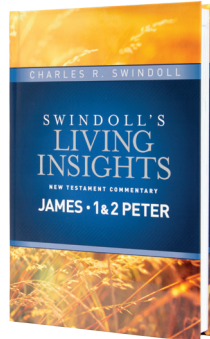
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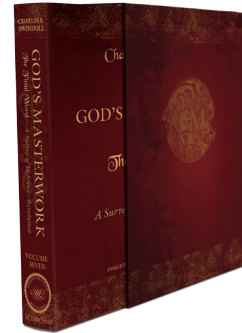
Tools for Digging Deeper



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7