

## FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

## STUDY TEN

## A Biblical Case for Healing

*James 5:13–16*

*When it is God's will that we be healed, He does so miraculously and immediately. Be sure to include those two words, for they go together.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**W**HAT do we do when we're sick? Some so-called faith healers urge sufferers to forego medical treatment and "expect a miracle." They say that pursuing medical help demonstrates a lack of faith, and sick people must trust in God's power alone for Him to heal them.

The Scriptures, however, never draw a line between praying for healing and seeking help from a physician. In fact, James' prescription for sick people includes both prayer and medical care. Let's take a closer look at his instructions for the suffering and the sick in James 5:13–16.

**PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Doctors prescribe medications and perform surgeries, but, ultimately, all healing comes from the One who formed our bodies. Take a few moments in prayer to offer yourself to God and receive grace to understand what His Word says about healing.

*Father, I humble myself before You as the maker and healer of my body and soul. Grant me wisdom as I learn Your ways and follow Your prescription for my life. In Jesus' name, amen.*



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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*James 5:13–16*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

James wrote his epistle to persecuted Christians whose suffering severely tested their faith. In the opening chapter, he counseled his readers to find joy despite their trials, seeing them as avenues to maturity and deeper faith in God. James invited them to pray for God’s wisdom and assured them that “God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation” (James 1:12).

In his final chapter, James circled back to the subject of trials, urging “patience in suffering” and offering Job as a model of endurance (5:10–11). He concluded with practical steps to follow when we’re suffering, featuring prayer as a central theme.



### Observation: The Suffering, the Cheerful, and the Sick

Observation is the first phase of *Searching the Scriptures*. As you read the verses, look for patterns, questions and answers, steps to follow, commands, and promises.

What instructions do you observe in *James 5:13*?

What do suffering hardships and being happy have in common?



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*James 5:13–16*

What steps do you observe in *James 5:14*?

What teaching about the body and soul, sickness and sin, and prayer and confession do you observe in *5:15–16*?

*Healing doesn't come because we pay some individual who claims he or she is able to heal us. Healing comes because God sovereignly and mysteriously chooses to say yes to our prayer. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



**A Biblical Case for Healing**

*James 5:13–16*



**Interpretation: The Meaning of Key Words**

An accurate interpretation of Scripture often hinges on definitions of key words, such as “suffering” and “sick” in James 5:13–14. Commentaries, such as *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*, Bible dictionaries, and lexicons help us discover the meaning of the Greek words.

An excellent online resource is [netbible.org](http://netbible.org). Go to James 5 on this website and click the “Greek” tab. The NET Bible translation of James 5 will appear on the left pane and the Greek New Testament on the right. Hover your cursor over the words *suffering* and *ill* (James 5:13–14 NET). The corresponding Greek word will be highlighted in yellow, and a box containing the definition of the Greek word will also appear. Using this resource or one of your other study aids, write down the definitions of the Greek words in the chart below.

English Word	Greek Root Word	Definition
<i>suffering</i> (James 5:13)	<i>kakopatheō</i>	
<i>ill</i> (5:14)	<i>astheneō</i>	

These terms describe two conditions that call for specific actions involving prayer. James didn’t say explicitly, but what did James imply the suffering person should pray for?

Too sick to leave their bed, ill people should summon the elders to come and to pray, “anointing [them] with oil in the name of the Lord” (5:14).



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In his commentary, Pastor Chuck Swindoll sheds light on the meaning of “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 Sam. 16:13). A more mundane type of anointing was 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 was that the church should seek to come to the aid of both the physical and spiritual needs of a sick person. The medicinal use of oil provided physical comfort and promoted the healing process. Please observe that for James there was *no* conflict between prayer and medicine.<sup>1</sup>

In James’ day, anointing with medicinal oil was one means of medical care. So, the implication for our day is that not only should the elders come to pray, but also the sick person should accept medical treatment. Prayer and medical care go hand in hand.

What does it mean for the elders to pray and anoint the person “*in the name of the Lord*” (James 5:14, emphasis added)?

In matters of healing, God alone has the say regarding our restoration—“the Lord will make you well” (5:15). In Greek, the word for *heal* in 5:15 is *sozo*, which means “save” or “rescue” or “preserve.” What else did James say that God has authority to grant in 5:15?



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James concluded his instructions in [5:16](#). Put this verse in your own words and, from the context, summarize the roles of prayer and confession in healing body and soul.

*The elders are to pray over the sick person in the name of the Lord—that is, invoking God’s will, asking God’s presence and God’s blessing. And the results? When it becomes His will, “the Lord will raise him up.” I take it that it is a miraculous, instantaneous healing.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Correlation: Praying in Jesus’ Name for God’s Will

Praying in Jesus’ name means to pray to the Father in Jesus’ authority as His representative (John 15:16; 16:23–24). “In Jesus’ name” isn’t a magic formula we attach to prayer to get whatever we wish but an invitation to ask the Father for what *Jesus* would ask, always in accordance with the Father’s will.

Read [1 John 5:14–15](#) in the Amplified Bible. What instructions did John give about prayer that further explain (instructions explain) Jesus’ teaching?

A prayer for healing offered in the name of Jesus always appeals to the will of God, for it is only by His will and by His power that a sick person is healed.

*Doctors are not miracle workers. They are not healers. They cannot cure anything. God cures. God alone heals.* —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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### Application: Four Practical Principles

In his book, *Flying Closer to the Flame*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll recalls praying for a friend with cancer who had asked for prayer. Amazingly, God healed the man! Pastor Chuck reflects,

I can't explain what happened. He couldn't either. I have no powers within me that produce healing in anyone else. The God I know is the same God you know, and I simply trusted Him and prayed for His will to be done. The Spirit of God healed my friend sovereignly and silently. And best of all, God got all the glory.<sup>2</sup>

God has the power to heal, and He does heal when He chooses to. Our part is to follow the biblical steps. Let's review them in principle form.

- *Confession of sin is healthy—employ it.* Don't let sins build up in your life to the point that they make you physically ill.
- *Praying for one another is essential—practice it.* If you become ill, call upon the elders of your church to come and pray for you. Ask others to pray.
- *Use of medical assistance is imperative—utilize it.* Asking for prayer but ignoring proper medical treatment was not James' point.
- *When healing comes from God—claim it.* Whether or not the illness is the result of personal sin, when God heals, remember to thank Him and give Him the glory!

Write down how you can apply these principles. Do you need to ask for prayer? To pray for another person? To seek medical advice? To confess sin? (Take a moment right now to pray!)



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



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for Your marvelous power to heal us physically and restore us spiritually. I seek Your will for my situation. Bind up my broken heart. Strengthen my failing body. Renew my suffering Spirit according to Your wise and merciful plan. In the name of Jesus and according to Your will, amen.*

#### ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on James, 1 and 2 Peter*, vol. 13 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 124.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Flying Closer to the Flame* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 200.

