

JESUS: The Greatest Life of All

STUDY NINE

The Ultimate Healer

Selected Scriptures

Being sovereign, God can do whatever He pleases with whomever He wishes whenever He desires.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN the previous *Searching the Scriptures* study, we witnessed our Savior’s healing power in action. At His word, the official’s son rose from his sick bed (John 4:46–53), a lame man stood up and strode down the street (5:2–9), and a blind man opened his eyes to see a brilliant blue sky (9:1–7). Even death released its grip when Jesus called lifeless Lazarus out of the tomb (11:40–44).

Jesus is the ultimate healer . . . and His power to heal didn’t end when He ascended into heaven.

In the name of Jesus, Peter told a man who was lame from birth, “Get up and walk!” As soon as Peter gave the command,

The man’s feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! (Acts 3:7)

The man’s healing was instantaneous, complete, and permanent—certain signs of divine healing. Nothing has changed in Jesus’ power to heal . . . which makes us wonder, *Do we as His followers have the authority to heal people in His name? How do we minister to the infirmed? If we fall ill, should we expect divine healing?*

To discover the answers, we need to dive deeper into the Scriptures, beginning with James’ instructions to suffering and sick Christians in James 5:13–16.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

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.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

James wrote to persecuted Christians caught in the jaws of suffering. He opened his letter by helping them see their trials as faith-building opportunities and find joy through them. In his final chapter, James returned to the subject of trials and urged “patience in suffering” with Job as a model (James 5:10–11). He concluded with practical steps to follow when we’re suffering and sick—prayer being his central theme.



Observation: What to Do When We’re Suffering and 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](#)?



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How are our responses to suffering hardships and being happy similar?

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

What teaching about prayer and confession do you observe in *5:15–16*?



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Interpretation: The Meaning of Key Words

An accurate interpretation of Scripture often hinges on definitions of key words. First, let's examine *suffering* and *sick* in *James 5:13–14*. In the following chart, click on the Greek root word linked to the online Greek dictionary at billmounce.com and fill in the definitions.

English Word	Greek Root Word	Definition
<i>suffering</i> (5:13)	<i>kakopatheo</i>	
<i>sick</i> (5:14)	<i>astheneo</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?

*Pray for wisdom. Pray for help from a counselor. Pray for endurance. Pray for direction.
Pray for patience. Pray for relief. Just pray. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

What about the *sick*? People in this condition are too weak to function normally and often are bedridden. What should they do and what should the elders do, according to *5:14*?



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This is a person who is debilitated physically. He or she is never told to go to a faith healer, here or anywhere else. The sick person is responsible to let the church elders know.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

In his commentary, *Insights on James, 1 & 2 Peter*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll sheds light on the meaning of *anoint*.

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 [is] 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.¹

In James' day, anointing with medicinal oil was one means of medical care. For example, the good Samaritan, in Jesus' parable of the same name, rubbed oil in the wounds of the victim on the side of the road (*Luke 10:34*). So, the implication for our day is that not only should the elders come to pray, but also the sick person should seek medical treatment. Prayer and wise medical care go hand in hand.

The elders are to pray and anoint the person "*in the name of the Lord*" (James 5:14, emphasis added). What does it mean to pray "in the name of the Lord"? Why is it important to always pray in the Lord's name?



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God alone has the say regarding our healing. James wrote, “the *Lord* will make you well” (James 5:15, emphasis added) and “raise [you] up” (5:15 NASB). Sometimes, the Lord answers our prayers and miraculously heals the sick person. 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 alone has authority to grant in 5:15?

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 sick person seeks the best medical help he or she can find. We pray again and again for healing. And then, we wait on God. We pray in faith that God will do what only He can do.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Five Laws of Healing

Correlation looks at a passage from a broader, whole-Bible perspective. From this vantage point, we can build a framework for understanding healing. We begin by nailing down basic principles about the nature of sin and its connection to suffering and sickness.



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Primarily, there are two types of sin: original sin and personal sin. This statement is based on comparing Psalm 51:5, “I was born a sinner,” with 51:7, “Purify me from my sins.” We are sinners by nature who commit sins through our actions. Look up *original sin* and *personal sins* in your Bible-study resources and explain what these terms mean. For an online resource, consult *The Encyclopedia of the Bible* at biblegateway.com.

Because we have original sin, we commit acts of sin—sins of thought, sins of word, sins of actions, sins of motives. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Original sin introduced sickness, suffering, and death to the human race. *Romans 5:12* and *1 Corinthians 15:21* elaborate this point. Next, read *Romans 5:13–19*, and explain how Paul connected the first sin of Adam to sickness, suffering, and death in the world.

*Through sin came death, our “enemy.” The last enemy to be destroyed will be death.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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Sometimes there exists a direct relationship between personal sins and physical sickness. David's experience in [Psalm 32:3–5](#) illustrates this point, along with Paul's warning in [1 Corinthians 11:29–30](#). How might personal sins lead to physical sickness?

Sometimes there is no relationship between personal sins and human afflictions. Jesus corrected the disciples, saying, "It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins" ([John 9:3](#)). What can you conclude in regard to making assumptions about the cause of a person's suffering?

Guard yourself from blaming someone's sins for their sickness. You don't know. If you knew, you'd be God. We never know the reason people are suffering, so don't even hazard a guess.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Sometimes it is not God's will that we be healed. Paul's experience related in [2 Corinthians 12:7–9](#) and also the ongoing illness of Trophimus [2 Timothy 4:20](#) confirms what point about God's will and healing?



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If it is God's will that everyone be healed, wouldn't God have healed Paul, His most prominent spokesman? No one prayed with more faith, but God said no. As a result, Paul found that God's grace in weakness was sufficient. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Principles about Healing to Apply

Let's tie together all these principles from Scripture with five cords of application

- *The will of God is paramount—respect it.* God “does whatever He pleases” (Psalm 115:3 NASB). He alone has the power to heal and the prerogative to choose the timing.
- *The use of medical assistance is imperative—seek it and obey it.* Asking for prayer but ignoring proper medical treatment was not James' point. Do both.
- *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. Confession and forgiveness bring relief from guilt.
- *Praying for one another is commanded—practice it.* If you become ill, call upon the elders of your church to come and pray for you. Pray for healing and ask others to pray.
- *When healing comes from God—accept it gratefully.* 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? (Take a moment right now to pray!) To seek medical advice? To confess sin?



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As we read in James 5:13–16, prayer connects a believer’s heart with the sovereign will of God—trusting the One who may or may not choose to heal. 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.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on James, 1 and 2 Peter*, vol. 13 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 124.

