

■ SCRIPTURE

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. **14** Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. **15** And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. **16** Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. **18** Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

19 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, **20** let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.
ESV

■ DISCUSS

1. How would you define prayer? What is it?
2. James 5:13-14 seems to give us a menu: For different situations, here's what to do. Let's parse that out. What situations are mentioned? What course of action is recommended for each one?
3. Let's say that all three courses of action are some form of prayer. How would these types of prayer differ from one another? Why is it important to get the church leaders involved in prayer for a sick person?
4. Is there more value in praying with other believers than in praying by yourself?
5. Is verse 15 telling us that every physical illness has a spiritual cause? What's the connection between sickness and sin?
6. What do you say to God when you're sick? Is this a time when you ignore God, or pay more attention to Him?
7. Do you think verse 15 guarantees healing if the people praying are faithful enough? Have you found this to be the case? Is every sick person healed when they're properly prayed for?

8. The end of verse 16 has a sentence that many people know and often quote. “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” What do you think that means?
9. So let’s ask the natural question: Who is righteous? Are we righteous? How do we become righteous? What distinguishes the righteous from the unrighteous?
10. Why do you think “confessing your sins to each other” is so important for healing and answered prayers?
11. As you look at the last two verses of James, how do they connect to the rest of this chapter? Can you make any sense of it?
12. If we’re right about the readers being like Pharisees—and take a glance at 4:11 to support that notion—how would they normally treat someone who “wanders from the truth”?

■ LIVE IT OUT

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let’s consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Prayer Journal: Begin keeping a prayer journal, in which you record the things you pray for. Plan to check back periodically to see how God is changing the situation, and how He’s changing you.

Group Prayer: If you don’t already do this, connect with other believers for group prayer. Talk with a few friends about getting together on a regular basis to pray for the needs of your church and community.

Care for the Sick: Do you know anyone who’s sick? How can you help them? Are there practical matters—errands to run—you could attend to? How could you encourage them? And don’t neglect prayer—for and with the sick person.

Study Elijah: The character of Elijah is fascinating. Pick the story up in 1 Kings 17, and follow him until he gets swept up to heaven in 2 Kings 2. Do a name search to find other Bible passages that mention Elijah. Consider how his “passions” made him such an effective pray-er.

Connect with Wanderer: Do you know anyone who is wandering from the faith? What can you do to reach out to this person? Pray a lot before you do anything. Listen for God’s direction. And remember all of James’s cautions about the tongue. Don’t spew harsh judgment, but express your love and concern.