

**Sermon or Lesson: James 5:13-16** (NIV based)  
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Use God's Way To Successfully Pass Through Suffering

INTRO: Have you ever given advice to someone who was about to go through a difficult situation that you had already experienced fully? The purpose of your advice was to give them a good tested coping strategy that would strive to minimize their suffering. And then after they went through the difficult situation, you find out they totally ignored all of the excellent advice you had given them beforehand, which of course resulted in their suffering way more than they needed to.

In our verses of study today, we will see that the Lord gives us really good advice on actions we should take in order to minimize suffering when we go through difficult suffering situations.

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READ - James 5:13-16

This section of verses 13-16 is continuing the discussion on the topic of patient endurance in the face of suffering (vv.10-11), and it designates specific responses to specific types of suffering situations.

v.13 - READ

[Lesson Question: In this verse, what are the designated responses to suffering situations?]

SECTION POINT: Pray when you are suffering, sing when you are not.

- - If there is any one among the "brothers" (v.12) or fellow believers who is "suffering harm or undergoing hardship" (Strong's #2553), then that person should pray, bringing his/her situation before the Lord and requesting divine intervention. (cf. Psalms 50:15)  
- - Thus, when you are experiencing suffering or hardship and you are struggling to endure the suffering with perseverance (v.10), it is proper and advisable to pray about your suffering situation.

- - Conversely, when you are experiencing "happy" or "cheerful" times, then it is proper and advisable to "sing songs of praise" to the Lord. (Strong's #2114)

- - Obviously, you would want to also express thanksgiving to the Lord for granting you a period of time that is devoid of suffering.

- - Our natural inclination is to cleave to the notion that we are entitled to live every day without any suffering, which we think should be normal and predominant for us believers.

- - But we need to quench this entitlement thinking, instead embracing the reality that the Lord is in control of ordaining our days (v.4:15) and He determines whether suffering or cheer come upon us each day.

- - So we have plenty of motivation to express to the Lord extreme gratefulness when He spares us suffering for that day.

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## vv.14-16 - READ

[Lesson Question: What are the dynamics of the God-designated process to get the Lord to heal a sick person?]

SECTION POINT: The elders are to lead the sick person through a specific God-designated process by which the Lord will grant healing.

The elders are to pray over the sick person:

- - If there is any one among the brothers who is suffering sickness, then the prescribed response involves calling in the elders of the church to take action.
- - The elders are instructed to do several things, firstly to pray over the sick person.
- - The most plausible explanation for this course of action is that getting healed from sickness requires more than just the sick person praying; it requires intervention and intercession by specific others, namely the elders.
- - Verse 15 declares that the Lord will honor the prayer of the elders by "making the sick person well" and "raise him up".
- - A reason the Lord will honor the prayer of the elders is because they offer the prayer in faith.

The elders are to anoint the sick person with oil:

- - Another thing the elders are instructed to do is to anoint the sick person with oil while including a verbal declaration that this action is being done "in the name of the Lord".
- - Because verse 15 clearly states that the Lord's response to the "prayer offered in faith" is what makes the sick person well, then unquestionably neither the oil nor the elders have magical or supernatural powers to heal the sick person.
- - Therefore, it is proper and necessary to give the credit for a healing solely to the Lord because it is "the Lord [who] will raise him up". (v.15)

Q: So what purpose does the anointing with oil have then?

- - A search of the Old Testament reveals that the purpose of anointing with oil was to set apart persons or things for sacred purposes (Exodus 40:1-15), i.e. to sanctify, to cleanse and remove it from ordinary use and re-designate it for sacred use.
- - Therefore, the sick person will need to undergo a spiritual transformation of sorts, with the anointing of oil being an outward identification and representation of the sick person's inner change of heart to a new dedication for the Lord's sacred purposes.

The elders are to counsel the sick person towards repentance.

- - In order to achieve this new dedication, the sick person will need to be counseled and willingly move in this direction of being spiritually cleansed and set apart for the Lord's sacred purposes.
- - Therefore, a main function of the elders' counseling is to expose "if [the sick person] has sinned" (v.15) in a way that is causing the illness, i.e. the sick person has been engaging in gross sin.

- - Then the elder's counseling will seek to gently persuade the sick person to repent, turning away from engaging in the gross sin and turning towards engaging in the opposite competing righteous behavior. (2 Timothy 2:19-26)
  - - Within this counseling process, the sick person will need to disclose his/her engaging in gross sin to the elders (v.16), and then confess it to the Lord whereupon the Lord will grant forgiveness to those who are true believers in Christ, that He died on the cross to take the punishment they personally deserve for their sins. (v.15; 1 John 1:9; John 3:16,18)
  - - At this point in the progress of the counseling in which the sick believer has genuinely repented of engaging in the gross sin and has confessed it to the Lord, the elders join in to pray for healing of the sick believer, which the Lord will then honor (v.16).
  - - If the sick believer does not have gross sin to deal with, then of course the counseling would skip this part where sin is uncovered and addressed.
  - - Notice that the steps delineated in these verses comprise an outline of general steps to take and does not comprehensively include other crucial steps that are found elsewhere in Scriptures.
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Q: So what is so special about the elders that they are the ones being called to pray and counsel the sick believer?

SECTION POINT: The elders have the necessary qualifications to successfully facilitate the Lord's healing of the sick believer.

- - When guidelines in Scriptures are followed, the men selected to be elders in churches are to be spiritually mature, righteous, wise, above reproach in their living, knowledgeable about and able to teach Scriptures, and know how to pray effectively.
- - As such, they would be spiritually gifted and empowered to minister to people in various ways, in this case to spiritually counsel a sick person through repentance towards healing.
- - The elders would possess the God-approved spiritual perspective, the God-approved spiritual treatment approach, and the God-empowered spiritual discernment necessary to correctly identify and properly address the spiritual causes to the sickness.
- - The Lord actively responds to this kind of ministering and prayers of elders using this kind of treatment approach, as stated in verse 16 that their prayers "are powerful and effective".
- - Additionally, the Lord actively responds when believers "confess their sins to each other and pray for each other" (v.16), in other words when other believers get involved in the process by assisting sick believers towards repentance and by interceding in prayer on their behalf.
- - Some sick persons have a spiritual problem at the source-cause of their medical or psychological prolonged sickness, which thereby requires a spiritual solution.
- - The Lord is the only One with sufficient power to heal this spiritually-caused sickness, and therefore the treatment process must be done the Lord's way in order to get Him to carry out the healing.
- - The elders possess and utilize everything the Lord requires for Him to grant healing of the sick believer.

- - And other believers can get somewhat involved and be helpful too, particularly if they are "righteous". (v.16)

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BIG IDEA: The Lord has designated specific steps to follow in order to successfully pass through suffering.

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#### APPLICATIONS:

- - What approach are you using to successfully pass through suffering? Are you doing what comes natural to you? Or are you following God's prescribed way, properly implementing all the steps He designates?
  - - Are you praying when you incur suffering?
  - - Are you singing songs of praise during the times when you are relatively free from suffering?
  
  - - Are you praying for others to be healed?
  - - Do you call the elders to come pray over a sick family member, or friend, or yourself?
  - - If you are sick, are you searching for and digging out any sin source causes, and then repenting and confessing your sins?
  
  - - Are your elders doing what is prescribed in these verses, going to the sick people affiliated with your church or ministry, counseling them towards repentance, salvation, and praying over them for healing?
  - - Or do you or your elders take a shortcut and circumvent the process the Lord has designated here in James chapter 5 of utilizing prayer and counseling, by instead attempting to achieve a healing through a mystical or magical or declarative or commanding approach?
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"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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