

medicinal purposes to our usage of medications. Shepherds in Biblical times put oil on their sheep for protection from vermin.

3. What is meant by “the prayer offered in faith”? Whose faith is this? Why do people not always get healed?

A prayer offered in faith is a prayer offered by one who has faith, not doubt; in this passage, it seems to refer to the elders who pray over someone. The prayer is not what causes healing, God brings about the healing. Healing can take many forms – some of which we don’t understand or don’t see.

4. Look up the word “sick” in a Bible dictionary. What forms of sickness might James be referring to?

The word sick may refer to illness, but can be translated as weakness or weariness. We can be weakened spiritually, morally, physically or emotionally. Remember that James is writing primarily to Christians who were Jews. The Jews of the time believed that all illness was due to sin. Can you relate to this belief? (There are some illnesses that are a direct result of wrong living, but Jesus refuted this belief that all sickness is due to sin in John 9:1-3). Paul was afflicted in a way that was not healed physically, but he was given additional grace to deal with it. (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)

Modern medicine has recognized the interrelationship among physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health. We live as integrated beings. Often, unwellness or treatment for unwellness in one of these areas affects other areas. Hospital teams often consist of physicians, nurses, counselors, ministers, and sometimes alternative therapists (e.g. massage therapy, touch therapy, acupuncture, etc.). Only God can heal the deepest needs of our hearts. Through Christ He has provided forgiveness of sins and restoration to a life in relationship with Him both now and for eternity. This is spiritual healing at its core. All healing is a process that takes time. God works through medical, counseling, and ministerial people to start and effect that process. He is also with us in that process. And the church—elders and members—are with us to pray and support us.

Within the poem *Morte D’Arthur*, Tennyson wrote:

“Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

What does this mean?

DAY 4 – Read James 5:16-18

1. Verse 16 speaks of confessing our sins to each other. What purpose will this serve? Do you think all sins should be confessed to others? Read Matthew 18:15-18. How does this passage relate to James? Does it help your understanding?

If we have sinned against another, we should seek their forgiveness. If we struggle with a particular sin, sharing that with another believer may keep us in the right frame to resist, and it offers help in convicting us. It also enables us to remind one another of God’s forgiveness.

Do you think all sins should be confessed to others? All sin should be confessed to God. 1 John 1:9 teaches that the confession of sin will cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Any sin that has erected a barrier between us and another can be resolved through confession to the one affected or to those who are praying over you. If confession of a sin would only hurt another, should it be shared?

- 2. James speaks of prayer as a powerful resource. Do you believe there are any limits to prayer? Do you feel that prayer is a privilege? Why do we sometimes use prayer as a last resort? Can you recall a time when you saw the powerful results of such prayer?**
- 3. James recalls a period in the life of Elijah, which is detailed in I Kings 17 and 18. In what ways was Elijah a righteous person?**

Elijah, which means “the Lord is my God” was in a right relationship with God. He did what God told him to do, and he relied on God to sustain him.

What other example is given regarding a powerful prayer of Elijah’s in this passage? What resulted from this?

The widow’s son was healed after his apparent death by the fervent prayer of Elijah. As a result, the widow believed that Elijah was a man of God and that he spoke God’s truth.

DAY 5 - Read James 5:19-20

- 1. Who is James speaking to and about in verse 19?**
Many believe that James is speaking to fellow Christians about other Christians who have turned away.
- 2. If we believe the idea that once we are saved, we cannot lose salvation, then what is the death spoken of in verse 20?**
Death could be spiritual – a turning away from God, who sustains us, would be similar to death, or it could be an early physical death due to sin. It could mean that James is referring to people who are not believers, and the death they are saved from through salvation is a terrible one indeed.
- 3. Read 2 Timothy 2:24-26 and 3:16. What guidelines does Paul give us for turning someone from sin?**
We do not need to argue with people who disagree with us. We need to continue speaking the truth, which is the Word, but we need to speak the truth with humility and with kindness and compassion for others. The Bible itself can be used to teach and sway others, just as it can convict us of our own sin. In order for that to happen, we must know the Word.
- 4. What does the phrase “cover over a multitude of sins” mean in verse 20 (see also I Peter 4:8 and Romans 4:7-8)?**
Christ is a cover for our sins. His covering imputes His righteousness to us.

Is this a different idea than being “credited for righteousness” in James 2:23?

The principle is the same. It is our faith which allows for the covering of Christ. Abraham was credited with righteousness because of his faith. It is faith that allows our salvation, and the sign of our faith is the work that we do for the kingdom.

James shows us in these last two verses the hope we all have. Not only can we participate in helping to restore a fellow believer who has wandered away from God, but if we are that wondering person, we too can return to God. If someone is not a believer, we can participate in helping him or her to become one. “Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1).

DAY 6 – Reread James 5: 13-20

- 1. Is there a verse in this passage that is particularly meaningful to you? Write it down and memorize it.**
- 2. What does this passage say about what it means to be a disciple or follower of Christ?**
- 3. Reflect on the words to “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”**

*What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer.*

*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged: Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; Take it to the Lord in prayer.*