

## **“What is Healing?”**

By

Bryan Craig

*“Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James 5: 14-16*

Have you been to a hospital lately? If you have, you may have noticed something. They're always full! No wonder the healthcare business has caught the attention of our entire economic system. Yes, sickness and disease are a big part of this fallen world in which we live. I was raised in a family where you could stay home from school if you had a fever or were throwing up, and if it seemed you were not getting well, we would go see the doctor. It was never our family's practice to pray that the sickness would be removed. I met a friend, years ago, who introduced me to the verse in James above. He was raised that if someone was sick, the FIRST thing they would do was to pray. Not only that, but they would invite the spiritual leaders at their church to pray over them and anoint them with oil for healing. Considering that I believe in the power and authority of Scripture, I began to take this scripture in James as a promise from God. I believe it is the central directive that Scripture gives us in regards to healing, and as Influencers for Christ, we should exercise this practice.

However, first let me explain some things I have learned in applying this scriptural directive in my own life.

**What is sickness?** I believe we are all physical, mental and spiritual beings. When any one of these three components of our being are afflicted, it affects the other two. We may be “sick”, meaning we are not “whole”, as a result of our own actions and the consequences of that action. For example, if someone smokes cigarettes their whole life, they should not be surprised if their body becomes afflicted with lung cancer. However, sometimes afflictions come which are unexplainable. We read in Job that though Job was a righteous, blameless man, God allowed Satan to afflict his body with horrible, painful sores. Again, not all afflictions are physical. We may have struggles in

our thought life or we may be wrestling with spiritual beings in our spirits as discussed in Ephesians 6.

***If we are sick, we should pray and seek prayer.*** The directive from James tells those who are sick to seek prayer and anointing. This is in keeping with other scriptures. In 2 Chronicles 16:12, we read about King Asa, who was afflicted with a disease in his feet. It says, "Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians." Contrast that with King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20 who was told he was going to die of an illness. He immediately prayed and cried out to the Lord. His prayer was heard and he was granted 15 more years to his life. Or consider Jesus' healing ministry. We know He could and would heal, but often, He would interact with those in need, saying, "Do you want to get well?" (John 5:6)

***Who are the Elders?*** In the New Testament church, they had to get organized and thus, they created offices or positions in carrying out the Lord's work. Elders were the "overseers" of the church. They were the spiritually mature among them and those entrusted with great responsibility. 1 Timothy 3 gives detailed description to the expectations of an Elder. As Influencers for Christ, God is entrusting you with great responsibility and territory for which you serve. You are becoming spiritually mature and wise in His spirit, and you will be called to lead in many different ways. Though you may not hold an "office" in your church as an Elder, you will be an Elder to someone in your sphere of influence. You need to make yourself available to pray for those around you in need.

***Why the oil?*** I believe the anointing oil is very significant. First, oil was a balm used in medical practice in those early days. Second, oil was used to set apart someone for service for the Lord. Think of how Samuel anointed David, the shepherd, with oil when he was chosen to become King. Most importantly, oil is a sign of the Holy Spirit. In Hebrews 1:9, it talks about Jesus, who is "anointed with the oil of joy." As you know, Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. In this simple act of obedience, touching a sick person's forehead with anointing oil, we invite the Holy Spirit to come into the situation and into the person. The Holy Spirit is the One who heals.

***Confession of sins.*** It clearly says in James, "confess your sins to each other...that you may be healed." I've thought a lot about this, for we must be careful in our application of this. Many well-intended Christians have lowered the condemning boom on a sick person by suggesting that their sin has caused their sickness. This has driven more people from Christ than toward His healing. Jesus clarified this for me, as I studied His encounter with sick people. In Matthew 9:5-6, Jesus says to a paralytic, "***Which is easier***

*to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?' But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....Get up, take your mat and go home."* Our physical healing is only temporary, for we will all die one day. However, our spiritual healing, which comes through Jesus and His forgiveness of our sins, is eternal. Jesus is happy to heal us, but more importantly, He cares about our spiritual state. He wants our hearts. In John 9:1-3, the disciples saw a man blind from birth and they asked Jesus, "Who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus reply tells us much, "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.*" Guess what Jesus did next? He healed him!

*Prayer is powerful and effective.* For the past 8 years or so, I've applied this scripture in James to my life. A few of my Journey brothers and I have made ourselves available to go and pray over those who are sick. We call these "prayer missions." We have been in hospital rooms, in ICU, in prayer chapels and in living rooms. We have encountered those who are sick physically, some with minor afflictions and some with life-threatening diseases. We have seen those who are stuck in addictions or in a prison of sin. We have seen some having marital struggles or challenges with their children. We bring our faith, God's Word and our anointing oil, and we trust the Holy Spirit to do the rest. We never know what God might do in any particular situation, but we know one thing for sure...we will share the Love of Christ with each individual. For some, He may choose to do a miraculous healing, giving someone an extension in their life like God did with Hezekiah. For some, they might find peace. For some, they might find salvation. I can tell you that every prayer mission is successful because we are obedient to God's instruction and that's all He really requires of us. I will tell you that we have seen some amazing things:

- A man who was supposed to die within months from a failing liver because of Hepatitis lived an extra year and a half, long enough for him to go through The Journey and to touch many, many lives.
- A woman who was plagued by alcoholism, who had tried every treatment known to man, received the gift of healing. Following a prayer mission over her, she vomited violently for a week until one day, God reached down from Heaven and removed her obsession with alcohol. She has been clean and sober for one year now, on fire for the Lord and serving Him greatly.

- A woman, who had a brain tumor under her brain, and was to receive a life threatening surgery, was prayed over, claiming James 5. When doctors got into the surgery, the tumor had miraculously moved to the outside of her brain for easy access for removal. She is alive and well.
- A Journey brother's daughter was afflicted and hospitalized. She was in a bad state and had not slept for 24 hours. Anointing prayer was administered to this little girl, and soon after, she fell asleep at about 4:00 p.m. and slept peacefully until the next morning, when she was released from the hospital.
- A prominent coach was having critical back surgery, and he was instructed to get his affairs in order and prepare for the worst. His son urged him to allow a group of men to pray over him and he agreed. The surgery was efficient and effective and his recover was miraculous.
- A Muslim woman wanted prayer for healing, and she did not mind us praying in the name of Jesus. It was an amazing prayer time of healing and introducing this woman to Jesus.

There have been hundreds of encounters, each of them precious in my heart. Every time, we enter with a feeling of inadequacy and total reliance on God. We don't claim to have all the answers, but we believe in what Scripture says that, "the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well." What that looks like is different for each person, but we know it is way beyond just a physical manifestation. God is making Himself known among the nations, and we are His vessels. Just as Jesus sent His disciples out 2 by 2 and told them to "heal the sick", He is sending you out. Someone around you may be sick and looking for an "Elder" pray over them. Get your anointing oil ready.