

# GOD



# LIFE

LIFE GOD'S WAY, ACCORDING TO

# + JAMES +

# 5



## YES, NO & MAYBE

1. In my lifetime, I've experienced more challenges than the people sitting near me.
2. I find myself singing happy songs when I'm going through moments of crisis.
3. In order to receive a miracle, your faith must not waver.
4. Many people are sick as a result of their sins.
5. My prayers can affect the weather.



## DIG DEEPER

● READ James 5:13-18 (NIV)

*13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

*17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.*

**+ 13 Is anyone among you in trouble?** - The word used here is really the same as the one used in verse 10, "suffering". The verb for trouble/suffering is *kakopatheí*, from a compound word joining *kakos* (evil) and *patheo* (to suffer). It means "to suffer hardship or evil, be vexed, troubled" (2 Tim. 2:9). Sometimes it can mean "to bear hardship patiently". James surely means suffering in the widest possible sense, whether from mistreatment by the rich, social ostracism because of the faith, physical illness, or spiritual decline. James's admonition, "He should pray," teaches that petitioning God for help when we are in trouble is always part of the remedy we need. He will always give us strength, if not deliverance.

**+ 13b Is anyone happy?** - The word is from *epithumeo*, "to be in a good, upbeat spirit or mind" as it features *eu* (good) and *thumeo* (to be of a mind). It refers to a person who is exuberant. And it is in the present tense, showing that the encouraging situation is continuing on. The implication is that there is temporary freedom from adversity. Pressure is off, and the person feels in good spirits, in contrast to the case just mentioned, of suffering. However, it can also refer to being courageously cheerful even when still in trouble, because the believer sees or hears what gives a new lease on life (cf. Acts 24:10; 27:36). God's sufficiency can lift a person to that (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9).

**+ 14 anoint them with oil** - The Greek word translated "anointing" is a medicinal term; it could



## DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

be translated “massaging.” Rather than being medicinal or sacramental, the anointing is symbolical. Anointing in the Scriptures is usually associated with consecrating or setting apart someone for special service or attention. In this respect oil is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit, who indwells and watches over each believer (cf. 4:5). So the applying of oil to the sick is a rich symbolic act—setting the sick apart to be ministered to in a special way by the Holy Spirit. When applied by the loving hands of the elders, it is a profound vehicle for comfort and encouragement.

✦ **13-14 kawwanah** - Jewish teaching uses one word to summarize all that is necessary for God to hear the prayers that people direct to Him. That word is *kawwanah*, and it stands for sincerity, devotion, submission, and focusing on God. The rabbis say that, as long as *kawwanah* is present, God hears. The person’s location does not matter; he can be in the synagogue, in the field, or even in bed—God still hears. James tries to teach a similar truism in this passage: that, in whatever circumstance a Christian might find himself, prayer to God is an appropriate and meaningful response.

- Why do you think so many struggle to believe that God truly hears their prayers?

✦ **15 the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well** - The Greek term *sozō* is used often in the NT for spiritual salvation (cf. 1:21; 2:14; 4:12), but here it is used in its OT sense of physical deliverance (cf. 5:20; Matt. 9:22; Mark 6:56). The term literally means “to make whole” (physically and/or spiritually).

● What does it say about God that sometimes he only brings spiritual healing instead of physical as well?

✦ **16 The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.** - The term power is the present tense of *ischuo*, “to have power, avail, be effective.” Prayer does not move a reluctant God, but channels His will and purposes through His children. It is the righteous person’s prayer, not in itself but in “being energized.” The word is from *energeo* “to energize, empower,” and it is in the present tense to focus on a continuing effectiveness.

● Since we do not pray to a reluctant God, what do you think He feels during times that He cannot bring the physical healing that we are asking for?

✦ **17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are.** - Elijah was so highly regarded that some were tempted to think he was superhuman, and some therefore could conceivably wonder how his example of powerful prayer could apply to them. Thus James introduces him by saying, “Elijah was a man just like us” (v. 17a). He had the same human nature, the same fallible passions as us. He was an ordinary mortal (cf. Acts 14:15, which uses the same word). Therefore Elijah’s experience has lessons for all of us.

- What does it say about God that He uses flawed, weak humans to be his spokespersons?

✦ **13-18 The 7 principles of this passage** - **First**, whatever the situation, pray! James’ examples can remind one of Paul’s words, “pray about everything” (Phil. 4:6). **Second**, even when an illness brings the life very low, have faith in God and count on His people to pray to Him. **Third**, whenever sin is part of the immediate difficulty, confess and believe that God forgives. **Fourth**, if others have been wronged by the sin, confess to them as well. **Fifth**, think not of your human limitations, but of what the great God is able to do. **Sixth**, looking at how God has answered prayers of others like Elijah can fan the flame of faith. **Seventh**, God not only can bless a life by prayer, but use that life to pray and bring blessing to someone else.

- What do each of these principles demonstrate about God’s character?

## MY PRAYER...

1. How can I strengthen my understanding of God’s presence during the times of trouble?
2. How can God use a flawed, weak human like me to be his spokesperson?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?

