



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

HELP FOR OUR HEALING

KEY PASSAGE: James 5:13-20 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE: Psalm 68:18; 119:67-68, 71 | Acts 20:28
Romans 8:28-29 | 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 | James 1:5-7 | 1 John 1:9

► SUMMARY

We gain a right perspective on our health when we consider its Source.

Instead of looking in books and magazines for the latest advice, we should study what the Bible tells us about good health. God says a believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). That means our bodies do not belong to us because we have been purchased with the blood of Christ.

We now serve as His representatives on earth, and that's why our conduct, character, and conversation should be a reflection of Christ in the world. Knowing this should motivate us to maintain good health so the Lord can use us as He desires. However, since we can't always avoid sickness, we need to understand exactly what the Bible tells us to do when we're in need of healing.

► SERMON POINTS

We must understand basic biblical teaching on the subject of healing.

The Lord gives us a pattern to follow in James 5:13-20. First century believers didn't have the pharmacies, hospitals, and doctors we so readily rely upon. Although God has blessed us with these tremendous resources, we are just as dependent upon Him for healing as they were and should follow the same pattern set before us in Scripture. When we are ill, we should ask ourselves:

■ **Is sickness a result of sin?** Sometimes it's due to personal sin, but not always.

■ **Is it the Lord's will to heal everyone?** No, but there are times when it is.

■ **What role do physicians play?** God calls many of them to help. For instance, Paul often relied upon Luke, the beloved physician.

■ **How should we respond when the Lord doesn't heal us?** Knowing He promises to work all things for our good, we can trust Him to accomplish His purpose, even through illness (Rom. 8:28).

■ **Can unbelievers expect God to answer their prayers for healing?** Since they don't have a relationship with Him, He isn't obligated to answer their prayers. However, God does extend mercy and give healing in order to draw people to the Savior.

■ **Can sickness in the life of a believer be profitable?** The psalmist testifies, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes" (Ps. 119:71). Although no one enjoys affliction, the Lord uses it for His ultimate purpose—to shape us into the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).

Healing should involve other people.

The church is more than an organization. It's the family of God, and we are told repeatedly in the Scriptures to love and care for one another. The early church demonstrated this interdependence, and their goal was to make sure everyone's needs were met. The course of action outlined in James 5:14-15 gives every member of the body of Christ the steps to follow when facing sickness:

■ **Whoever wants to receive prayer for healing must be willing to ask for it.** When a believer is struggling, he or she should seek out the elders of the church who are tasked with guarding and leading the flock (Acts 20:28).

■ **The elders should pray, anointing him or her with oil.** Prayer is the most essential element of healing. Oil was used for medical purposes in the early centuries and has no power of its own. However, for us, it symbolizes the presence of the Holy Spirit.

■ **It should all be done in the name of the Lord.** These actions, when they are performed in obedience to the will of God, indicate that the elders trust the Holy Spirit to work in the person's body.

The person who is praying must meet certain criteria.

God's involvement is essential for healing, and this is why intercessors must be people of godly character. Nothing in their lives should prevent the Lord from hearing and answering their prayers (James 5:15-16). They possess:

■ **Hearts of faith.** This means their prayers are based on the Word of God and in confidence that the Lord will do what He's said.

■ **Pure hearts.** Since sin is a barrier to the Lord's blessings and hinders His work in a believer's life, it must be dealt with before effective intercession can occur. The elders' hearts must be pure, and the person who is sick should confess his or her sins because there is sometimes a link between the two.

■ **Righteous lifestyles.** Each and every believer who is firmly committed to Jesus and seeks to walk obediently in His will can be a healing agent God can use to intercede for those who are in need.

Why don't Christians always follow this pattern?

Despite the guidelines in the book of James, many Christians fail to apply them because of misunderstandings and excuses. For example:

- They think this pattern only applied to the first century church.
- They don't believe it works today.
- They're too embarrassed to admit that they need help.
- They're too proud to ask for help.
- They're afraid to pray for others because their prayers might not be answered.
- They're too embarrassed to confess their sins to someone else.
- They're consumed with their own needs and believe they don't have time to sympathize with or pray for others.
- They have sin in their own lives and doubt that God can heal.
- They don't feel worthy to be used by the Lord.
- It's easier to send a card or flowers than to engage in serious prayer for others.

► RESPONSE

- Are you allowing the Lord to use you as an agent of healing in the family of God? Many people are going through difficulties and need someone to listen and pray for them. You don't have to be a pastor or elder to be used by the Lord. If you'll allow His Spirit to give you sensitivity to the hurting people around you and seek to become a person with a heart of faith and purity who has a righteous lifestyle, your effective prayers will accomplish much.

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