



SERIES: FEBRUARY – MARCH FAITH IN REAL LIFE

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Scripture: James 5:13-14

TITLE: An Appropriate Response

When crisis strikes, how do you respond? I find it fascinating that several people can come upon a situation, but everyone takes a different approach. For example, a person complains about a headache. One person offers a prayer. Another person offers Ibuprofen. Another suggests chiropractic care. Another says, “are you sure it’s not really a stomach ache?”

Finding an appropriate response can be a challenge. Especially when we’re unclear as to what the problem really is.

Today, we’re going to address a much-debated passage. What exactly is the debate? What is that passage? Join me as we look at James 5:13-14 (CSB). James writes...

Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

I told you this was a debated passage. What is the issue here? It comes down to verse 14. James writes, is anyone among you sick? The word sick is a word that, like many words, has a range of meanings. Traditionally, this passage and word have been interpreted literally to mean sick or metaphorically to mean spiritually weak. What’s fascinating is both sides point to the context to clear it up. Many believe that given the thrust of the letter and even verse 13, we should look at it metaphorically.

For example, if you are suffering and spiritually exhausted? You should pray. This fits in the scope of Scripture. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*” Peter says something similar in 1 Peter 5:7.

So when God comforts us, we should praise Him. If your spiritual weakness continues, call on the elders to pray over you and anoint or stimulate your faith through prayer, encouragement, Scripture, and all in the name of the Lord.

That’s one interpretation.

The other is literal. These dispersed Jewish Christians were being persecuted. So when suffering, they should pray for help and comfort. When physically sick, call on the mature elders

to come and comfort them and apply for medicine and/or medicinal oils to aid in comfort and healing. In all, do it in the name of Jesus.

So who has it right? Frankly, I think both are biblical responses to the situation at hand. In other words, use godly wisdom to make an appropriate response. If you're spiritually weak, pray for comfort and praise God when it comes. Call on the elders and spiritually mature to support you as you are weak.

When you are sick, do the best thing for your health according to the team around you. Call on your pastors and elders for prayer and help.

So here's my challenge for you: Provide and encourage an appropriate response. I don't know what deficiencies and struggles you are facing today. I assure you they are real. So respond to them appropriately. And through and above all, bathe it in prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we do the best thing and bathe it in prayer, we will win the day.