

PRAYER for the Sick
Prayer is rebellion against the status quo!
Jerry Nelson

“We should view prayer as another **revolutionary tactic**, *not* a passive resignation to a situation. In prayer, we enlist the aid and ear of the Lord of Hosts (recall 5:4), our God who is more than capable of righting our wrongs and helping us in our pain.” (Blomberg, 315)

HEALING AND PRAYER

For more see “Expectant and Accepting” under “Articles” “healing” at www.soundliving.org

ON CONFESSION OF SIN

“More difficult to apply is James’ command to confess our sins to one another. Catholicism elevated this procedure to a sacrament but limited it to a private encounter between church members and clergy. The Lutheran and Anglican/Episcopalian liturgies include a public confession of sins at the start of each service, followed by the pastor’s pronouncement of absolution. But still neither of these practices is quite the same thing as going to the person against whom one has sinned to acknowledge one’s failure and seek forgiveness. Matthew 18:15-18 lies in the background. When sin has estranged two parties, one of them needs to take the initiative to restore the relationship. If that fails, then other Christian helpers must be brought into the process. If at all possible, the confession should not be made any more or less public than the original sin. And “any confession should be offered in the presence of those who have been harmed by the sin or in the presence of the leaders of that community rather than a wider context, so that wise counsel may be offered.” Community life can be powerfully strengthened by sensitive application of appropriate confession, whereas cavalier and irresponsible application can do great damage. If a person does not know that one has sinned in one’s thoughts against them, it can probably only harm them for one to confess the sin. But when people are aware of offenses, even when two parties are each partly to blame, it is almost always healthy to take the initiative in apologizing.” (Blomberg, 330,331)

Resource: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (especially chapter 5).

AN OUTLINE OF 5:12-20:

5:12 Be people of integrity

5:13-18 Be people of prayer

5:19-20 Be people who lovingly correct each other.

AN OUTLINE OF 5:13-20

While waiting patiently for Jesus' return, do two things:

5:13-18 Intercede for one another.

5:19-20 Intervene for one another

ON INTERPRETATION OF 5:16

The translation of this verse (5:16) depends somewhat on the verb form of the word "energoumene;" is it passive or middle.

A good discussion of this is in Excursus I of James Adamson's *The Epistle of James*, NICNT, 205ff

On ELDERS

The words "Elders" – Presbuteros (James) ; Overseer - episkopos- (1 Timothy 3:1); Pastor/shepherd – poimane (Acts 20:28) are always used in the plural meaning not one but several men in any one church. All refer to the same office in the church. They are to be spiritually mature men who are responsible under God to guide the church (I Timothy and Titus 2).

It is at least interesting that James does not tell the sick to call for those with the gift of healing but to call for those who are spiritually mature. It is the spiritually mature who should be expected to be able to pray with discernment and a proper perspective.

Notice that the welfare of the members of the congregation is a primary concern of the elders. They are not only servants of an institution but more importantly they are servants of the people. It is not that the elders have some magical power but that the elders represent the congregation. They go to the sick person who has called them.

ELDERS PRAYING FOR THE SICK

1. Upon request, the elders assemble at the home of the sick person.
2. The sick person is asked about the nature of his/her illness; care should be taken to not encourage too much detail, but enough to pray specifically.
3. James 3:13-16 is read.
4. The sick person is gently questioned about their understanding of the passage: has confession of sin been made where appropriate; do they understand faith as faith in God, not faith in faith or faith in prayer; are they ready to accept God's will in the matter, etc.
5. The sick person is anointed with oil in the name of the Lord (Father, Son and Holy Spirit).
6. Laying hands gently on the sick person, several of the elders pray for him/her.
7. Together we sing the "Doxology" as indication of trust in God's providential care.

(Ideas guided by R. Kent Hughes, in *James, Faith that Works*, 256-7)