

# The Letter of James

## Faith that works!

### Study 11 – Faith at work

#### Introduction

Throughout his letter, James has been careful to emphasise the importance of faith. He began his letter with a reminder that the Lord permits trials of many kinds within the life of every believer so that his or her faith may be tested and strengthened (1:3-4). And he reminded his readers of the fact that true faith is not a matter of mere lip service but of practical action - that true faith is indeed a faith that works (2:14-25). As he comes to the end of his letter, James returns to the theme of faith and highlights an area of the life of every Christian where practical faith is most clearly seen, namely prayer.

Having called upon his readers to exercise patient endurance in the face of many trials and assured them that the Lord is “full of compassion and mercy” (5:7-12), James urges them in all circumstances to turn to this same Lord in prayer, confident that the prayer of God’s righteous people is indeed powerful in its effects (5:16). Believers should thus pray at times of trouble and in times of joy, for prayer is not only asking God but also the act of praising Him for His grace and kindness (5:13). Nor should they hesitate to pray at times of physical affliction and illness, for such times are special opportunities for each believer to take stock of their own walk with the Lord and, in fellowship with others, to re-commit themselves to wholehearted consecration to the Lord (5:14-16). It is in this context of faith and consecration that Elijah is mentioned for his prayer to God modelled true faith and his ministry within Israel was primarily to restore those who had drifted away from the faith into unbelief and false religion (*cf* 5:19-20)

#### Read James 5:13-20



#### Investigate

1. How many times does James refer to prayer in these verses? What does that tell us about the main theme of this passage?



7. What important truth are believers to learn from Elijah's example? What is surprising about this?
8. What was James' major concern regarding those who had 'wandered away' from the faith?



### **Think**

1. In what way are prayer and faith connected in this passage?
2. Does James 5:14-20 teach that healing will *always* occur in response to prayer?  
(Give a reason for your answer from the text!)
3. How are sickness, sin, forgiveness and healing connected in this passage?

4. What does this passage teach us about our response to illness in our own lives?

## Apply



In what way has this passage challenged your thinking?



In what way has this passage spoken to your heart



What needs to change in your daily life as a result of this passage?