# Simple faith

Kalamazoo Mennonite Fellowship

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James 5:13-20

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*

We have been dipping in and out of the letter of James. And, I suppose, it would be very much worthwhile to examine this letter in depth. And perhaps you’ll have time to do that on your own. Especially the warnings to those who are rich and the comfort for those who are suffering. And, in general, to live a life of virtue without being judgmental of others.

But today, let us take a quick look at the last section of the letter. It’s a little unusual, in that James doesn’t give any goodbyes or greetings to people, as we have come to expect in a New Testament letter. And we don’t get a doxology of praise to God; again, something we’d expect to find in your standard New Testament letter.

Instead, we get what James is best at: a kind of relentless call to us to be better, more faithful people.

As we reread these verses, I want you to try to turn off that part of your brain that wants to make things really, really complicated. If you know me, I usually want to ask you to do just the opposite—to think more deeply and look at all the nuances and conflicts in a text, to ask, “But what about this?” And “What about that?” And to live within a certain amount of ambiguity. So, this is very hard for me to do!

But in these verses, it seems to me that James gives simple advice, and I’d like us to listen to this advice with a certain purity of spirit, a certain uncritical reception, perhaps a childike spirit.

So, take a minute and calm yourself. And listen for the word of God to you in this passage.

**13**Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. **14**Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. **15**The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. **16**Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. **17**Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. **18**Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

**19**My brothers and sisters,[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%205&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-30356g)] if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, **20**you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner’ssoul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

What are your initial reactions? Any immediate “words” that come to you?

What are you suffering from? What does James say you should do? [Let’s spend some time praying]

Are there any reasons for you to be happy? What does James say you should do? [Let’s spend some time singing songs of praise]

Are you sick? What does James say you should do? What does James say will be the result of prayer and annointing and confession? Is there anyone here who would like to be annointed with oil today? [Annoint with oil as necessary]

[Optional] Is there anyone “wandering from the truth” that you have an inkling of how to help?