



# Praying For Healing

## Introduction

Here at Grace Baptist we are radically committed to dependence upon our Heavenly Father. He is the One “from whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things” (Romans 11:36). And, as His children, it is a privilege to be so dependent. We look to our great God for everything that makes up life, and allows us to live in righteousness.

One of the ways we display our dependence on God is through prayer. Prayer is — at its core — a demonstration that God has all the power, and can do all things. Through prayer we bring Him our desires, our anxieties, our pain, and our joy, knowing that we have His fatherly attention, and trusting that He genuinely cares for us, hears us, and causes us to rest in the knowledge that He always does what is best and right.

## Praying for Physical Healing

It is with this understanding — that God knows best — that we approach our Heavenly Father in matters of health. Living in a broken world means being subject to the diseases and conditions that have plagued mankind throughout history. And, sadly, every year seems to bring more challenges to us in the area of health. As Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 4:16 “our outer man is decaying.” Each of us suffers, or will suffer, the pain and emotional fatigue of disease as we grow older. This is a rude fact of life in a broken world. And yet, our Heavenly Father cares for us, and offers us full entrance into His presence in order that we might find healing from His loving hand.

At Grace Baptist, we believe strongly that our Father wants us to come to Him with all of our cares, and cast them upon Him because He cares about us. However, given that healing has been a thing of great confusion in our day, we want to make clear just how the leadership of Grace Baptist understands this area of Christian living.

We believe and rejoice in the fact that God does heal miraculously today. By “miraculously” we mean that God acts in ways contrary to natural law, and apart from any other explanation, to heal disease, remove tumors, mend broken bones, and any number of other maladies. We have seen it happen, and believe God is the active agent in these experiences.

We also believe that sometimes God chooses to heal through the conventional methods of medicine. He sometimes uses the skill of doctors and other health professionals, and the technology of the medical community to bring health and healing to those in pain.

We also believe that sometimes God chooses not to heal by any means. That some are healed and some are not is ultimately God's decision. We pray for healing, and at the same time realize that whatever God determines to do is always best. We believe that when He does choose to heal, it is not because we have had more faith in praying, or that those healed are more deserving than those who are not healed.

Most importantly, while we pray for healing for those facing health issues, we are most interested in their spiritual health and vitality. As pastors, we welcome the opportunity to stand with those who suffer, believing that our God is pleased when we come to Him seeking for spiritual comfort, rest, peace, and contentment in the knowledge that “while our outer man is decaying, our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Over the years here at Grace Baptist we have often used oil to anoint those coming to us for prayer during times of illness and physical challenge. During a recent group study of James 5:13–18 our Elder Team became aware that this text is best seen as relating to spiritual, rather than physical suffering, and that the anointing with oil was, in all likelihood, a cultural way of bringing comfort to those who were spiritually downtrodden. The guarantee included in verse 15 — that the one who is sick will be restored — certainly cannot be applied to every case of physical sickness, for we have all been part of praying for those whose physical illnesses were not removed. But in the case of those whose hearts are spiritually distressed, it is always true that, when they come desiring comfort from the Lord, He never disappoints. Consequently, we trust that those coming to us for prayer regarding the challenges of physical illness and brokenness will understand that we do not consider anointing with oil to be a necessary component in our caring for those in need.

## **Praying for Strength and Hope**

We also know that many in our world suffer in ways that are not tied to physical health. Fractured relationships, unmet expectations, emotional distress, and a host of other circumstances can bring great pain to the heart and life. We believe that God also wants to bring healing in these areas, and it is our privilege as pastors at Grace Baptist to come alongside all those who are heavily burdened and weighed down with cares, seeking the loving care of the Father on their behalf.

It is in regard to these spiritual challenges that we believe James 5:13–18 speaks most directly. It is here, in the lives of those whose spiritual vitality has been beaten and battered by the circumstances of life, that we find great opportunity as leaders to surround them with comfort, and uplift them in prayer. And as those in James' day brought comfort through the anointing with oil, we also seek to bring whatever comfort we can bring, reminding the child of God that they have been anointed with the Spirit, forgiven of their sins, and granted eternal membership in the family of God. In addition, it is our privilege to provide the resources of Grace Baptist to help in ways that are both spiritual and tangible.

## **Summary**

All who suffer are important to us here at Grace Baptist. Those who face physical challenges, as well as those who are emotionally or spiritually fatigued are warmly invited to call upon the strength of church leadership, be surrounded in love and prayer, and be reminded that our God cares for His own, and He hears and heals.