

Stance and Guidance on Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Gifts and Deliverance

What is prayer?

Prayer is a personal communication with God. It is the means by which we are able to intercede for others, confess our sin, express adoration, praise, and thanksgiving. It is also the means by which God communicates with us. By praying in the name of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1–2), with the Bible as our guide (Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16–17) and the Holy Spirit as our mediator (Romans 8:26–27), we are conformed to think God's thoughts after Him (1 John 1:9, 5:14–15; Romans 12:2; 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Peter 1:6–7; Psalm 8:1; James 4:8).

Why do we pray?

Prayer is the way we express our trust in God and how we are continuing to grow in our dependence on Him. The primary biblical emphasis for a believer to pray is to use faith and increase our reliance on God's sovereignty and provision. The first words of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9), "*Our Father who art in Heaven,*" is an expression of dependence by the one praying and trust in our wise Father who is ruling from His heavenly throne (Psalm 22:28). Therefore, we pray to express our trust in and love to God. Prayer is a means of loving God and enjoying His presence. Prayer is also a means of bringing glory to God and declaring His great worth.

God instructed us to call on His name through prayer (1 Chronicles 16:11; Psalm 145:18; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). Jesus prayed and modeled for us that we should pray often. After Jesus ascended into Heaven, He became our mediator. It is only by His righteousness that we can be sure God hears our prayers: "*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*" (1 Timothy 2:5). We are to make requests according to God's will, and we have confidence that, when we do this, He will hear us (1 John 5:14–15). We believe God answers our requests according to His sovereignty and goodness and in light of His love for us (Matthew 5:44, 6:5, 6:9; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18; 1 Timothy 2:1; Philippians 4: 6–7; John 14:12–13).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR APPLICATION:

- Express your love of God and trust in Him through continual prayer.
- Pray to confess your sins; pray to express adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; pray to intercede for others.
- Believe that God will answer your prayers according to His sovereignty and goodness and in light of His love for you.

Prayer and Spiritual Warfare

There is a spiritual realm that wars against God and His people.

Satan was an angel created by God and, through pride, was cast out of Heaven (Isaiah 14:12). He desires to be worshiped and honored – yet he is limited in his power and realm because of Jesus' victory over death and the grave. He opposes the purposes of God and God's people. While God is in control, Satan and his legions of followers – demons – wage war against the Christ-follower through his forces of darkness at work in the world. Believers are encouraged to clothe themselves with the power of Christ in the full armor of God and pray in the Holy Spirit to withstand Satan's attacks. (Genesis 3:1–7; Job 1:12, 2:6; Ezekiel 28:13–15; Zechariah 3:1–2; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:3–4, 2:10–11, 11:13–15; Ephesians 2:2, 6:12–18; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10).

Stance and Guidance on Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Gifts and Deliverance

What is our role in spiritual warfare?

Christians are to wage war against the sin in themselves (Romans 6) and oppose the schemes of the devil (Ephesians 6:10–18). We should never be impressed, intimidated, or bullied by Satan and his demons. Satan and the demonic spirits are, by nature, liars (John 8:44), but it is the power of Christ that binds them (Colossians 2:15). Once we have placed our faith in Jesus Christ and have been justified, God “*rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son*” (Colossians 1:13).

How do we conduct spiritual warfare?

“*For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds*” (2 Corinthians 10:3–4). When engaging in spiritual battles, we rely on God’s power, not our own. We gain spiritual power through the Gospel of Jesus Christ which overcomes sin and hard hearts that oppose us (see Romans 10:17; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), which includes demonic opposition. Our confidence rests in the fact that we are declared righteous because of Christ’s sacrifice for us. We are not to waver in our faith, trusting God’s promises no matter how strongly we are attacked. Our ultimate defense is the assurance we have of our salvation, an assurance that no spiritual force can take away. Our offensive weapon is the Word of God, not our own opinions and feelings. We pray in the power and will of the Holy Spirit, trusting that Jesus is ultimately ruling over all unseen spirits (John 16:33). We stand firm against our enemy (Ephesians 6:13–14), and we resist the devil’s work (James 4:7) knowing that the Lord of hosts is our protector. “*Truly He is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken*” (Psalm 62:2).

How does Satan and his powers affect the Christian?

We believe that Satan and his powers are able to oppress those who have been saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Through temptation and affliction, by the permission of God, Christians can experience the effects of Satan’s power in their lives. However, those who have true saving faith in Christ cannot be possessed by Satan’s demons. Once a person has been saved, they are claimed as Christ’s and are made a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Satan has no rights over those people claimed as God’s very own through the blood of Jesus Christ. Satan’s demonic oppression in a person’s life can come in various forms, but is always for the purpose of causing a believer to lose trust or communion with God and His people (John 10:10). Satan tries to cause doubt about God and His promises (Genesis 3; Luke 22:31). Satan tries to slow us down from doing what God wants us to do (1 Thessalonians 2:18). Satan wants to tempt us to sin (Acts 5:3; 1 Corinthians 7:5).

The believer’s authority to resist Satan’s demonic spirits

In Jesus’ earthly ministry, we see Him enable and deploy His disciples to have “*power and authority over demons*” (Luke 9:1). We see other instances of Christ’s power casting out demons, both by His hand and the hands of the Apostles (Luke 10:19; Acts 8:7, 16:18). Therefore, we conclude that we, too, are enabled to engage in spiritual warfare by resisting Satan and his demons through the power of Jesus Christ. We should trust the prompting of the Holy Spirit to discern whether we are to speak to the demonic spirit directly or to call on God to do the work and conquer the demon (Jude 1:9).

We acknowledge that it is only Christ and His work on the cross that gives us this authority to speak to Satan’s demons without fear. We fully recognize Christ’s atoning work, “*He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them*” (Colossians 2:15). If we find it necessary to speak directly to a demonic spirit, we will do so with confidence in Christ alone (1 John 4:4) and in Jesus’ name. This should be a brief commanding conversation with Satan or his demons. We will also quote Scripture when commanding an evil spirit to leave, just as Jesus Himself modeled for us (Matthew 4:1–11). The person who is oppressed by Satan must respond in faith in Jesus Christ and rely on the Holy Spirit’s deliverance.

Stance and Guidance on Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Gifts and Deliverance

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR APPLICATION:

- Pray for God's spiritual protection for you and your family.
- Clothe yourselves with the power of Christ in the full armor of God and pray in the Holy Spirit to withstand Satan's attacks.
- Call on God to rebuke the demonic spirit, or if you choose to resist their power, do so only "In the name of Jesus Christ," being as specific as possible about what you are rebuking and in whose name you are speaking.
- As Jesus modeled, quote Scripture when commanding an evil spirit to leave. (Matthew 4:1–11)

Spiritual Gifts Related to Prayer

God, by His Holy Spirit, has given the church many gifts. These gifts are always for the benefit of the body of Christ and must be used with humility. The following gifts are specific to prayer and should be understood as follows:

Visions and Prophecy

We believe the Holy Bible and the revelation of Jesus Christ is complete. Scripture contains all the words God intends for His people to have at each stage of redemptive history. It contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly¹ (Revelation 22:18–19).

The gift of prophecy is the ability to receive a divinely inspired message and deliver it to others in the church. These messages can take the form of exhortation, correction, disclosure of secret sins, comfort, inspiration, or other revelations given to equip and edify the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:3–4, 14:24–25). They do not equal the authoritative Word of God, but are the human interpretation of the revelation that was received. They are spoken in human words through a human mind which is why they must be tested against the Scriptures (1 Thessalonians 5:20–21). Therefore, we conclude that God may suddenly bring to mind or impress something on someone's conscience in such a way that the person has a sense it is from God. This is usually distinct from a person's own train of thoughts and comes with a clear urgency that it must be shared. When shared, it should be done so with humility and submission to God's Word and the authority of His Spirit.

Dreams and visions can be a form of prophecy. God used visions in Scripture to give wisdom or direction to people (Acts 16:9–10, 18:9–11, 10:9–15, 10:1–6, 9:10; Matthew 27:19; Luke 1:5–23). We know that God would never give a vision that would contradict His written Word or do so without providing wisdom around it if we seek Him (James 1:5). "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). All visions should be tested and balanced with God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Any prophecy or sharing visions must be done with humility and in submission to God's Word. Colossians deals with those who claim to have special knowledge and spiritual superiority through visions. We are warned to avoid spiritual pride or spiritual elitism. Colossians 2:18 says, "Let no one disqualify you, insisting on

¹ Grudem, Wayne A. "Chapter 8: The Four Characteristics of Scripture: Sufficiency." *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1994. 127. Print.

Stance and Guidance on Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Gifts and Deliverance

asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind.” All spiritual gifts are for the benefit of others and the glory of God.

As it relates to 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, we believe that when it mentions that some will be given “words of knowledge” and “words of wisdom,” these are not the same thing as the gift of prophecy. We believe these are directed by the Holy Spirit and given to individuals, as He desires in specific instances (1 Corinthians 12:11). We also believe that all believers are to “*test the spirits to see whether they are from God*” (1 John 4:1), and that the ability to discern spirits will be given as God determines and for a specific situation (1 Corinthians 12:11).

Speaking in Tongues

Speaking in tongues is the act of praying something that is not understood by the person who is speaking it. This is different from the gift of prophecy, which is speaking words to someone else for their edification. Because it is being spoken solely to God, Paul said, “*If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful*” (1 Corinthians 14:14). Therefore, we believe there is a prayer or praise that can be expressed to God, and it comes from the spirit of the person who is praying. This is what some may refer to as a *private prayer language*. While it may be a genuine prayer, it needs to be kept between God and that person.

As the Bible speaks about the public use of tongues in 1 Corinthians, we believe the following:

1. The context of 1 Corinthians has to do with the public assembly and the use of gifts in their proper context for building up the body and as a sign for unbelievers.
2. All spiritual gifts (including tongues) were given for the sole purpose of edifying others, not self. Paul condemned the Corinthians for using gifts for self-edification.
3. Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 14 are not statements of commendation, but rather correction.
4. If tongues were used in the public assembly, they would always require a gift of interpretation in order to be valid.

The Greek word “*glōssa*” translated for “tongue” in Acts and in 1 Corinthians is used not only to mean the physical tongue in a person’s mouth, but also “language.” Therefore, our understanding is that when God uses the gift of speaking tongues in public (a group of two or more believers), it is for the sake of communicating truth to those who would not otherwise understand. The gift of tongues is not found in the Old Testament, but was only given after the new covenant (Acts 2) and for the sake of the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts, we see the use of tongues for the growth of the Church, and in 1 Corinthians, we see the use of tongues for the edification of the Church. Therefore, it can be used for either purpose, given to any believer at any time.

- Not every believer receives this gift, nor do all people receive it ongoing. The gift of tongues is not a requirement or a necessary sign of salvation or a second filling of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:30).
- Typically, tongues is a sign for unbelievers so that they may have faith (1 Corinthians 14:22).
- To be of value to anyone other than the speaker, the message must be interpreted (1 Corinthians 14:5, 13, 19). If there is no one to interpret the tongue, the speaker should keep quiet and speak only to God (1 Corinthians 14:28).
- Tongues are not “ecstatic speech,” but are always orderly and are able to be controlled by the one speaking (1 Corinthians 14:27–28, 33, 39–40).
- Tongues should not be forbidden (1 Corinthians 14:39).

Stance and Guidance on Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Gifts and Deliverance

- Tongues are considered a “lesser” gift. The gift that we, as believers, should strive for more is the gift of proclamation (prophesy), all bathed with love (1 Corinthians 13:1–13; 14:1).

Therefore, because tongues is a spiritual gift intended to bear witness to unbelievers and edify the body of Christ, we are aware that God could choose to use this gift in our time if He so chooses. Should the use of tongues present themselves in a public setting, it will come with interpretation and be for the sake of increasing faith in those who witness it and will be for God’s own glory.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR APPLICATION:

- Use God’s Word as your guide when praying.
- Test all prophecies, against the Bible, to ensure they are aligned with God’s Word.
- Have humility toward others and be submissive to God’s Word when sharing dreams and visions with others, always trusting the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Speak in understandable words when praying with others. If someone is praying from their spirit and not using understandable words, this should be done in private to God and not involve other people.
- Ensure there is interpretation when tongues are spoken in public so that it can be a sign for unbelievers and an encouragement for believers.

Prayer for sickness, generational sin, curses, and soul ties

Prayer for Healing and Sickness

As a consequence of the fall of man into sin, calamity is upon the human race and generally includes illness, injury, disease, and disability. Sickness is the manifestation of two broad types of evil—moral and natural.

- Moral evil is man's inhumanity to other humans.
- Natural evil is composed of things like natural disasters and physical sickness.
- Evil, itself, is a perversion or corruption of something that was originally good, but is now missing something. In the case of sickness, illness is a state where good health is missing. Although there are scriptural indicators that God wants us to be in good health (3 John 2), all sickness and disease are allowed by Him for His purposes, whether we understand them or not.

Therefore, we believe that sickness can be a consequence of sin (i.e., I drink too much...I get liver disease). Sickness can also be a consequence of another person’s sin (i.e., a man drives drunk and injures another driver). Sickness can also be a consequence of an inherited sickness (i.e., a woman inherits diabetes from her parents). Ultimately, we are freed from the consequences of our sin before God through Jesus Christ’s atoning work on the cross. However, before we are fully sanctified and in God’s presence in Heaven, we may experience consequences of sin on earth.

Why does God allow His people to experience the consequences of sickness?

In John 9, we see Jesus answer the disciples’ question about sickness being a result of sin by directing them to think of sickness differently. He wanted them to understand that some sickness or physical ailments are allowed by God so that “*the works of God might be displayed in him*” (John 9:3). Some sickness is merely the result of the fall, but can be used by God to develop greater trust in Him and bring greater glory to Him.

Stance and Guidance on Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Gifts and Deliverance

No consequence of sin, physical or spiritual, is outside of God's control or beyond His ability to turn sin for good. We believe God is a healer. He desires that we be spiritually, physically, and emotionally whole. In His timing and in His way, He can use sickness for ways that may not always be agreeable or make sense to us. His ways are not our ways, but are higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:8–9). We should never presume to know the mind of God regarding a person's sickness or His will regarding healing. We trust that He is in complete control of all things—past, present, and future—and nothing happens that is out of His jurisdiction (John 1:3). Therefore, sickness is a means by which we are prompted to pray with greater faith as we petition (Philippians 4:6) His throne for His will to be done (Matthew 6:10).

Does acknowledging the existence of sickness show a lack of faith?

A person's acknowledgement that a sickness exists and that the consequences of that sickness may continue to exist in the future does not in any way limit God's sovereignty and His ability to heal. God uses sickness and other evils to bring about His sovereign purpose, to glorify Himself, and to exalt His holy name. Those who are believers and suffering with sickness can glorify God through their suffering though they may be uncertain as to why He has allowed it until they stand in His presence in eternity.

Should we pray for miracles today?

God can perform miracles today according to His own choosing to cause awe and wonder and to bear witness to Himself. He is under no obligation to intervene in a supernatural way, but can freely act. We acknowledge that we may ask God for a specific miracle, but are not guaranteed our prayer will be answered in that way. Miracles are done by God and for God. He uses them to bring glory to Himself and to strengthen our faith. When asking God to do something miraculous, we must not do it for our own fame, such as Simon, the magician, did in Acts 8:21–22. Miracles are always to be requested that God's glory may be known and more people may have faith to believe in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 12:12; Romans 15:18–19). Our motive should never be for our own benefit, but it should be for the Kingdom of God in order to advance the name of Christ to be exalted.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR APPLICATION:

- We pray for God's healing in sickness having faith that He can and does heal according to His will. If He grants healing, we praise Him. If He does not grant healing, we praise Him still, and pray that He uses the sickness for His glory.
- Seek God to move powerfully in prayer. Leave the outcome in God's hands for how He chooses to respond to our prayers.
- Pray for healing. *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition, present your requests to God"* (Philippians 4:6–7).

What is generational sin?

We see in the Old Testament how generations were impacted by the sins of their fathers. Exodus 20:4–6 says, *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments."* Numbers 14:18 says, *"The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation."*

Stance and Guidance on Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Gifts and Deliverance

In the New Testament, Paul writes that we are all under a curse. *“For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”* (Galatians 3:10). Therefore, for those that do not seek the Lord under the New Covenant, their sin can go from generation to generation under that curse.

Can believers be punished for the sins of their ancestors?

No, the curse of all sin was taken care of by Christ’s work on the cross. We are a new creation in Christ, the old has gone. When we repent of our sins and rest in the finished work of Jesus on the cross and His spilled blood, we are forgiven fully and freely (1 John 1:9; Hebrews 10:19–22; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Are we destined to repeat the sins of our ancestors?

We learn many of our ways from our parents and other family members. Experience shows that children are prone to repeat the “negative behaviors” of their parents. However, the power of sin has been broken for us, and we have been equipped to resist sin (Ephesians 6:10–18).

Can we be afflicted because of the sins of our ancestors?

Satan and his demons will use every angle possible to afflict us through lies, false teaching, and the values and behaviors of the world. They may use the history of our family to come against us, tempt us, depress us, or cause us to lose faith in the fact that we are forgiven of our past.

Must we confess the sins of our ancestors?

No, each of us are responsible only for our sins. However, while ancestry does not dictate a predefined outcome, we must recognize that our heritage can influence the choices we make.

What are soul ties?

The term “soul tie” is not found in the Bible, but it is found in contemporary literature on prayer. However, we do recognize that we can be impacted, sometimes severely, by people with whom we have shared a relationship. Harmful relationships can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse. Any of these can result in harmful memories and identity issues. We can break the power of these memory connections in believers by praying for God to cover the memories and praying for the person to develop a healthy and complete understanding of their identity in Christ. A healthy and complete identity in Christ is at least as much of a discipleship issue as it is a prayer need. We recognize that Satan will attempt to afflict us because of memory and identity issues. We must resist the devil.

Prayer to overcome curses

The Christian has been born again as a new person in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and we are in the constant presence of the Holy Spirit who lives within us and under whose protection we exist (Romans 8:11). We do not need to worry about anyone casting any sort of pagan spell on us. Voodoo, witchcraft, hexes, and curses have no power over us because they come from Satan, and we know that *“the One who is in you [Christ] is greater than the one [Satan] who is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).

At the same, time a believer should not involve themselves in spiritual games or practices that would open the door for spiritual attack in their lives. We are to walk in the light, not in darkness (1 John 1:5–6), and avoid anything that would claim to give us spiritual power or insight in addition to or outside of Christ. God’s power is sufficient in our lives; God has overcome all other powers, and we have been freed to worship God without fear (John 8:36). *“The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my*

Stance and Guidance on Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Gifts and Deliverance

life—of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1). No one has the power to curse someone whom God has decided to bless with salvation in Him. God is the only One able to pronounce judgment. We abide in God and God in us (1 John 3:24). Yet, as we remain in Him, we must not merely be transformed by our knowledge, but continually be on guard to remain in righteousness (2 Peter 2:20–22).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR APPLICATION:

- Believe that Christ’s work on the cross was sufficient to forgive us for our sins.
- When speaking to a person about their past and the sins of their family, do not assume those sins still exist. Nevertheless, do not be naive that Satan could use the past against a person.
- Do not repent for sins you have not committed. You cannot seek forgiveness from God for other people in the past, present, or future.
- Stand on guard against sins common to our families. Sin can be modeled and repeated, so pray to protect yourself against such patterns.
- Declare and remind redeemed people of their identity in Christ.
- Trust that the power of Christ is stronger than satanic power or any pagan spells in the life of a believer in Jesus.

Prayer and the Confession of Sin

Believers are told to confess their sins to God, and that God is faithful and just to forgive our sins as we confess them to Him (1 John 1:9). God forgives us as we confess to Him. It is not necessary that our confession be spoken to others, unless we have an offense with them that needs to be addressed before we continue in worship (Matthew 5:24). We believe that we can be fully forgiven by God without confession to another person. We should strive to maintain healthy relationships, and therefore, be willing to make confession and retribution for those we have offended.

As it relates to sinning against another person, we should confess our sin to the other person(s) and then to God (James 5:16). This is for the sake of keeping unity and the bond of peace with believers (Ephesians 4:3). When confessing sins publicly to those we have not offended, we must use caution so that we do not cause them to stumble. While there is value in accountability and sharing our wrongs with other believers so that we do not make the same mistakes, confession is primarily an act between us and God and the transgressed party.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR APPLICATION:

- Confess your sins to God first, knowing that your offense is primarily against Him, and that God alone forgives and reconciles you to Him.
- If you have an offense against someone, go to them first and ask for forgiveness.
- Confession to God in the presence of other believers, who you have not offended, is not necessary for forgiveness from God, but can be helpful for accountability.
- When someone confesses to you, respond to him or her with forgiveness, dignity, generosity, and confidentiality.

Stance and Guidance on Spiritual Warfare, Spiritual Gifts and Deliverance

Prayer and Anointing with Oil

In the Old Testament, anointing with oil was significant to mark the presence or approval of God. However, after the cross of Christ and in the New Testament, we only have four passages referring to the practice of anointing with oil. Because none of them offers an explanation for its use, we can only draw conclusions from context. In Mark 6:13, the disciples anoint the sick and heal them. In Mark 14:3–9, Mary anoints Jesus' feet as an act of worship. In Hebrews 1:8–9, God says to Christ as He returns triumphantly to Heaven, "*Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,*" and God anoints Jesus "*with the oil of gladness.*" In James 5:14, the church Elders anoint the sick with oil for healing.

When sickness is linked to sin, as in James, the direction is that the Elders should be called to pray and anoint with oil. With context from the choice of two Greek words, the anointing, in this case, is a "medicinal" application of oil and not a "spiritual" anointing. The purpose of the anointing seems to be to ease suffering and promote patience, which is consistent with the larger context of the epistle. There does not seem to be a connection between the sin that caused the sickness and the oil (e.g., the oil does not signify forgiveness of sins or a process for praying that promotes healing). The oil is not a magic potion. It is prayer, not anointing, that leads to healing.

A "spiritual" anointing was practiced in the Old Testament. A person was anointed for a special purpose—to be a king, to be a prophet, to be a builder, etc.

There is nothing wrong with anointing a person with oil today. We just have to make sure that the purpose of anointing is in agreement with Scripture. Anointing should not be viewed as a "magic potion." The oil, itself, does not have any power. It is only God who can anoint a person for a specific purpose. If we use oil, it is only a physical symbol of what God is doing to heal a person spiritually.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR APPLICATION:

- Use anointing with oil as a physical symbol of what God is doing to heal a person according to His will.
- Use discretion when anointing with oil, realizing that it is not mandatory and may cause confusion for some people.
- When using oil, teach the person you are praying for that oil is a symbol of God's sufficient grace to heal and protect. While it does not have supernatural power, it is an outward illustration of God's inward working.