

Introduction:

Brothers and sisters, we need more elders. As the roaring lion multiplies attacks on God's local flocks, we need more shepherds willing and able to lead the flock, care for the sheep, and wage war against the wolves. Every couple of years, we determine to see if the Holy Spirit has raised up others among us qualified and capable of shepherding. Scripture says little about this appointment process. From **Ephesians 4:11** we learn, when we do our appointing work properly, Jesus gives us shepherds, and from **Acts 20:28**, the Holy Spirit appoints them. From **Titus 1:5** and **1 Timothy 5:22**, evangelists play a particularly active role in the process. The events recorded in **Acts 6:1-7** give an important insight into a process by which men can be appointed to official roles within a congregation. The apostles did not simply review the membership, decide who was qualified, and appoint them. That surprises me because the apostles had miraculous revelatory gifts. Since the Holy Spirit oversees the process, I expect to read He directly revealed to the apostles who should fill those spots. But He didn't, and they didn't ask Him to. Instead, in **Acts 6:2-3**, the apostles "summoned the full number of the disciples," asking them to "pick out from among you" qualified men. In the same way, our evangelists and elders ask you to pick out from among you men who are qualified and capable of ministering to this congregation in the role of elder, shepherd, pastor, overseer, bishop. With this in mind, I'd like to provide guidance for looking through this congregation and finding appropriate men.

Discussion:

I. An elder on the job.

- A. Before we jump to the qualification lists as if this is a job profile on Monster.com, let's begin by seeing elders in the heart of their work. Multiple passages provide insight. One, however, gives a foundational look, providing powerful context for the qualifications we find: **James 5:13-20**.<sup>1</sup> But first, some background.
  1. James wrote to Christians facing faith-testing trials of various kinds (**James 1:2-3**). Does that sound like any group of Christians you know? Some tests were personal spiritual temptations (e.g. **James 1:14-15**). Others were natural trials stemming from life circumstances (e.g. **James 1:27; 2:15**). Still others were from external persecution (e.g. **James 2:6-7**). Whatever the nature of the sufferings, trials, and tests, God allowed them to build strength, steadfastness, and maturity (**James 1:4**). Where James's audience lacked mature wisdom, he charged them to pray for it, but to pray with faith and no doubting (**James 1:5-8**).
  2. James's audience lacked a great deal of maturity. Their immaturity revealed itself by struggles with partiality (**James 2:1**), faith (**James 2:18**), improper speech (**James 3:9-10**), jealousy and selfish ambition (**James 3:16**), fights and quarrels (**James 4:1**), divided loyalties (**James 4:4**), judging each other inappropriately (**James 4:11**), arrogant self-reliance (**James 4:16**). They clearly lacked wisdom and needed to do a lot of praying, but they also struggled with immature, weak prayer (**James 4:3**).
- B. This brings us to James's final exhortations in **James 5:13-20**.
  1. James essentially ends in **James 5:13** where he began in **James 1:5**, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray" (ESV). James referenced their suffering in **James 5:7-11**. He explains when they suffer, they must pray. Remember, however, James instructs them to count it joy when they suffer trials (**James 1:2**). So, in **James 5:13**, he continues, "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise" (ESV). The word translated "cheerful" (εὐθυμέω/euthumeō) occurs in two other New Testament verses: **Acts 27:22, 25**. In these, the term is translated "take heart" in the face of suffering and testing. Paul encouraged his shipmates to take heart, take courage, be encouraged, be of good cheer that despite the shipwreck they were about to suffer, God planned to deliver them. Do you see the picture forming? Are you suffering, pray. Why? Because suffering grows us. However, as **James 1:2-8** says, to count it joy and mature, we must pray in faith. Are you mature enough to rejoice and be of good cheer in the face of your suffering? Sing praise. Why? Because such wisdom and maturity are gifts from above (see **James 1:16-18**). God deserves the praise.

<sup>1</sup> Because the written instruction for elders includes anointing the "sick" with oil, I have too often avoided discussing this passage, missing the profoundly beneficial and powerful message and instruction James gives. That being said, for sake of time and in order to maintain the proper focus on the work and appointment of elders, I will not discuss the anointing oil in the oral presentation made about this passage. However, I provide a written appendix at the end of this outline regarding how that part of the instruction fits with the meaning of this passage as I explain it in this lesson.

2. James continues: “Is anyone among you sick?” (ESV). That seems odd. Is sickness some special manifestation of suffering needing special attention? Perhaps. Many very smart people assert James wrote about biological illness. Good arguments can be made for that. If so, we still see a great picture of elders in the throes of their work. However, I believe James provides a more profound picture.
3. Biological sickness provides a common metaphor for spiritual illness for which Jesus set the stage in **Matthew 9:12**; **Mark 2:17**. Beyond that, while the particular word translated “sick” (ἀσθενέω/as-theneō) in **James 5:14** often refers to illness, it can also be translated “weak” (e.g. **Acts 20:35**; **2 Corinthians 12:10**; **13:9**; note especially **Romans 4:19**). The word translated “sick” (κάμνω/kamnō) in **James 5:15** occurs only here and in **Hebrews 12:3**. There it is translated “grow weary” and goes along with being “fainthearted.” I suggest James wrote about spiritual sickness or weakness.
  - a) No Scripture supports the notion God will certainly grant biological healing to every sick person with whom elders pray. If this passage does so, why didn’t Paul call for the elders to pray for Trophimus instead of leaving him ill in Miletus? (**2 Timothy 4:20**). Why did Paul encourage Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach ailments instead of having the elders pray for him? (**1 Timothy 5:23**). Why was there any distress surrounding the sickness of Epaphroditus? Why not rely on and receive God’s promise of certain healing through elder prayer? (**Philippians 2:26-27**).
  - b) Note a parallel for shepherding in **Ezekiel 34:4**. God rebukes bad shepherds, saying, “The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them” (ESV). This entire list of shepherd work is metaphorically spiritual. Further, guess where the Greek translators of the Septuagint (LXX) used the same word we find in **James 5:14**. “The weak you have not strengthened.” To make James’s parallel to Ezekiel’s teaching about shepherds stronger, when James concludes his letter to “bring back” the one who “wanders” he used the same terms the Greek interpreters did for Ezekiel’s statement “the strayed you have not brought back.”<sup>2</sup>
  - c) Consider also **Matthew 26:41** and **Mark 14:38**. These are parallel accounts of Jesus’s words to the inner circle while in Gethsemane. Having prayed for about an hour, Jesus finds the disciples sleeping. He says, “So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (ESV). The word translated “weak” (ἀσθενής/asthenēs) is the adjective form in the same word family as our word translated “sick” in **James 5:14**. The apostles needed to pray to overcome temptation, but they were too weak to do so.
4. Can we piece together this picture of the elders at work now?
  - a) Elders are not in the heart of their work when meeting to decide how to manage the money we’ve collected. Neither while deciding what Bible class curriculum to use or teachers to assign. They are not in the heart of their work while deciding which preachers to invite. They are not in the throes of their work when deciding what times the congregation will meet or what programs and processes we will use to make and grow disciples. Of course, elders will do all these things, but these periphery actions do not make up the heart of their work but flow from what is found here in **James 5:14-15**.
  - b) Are you suffering? Pray. Are you mature and strong enough to count it all joy and be of good cheer in the face of suffering? Sing praise. But what about when we struggle to pray and sing? What about when our doubts diminish our praying and our singing? What about when our sins hinder whatever praying and singing we do? What about when we lack the wisdom to rejoice in our suffering? What about when we struggle with the faith to ask God for wisdom? What about when our prayers are plagued with immaturity and weakness as in **James 4:3** or we just don’t even know what to pray? What about when we are like the apostles in Gethsemane, having willing spirits but weak flesh? And even more so what if we not only are dealing with weakness but if our weakness has already led us to sin? Do you know what most people, even Christians, do today when they feel like this? They call on Google and YouTube. The internet willingly provides a million wrong solutions for all these struggles. Instead, James says we should call our elders. Call them to come and pray with us.
  - c) Instead of listening to James, we hide our weaknesses, doubts, struggles, sins. We suffer silently, wondering why we never find victory, feeling defeated, hoping these weaknesses won’t keep us from heaven. We hide them until they not only weaken us, they kill us. We hide them because we misunderstand the work of elders, thinking their job is to police and punish instead of to shepherd and care. We think of going to the elders like going to the principal’s office—we are in trouble and in need of punitive discipline. So, we hide our weaknesses, struggles, and sins, afraid if the elders learn them,

<sup>2</sup> “Wander” and “strayed” translate forms of “planaō/πλανάω.” “Bring back” and “brought back” translate forms of “ἐπιστρέφω/epistrepō.”

they will punish us, shame us, or kick us out of the church. And then we dumb down the beautiful role of elder as if its great work is as a corporate administrative board which we can support or praise when they run the church the way we want and complain to or about when they don't.

- d) **James 5:14-15** explains why we need elders. Jesus did not establish local churches to assure pockets of people gathering in nice buildings to conduct churchy business. He instituted local churches because we individual Christians need each other to grow and have victory over our powerful enemy. Yes, every institution needs leaders. But a church doesn't need CEOs or CFOs who know how to make wise fiduciary decisions to make sure the "work" of a church can always be funded. We need shepherds who restore our souls and lead us in paths of righteousness for the sake of Jesus's name so we may dwell in His house forever (**Psalm 23**). We don't need a board of directors who know how to strategize and plan the business of a corporation. We need battle-tested soldiers, who have worn the armor of God long enough and effectively enough to come wage war alongside us against the real enemy in the most effective way possible—by praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication, being vigilant with all perseverance (**Ephesians 6:10-18**). We need men with the wisdom, strength, faith, compassion, and care to call on when we, fraught with weaknesses and sins, need someone stronger to fight the enemy with us, for us, and over us. And we need men who, because of their leadership in this battle, create a culture of Christians able and willing to confess to one another and pray with one another so we might all be healed, saved, and victorious (**James 5:16**).

C. My brothers and sisters, as you look out among you, look for men like that.

## II. The kind of man for the job.

A. I know you can read **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9** for yourselves. I know the debates surrounding each of the controversial qualifications. I've also been doing this work long enough to know if you disagree with my assessment of those controversial points, nothing I say in this sermon or probably even a series of sermons will convince you to change your mind. So, trying to give you the definitive explanation of each qualification on these lists is an exercise in futility. Therefore, instead of that, I'd like to draw your attention to something Paul told Titus, the significance of which, frankly, I have missed most of my life.

B. In **Titus 1:6**, Paul said "if anyone is above reproach" he can be an elder. But notice the reason given in **Titus 1:7**: "For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach."

1. Elders must be above reproach because they steward God's household. The congregation does not belong to them, it belongs to God. The number one job of any steward, according to **1 Corinthians 4:2**, is to be faithful to the house owner; in this case God.
2. In **Luke 12:42-48**, Jesus talks about the "faithful and wise manager," translating the same word as "steward" in **Titus 1:7** (οἰκονόμος/ oikonomos). The steward must provide for the Master's household, including the family and the other servants. A danger exists. The Master delays His return and the steward may begin to use the household for his own benefit and to exert his own power and control, abusing the other servants, using his role as steward to feed his own lusts and desires. Jesus says the Master will return when this unfaithful steward least expects it and will cut him in pieces putting him with the infidels. Peter provides a contrast to this picture in **1 Peter 5:1-4**.
3. But these stewards must be above reproach. What does that mean? It means no accusation of unfaithfulness can stand against them. Consider **Luke 16:1-2**. Here, we read of a manager against whom charges were brought. Regrettably, we do not have time to dig into this parable for its own sake (or perhaps you think "thankfully"). Instead, notice Jesus's comments on stewardship: "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much" (**Luke 16:10**, ESV). And ultimately, in this context Jesus teaches this: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money" (**Luke 16:13**, ESV).
4. Stewards not only manage the Master's household, they represent Him to everyone else. Therefore, they must not have divided loyalties. They must, like Joseph in **Genesis 39** in Potiphar's house, be so devoted to the house master, even to God, they refuse to use the Master's house to feed their own lusts and desires. And then as Joseph in **Genesis 41** in Pharaoh's household, do all they can to benefit the Master and His household, not themselves. They must, like Daniel, under the employ of Darius in **Daniel 6:3-5**, be the kind of men that when people search for some accusation to make against them, they can't find one unless it be in connection with accusing them of obedience to their God.

C. Therefore, we are looking for men above reproach. And why would it be otherwise? Let me ask you. When you are struggling and suffering with weakness, doubt, even sin, would you call someone to come fight the

battle with you who is subject to accusations of faithlessness, ruthlessness, selfishness, arrogance? Of course not. We not only need men above reproach, we want them. Paul describes such men to Titus in **Titus 1:6-9**.

1. He is the husband of one wife. Or, more literally, he is a one-woman man. Of course, how could a man with wandering eyes casting lustful gazes over the sisters in the congregation, flirtatious, and adulterous wage war for us and with against our own sins? If the man sees the women of the congregation as objects for his own lusts and desires, he cannot shepherd them or their husbands.
2. He has faithful children not accused of debauchery or insubordination. Not only is he to be above accusation, but accusation cannot be brought against him through his children either. How tempted might such a man be to mismanage God's household in order to make exceptions for his children?
3. Let me ask you this. When you are in the throes of battle against weakness, doubt, and sin and you need someone to come stand with you in the battle, praying for you and with you, would you reach out to a person who is arrogant, quick-tempered, drunkard, violent, or greedy for gain? Why would you make yourself vulnerable to such men? It's hard enough to open up to the best among us about our struggles, but to do so to someone who might use our vulnerability to look down on us, berate us in anger, pervert our rights and needs in their drunkenness (see **Proverbs 31:5**), get violent with us, or even use his position to extort money? Do you see this list isn't given to be a set of hoops to jump through so a person can be promoted to "leader of the congregation." How could men like this steward God's household? How could they care for God's flock? No doubt, when they gather in their meetings to conduct the "business" of the congregation, they would misuse their role. But worse, when you and I need them most, when we are plagued in the battle against sin and Satan, these kind of men would be completely incapable of waging war alongside us and praying us to victory.
4. Rather, when in the throes of battle against weakness, doubt, and sin, we need, in fact want, the kind of men who are full of hospitality, that is, men who are open to people and love people, welcoming people to themselves. We need men who love good. In these two qualifications, think of those who are mature in the definition of love found in **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**. We need men who are self-controlled; that is, sensible, prudent, thoughtful. We need men who are upright; after all, the prayer of the upright or righteous has "great power as it is working" (**James 5:16**, ESV). We need men who are holy; after all, God requires men pray, lifting holy hands without wrath and quarreling (cf. **1 Timothy 2:8**). And we need men who are disciplined; after all, what good does it do us to call on men who disqualify themselves from the work and the race (see **1 Corinthians 9:24-27**) to help us run the race? All of this shows we need men who have trained for godliness (cf. **1 Timothy 4:7**). We don't need men who know how to run a successful business, nor do we need men who know how to win a marathon. We need men who have exercised and trained in pursuing godliness by the grace of God. In fact, this is not simply what we need, isn't it what we want when we call on men to come pray with and for us in our need?
5. Of course, we need men who hold firm to the Word. After all, the insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers will lead us astray if given half the chance. When we call on men in the midst of battle, we need those who know truth, correct error, and silence the voices who will mislead us. What good is it if we feel comfortable letting someone come alongside and pray with us for victory, if in their counsel and teaching they lead us to defeat. We not only need such men, isn't that the kind of men we want?
6. Though there are a few different terms found in **1 Timothy 3:1-7**, when we read that list, we find the same kind of steward who is above reproach, loyal to one Master, who will faithfully feed and serve the household until the Master returns.

#### Conclusion:

Over the next couple of weeks, we will discuss the appointment of deacons and provide further instruction about the practical approach we take to this searching out process. At this point, on behalf of the evangelists and elders of this congregation, I ask you to recall when we pursue this properly, Jesus gives us shepherds and the Holy Spirit appoints them. With that in mind, the greatest work we need to be about right now is prayer to God. Please, start praying every day, perhaps add in some fasting prayer over the next few weeks. First, pray God will oversee this process and be glorified in us by the way we approach it. Second, pray He will allow the men who are capable for this work to become apparent in our search and He will fill them with an eagerness and a reliance on His grace and strength to overcome their fears about taking on this work. Third, pray that if we are unable to find such men presently, God will work among us to raise up these kind of men so in the years to come, this congregation can continue to pursue spiritual victory.

## Appendix I: What about anointing with oil?

### I. Addressing the **Mark 6:13** objection.

- A. First, if in the end, someone proves **James 5:14** does refer to biological sickness, I believe the point in the sermon about elders still stands. This passage demonstrates elders at the heart of their shepherding work: being called alongside those in struggles to pray with us and for us.
- B. The strongest argument in favor of biological sickness and healing in **James 5:14** is the similarity to **Mark 6:13**: “And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them” (ESV). This passage may provide a parallel for **James 5:14**. However, allow me to share disparities which I think disconnect these passages from one another.
  1. The words translated “sick” and “healed” in **Mark 6:13** differ from those in **James 5:14-16**.
    - a) In **Mark 6:13**, “sick” translates “ἄρρωστος/arrōstos.” As seen in the sermon outline, in **James 5:14-15**, the two instances translate “ἀσθενέω/astheneō” (vs. 14) and “κάμνω/kamnō” (vs. 15). In **Mark 6:13**, “healed” translates “θεραπεύω/therapeuō.” In **James 5:16**, it translates “ἰάομαι/iaomai.”
    - b) Granted, as in English, Greek writers use synonyms. The concepts are similar even if the specific words are different. For instance, in English we might read the following two sentences:
      1. They anointed with oil many who were ill and cured them.
      2. Is anyone sick? Anoint them with oil and heal them.

Though the specific words are different, we read synonymous concepts. Thus, **Mark 6:13** may provide a background for **James 5:14-16**. However, while James may allude to **Mark 6:13**, he certainly doesn't copy or quote it when he writes.

- c) At the same time, the two instances of “sick” in **James 5:14-15** are telling. The ESV translators translate both as “sick” because they see them as parallels in his context. As shown in the sermon outline above “κάμνω/kamnō” (vs. 15) occurs only one other time: **Hebrews 12:3**. There it is translated “grow weary” and parallels being “fainthearted.” The two times it is used in the LXX, it is translated “weary.” “Being weary in my soul in lament I will send upon him my words” (**Job 10:1**, Lexham English Septuagint, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, LES2). “I entreat, being weary. What shall I do?” (**Job 17:2**, LES2). In other words, while some may argue James employs synonyms between **James 5:14** and **Mark 6:13**, when he actually uses a synonym within his own context, the synonym for “sick” is “weary.”
2. More importantly, the actions taken in **Mark 6:13** and **James 5:14** are different.
  - a) In **Mark 6:13**, the apostles employ miraculous gifts of the Spirit. According to **Mark 6:7**, Jesus gave the apostles “authority over the unclean spirits.” In **Matthew 10:1**, a parallel passage, it reads: “And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction” (ESV).
  - b) We see a similar gift promised the apostles if they will believe in **Mark 16:18**: “They will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover” (ESV). And also in the list of miraculous gifts in **1 Corinthians 12:9**: “...to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit.”
  - c) These miraculous gifts were delegated authority over sickness and healing. Those with these gifts certainly healed by the power of Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit (see **Acts 3:6-8, 12, 16**). However, the healing was not God's response to prayer. It was an ability granted to the one working it.
  - d) **James 5:14**, on the other hand does not delegate authority over sickness and healing. It does not give elders the miraculous gift of healing. Rather, it refers to God's response to prayer. This passage lines up much more with Jesus's statements in **John 14:13, 14** and **15:16** than with statements made about miraculous gifts of healing. It also parallels the beginning of **James** more than the statement in **Mark 16:13**. That is, **James 1:5** tells us if we pray for wisdom with faith and no doubting, God will certainly give it to us. That does not refer to the miraculous spiritual gift of wisdom (see **1 Corinthians 12:8**), but to a promised response to prayer. Just as at the beginning of his letter, at the end James writes about a promised response to prayer. Refer to I.B.3.a) to see an argument against this notion about elders being given a certainty that God will always raise up the sick in response to their prayers.
3. Despite the similarities between **James 5:14** and **Mark 6:13** regarding anointing with oil, not only are the terms of sickness and healing different, the passages refer to different actions and workings of God. Therefore, I do not believe **Mark 6:13** provides the background for **James 5:14**.

## II. What then is the anointing of oil in **James 5:14**?

- A. The struggle, it seems to me, has to do with two different Greek words which have an overlap in potential English translation. Both of which, are translated “anoint” in English translations. The struggle is further compounded because our culture does not “anoint” people with oil in either sense of the two Greek terms. Finally, it is ultimately compounded by witnessing modern false teachers and shysters calling themselves “faith healers” dab oil on the heads of those they supposedly heal. Therefore, when we read “anoint,” we struggle due to language differences and cultural practice differences and witnessing false practices.
- B. The two Greek words.
1. The Greek word whose meaning we more commonly think of when we talk about “anointing” is “*χρίω*/chriō.”
    - a) The New Testament employs this term five times. In **Luke 4:18**; **Acts 4:27**; and **2 Corinthians 1:21**, it refers to being appointed to a task. In **Acts 10:38**, it refers to the Holy Spirit and power being poured out on Jesus. **Hebrews 1:9** is the only New Testament passage that connects the word with oil. However, here, quoting **Psalms 45:7**, the term is used metaphorically to refer to the gladness the anointing with oil represents more than the actual anointing itself.
    - b) The LXX repeatedly uses the term to refer to the anointing with oil which accompanied consecrating someone or something for a holy role in God’s work. Thus, in **Exodus 29:7**, Aaron and his sons are anointed into the priesthood. The altar is purified and consecrated by anointing in **Exodus 29:36**. They anoint the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant in **Exodus 30:26**. In **1 Samuel 9:16**; **10:1**, Samuel anoints Saul as king. He does the same for David in **1 Samuel 16:12-13**.
    - c) Note in **Exodus 30:22-33**, the oil used to anoint the priests was holy. They used it only for anointing the priests, the tabernacle, and its furnishings. “It shall not be poured on the body of an ordinary person, and you shall make no other like it in composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you. Whoever compounds any like it or whoever puts any of it on an outsider shall be cut off from his people” (**Exodus 30:32-33**, ESV). The king was no ordinary person, for in **1 Kings 1:39**, Zadok the priest anointed Solomon king, using “the horn of oil from the tent” (ESV).
    - d) The word “Christ” (*Χριστός*/Christos) comes from this word for anointing. The Christ, the Messiah, is the one who has been anointed to be Priest and King. We get our modern word “christen” from it.
    - e) Neither the Old or New Testament connects this term with healing. Of the 71 uses of this term in the Old Testament, only **Psalms 45:7**; **Amos 6:6**; **Deuteronomy 28:40**; **Ezekiel 16:9**; **Isaiah 25:6** employ this term to refer to perfumery or washing.
    - f) I share this term with you because this is the “anointing” we most commonly think of when we read the English word “anoint.” We think of some special ceremony of consecration or appointing someone to a special duty. We know from **Acts 10:38** it is somehow connected with the work and power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, when we read the English word “anoint” in **James 5:14**, we conjure these images in our minds. However, **James 5:14** does not use this word. It uses the second word.
  2. **James 5:14** uses the word “*ἀλείφω*/aleiphō.”
    - a) The New Testament employs this term nine times: **Matthew 6:17**; **Mark 6:13, 16:1**; **Luke 7:38, 46** (2x); **John 11:2; 12:3**; **James 5:14**. Not once is it used there to describe consecrating someone or something for a holy job or role. The only other time it the New Testament uses it in connection with healing is **Mark 6:13** (see Section I for more on this).
    - b) The rest of the passages in the New Testament use this term to refer to perfuming and cleaning. In **Matthew 6:17**, Jesus tells those who fast to “anoint your head and wash your face” (ESV). In **Luke 7:38, 46**, we see the term used to refer to a practice of hospitality coinciding with foot washing. We find that same use in **John 11:2; 12:3**. Finally, in **Matthew 16:1**, it referred to the slathering of oil and perfume on Jesus’s dead body to prepare Him for burial.
    - c) The LXX uses the term 19 times.
      - (1) The LXX uses the term three times for consecrating something or someone to holy duty: **Genesis 31:13** refers to the anointed pillar in Bethel, **Exodus 40:15** speaks of the anointing of the priests as does **Numbers 3:3**. But Bible authors clearly prefer *χρίω*/chriō for this action.
      - (2) Ezekiel uses the term six times to refer to “whitewashing” or “coating” a wall: **Ezekiel 13:10, 11, 12, 14, 15; 22:28**. The last instance metaphorically refers to false prophecy.
      - (3) The other eight occurrences refer to perfuming and cleanliness. For instance, Esther experienced anointing when she went through her six months of beautifying and perfuming in **Esther 2:12**. Ruth prepared herself to meet Boaz by washing and anointing with oil in **Ruth 3:3**. When

David ceased fasting and praying for his son to be healed following the sin with Bathsheba, he washed and anointed himself in **2 Samuel 12:20**. Of special interest to **James 5:14**, when Joab sent the wise woman of Tekoa to David to appeal on Absalom's behalf in **2 Samuel 14**, he asked her to pretend to be a mourner. Part of her disguise was to avoid anointing herself with oil (**14.2**). The other uses all fit in this context of washing, perfuming, beautifying: **2 Chronicles 28:15; Micah 6:15; Daniel 10:3; 2 Kings 4:2** (for this last, the LXX states the widow's oil was for anointing, not cooking).

(4) Historically, we know the ancients often used oil as part of their bathing, washing, and cleaning. According to the ISBE entry on "oil" it was used as a cosmetic. "From earliest times oil was used as a cosmetic, esp. for oiling the limbs and head. Oil used in this way was usually scented. Oil is still used in this manner by the Arabs" (©1939, v. IV, p. 2182). The entry on "olive oil" says, "In ancient times it was greatly used for anointing the person. In Rome's day of luxury it was a common maxim that a long and pleasant life depended on two fluids—'wine within and oil without.' In modern times this use of oil for the person is replaced by the employment of soap, which in [Palestine] is made from olive oil" (p. 2185).

C. The anointing in **James 5:14**.

1. Certainly, the elders did not consecrate for holy service those who called them in **James 5:14**. The New Testament doesn't use the word that way. The christening and consecrating concept in the Old Testament uniquely applied to priests, kings, and the tabernacle. People were not, in either Old or New Testament, consecrated by anointing with oil in order to be healed. In fact, such consecrating with oil was not supposed to happen with ordinary people.
2. The only two passages potentially connecting "anointing oil" with miraculous healing are **Mark 6:13** and **James 5:14**. In Jesus's story, the benevolent Samaritan uses both oil and wine to treat the beaten man's wounds in **Luke 10:34**. Therefore, as some suggest, James possibly calls on elders to administer medical treatment along with their prayers. However, being wounded and being sick are not the same. Further, neither Old or New Testament use either term for anointing to refer to applying oil medically.
3. The overwhelming use of "ἀλείφω/aleiphō" in both Old and New Testament refers to washing, perfuming, cleansing. When people were mourning, sad, afflicted, they did not anoint or perfume themselves with oil. However, when they were glad, rejoicing, being hospitable they anointed or perfumed themselves and others with oil. Remember, in **James 5:14**, James talks about folks who suffer affliction by trials and tragedies. Naturally, we face such situations with sadness and mourning. In such setting, the ancients would refuse to anoint or perfume themselves with oil or simply neglect it. However, James teaches us from the beginning to the end of his letter to face trials and suffering with joy. If the interpretation of this passage explained in I.B.4 of the sermon outline above accurately tracks James's point, James addresses those whose spiritual weakness and weariness keeps them from praying effectively and keeps them from facing their trials and suffering with joy, good cheer, and courage. In the ancient custom, these quite naturally neglect anointing or perfuming themselves with oil. How often do we today note the depressed, sad, despairing do not bathe, comb their hair, or pursue regular self-care?
4. Though it sounds odd to us, in the ancient cultural context of anointing with oil, James encourages those battle wearied and weakened by their suffering and trials to call on the elders to pray with and for them. In so doing, the elders take the lead in "freshening them up." Though I am now crossing over to a passage that employs the other term for "anointed," as in **Psalms 45:7** and **Hebrews 1:9**, they anoint the person with the oil of gladness, we might think of fragrant perfume or cologne. More importantly than the oil, the perfume or cologne is the gladness they represent. In that ancient time and culture, I have no doubt elders would literally help the weary and worn Christian by splashing them with the fragrant oil on the head or on their clothes. In their common practice, that action itself was one of gladness and joy. Today, we do not have the same customs surrounding cleanliness, hospitality, mourning, or gladness. Certainly, if you want the praying elders to spritz you with cologne or perfume, they can. If you want them to cleanse your face and head with oil, they can. However, it doesn't have the same cultural meaning today it had in the Bible times. Therefore, in our culture, the prayer leading to gladness and joy itself fulfills what James called on the elders to do in **James 5:14**.