



Morningside Church

Sermon Discussion Guide

Title: Prayer

Date: February 11, 2024

Scripture Text: James 5:13-18

Series: The Behavior of a Believer

Notes:

Prayer is an important practice in the Christian's walk. It is the means by which we communicate to our heavenly Father. Jesus constantly and consistently prayed. Paul instructs us to "pray without ceasing" ([1 Thess. 5:17](#)). Yet with all this emphasis placed on prayer, for many of us it is not a common occurrence. It may be something we engage in most frequently when there is a crisis in our life, but not much beyond that. In today's Bible passage James encourages us to pray by highlighting the powerful effects of prayer from a righteous heart.

I. Prayer for Self (James 5:13)

James encourages his readers to pray in both the good times and the bad. For many, attempts to solve problems ourselves may be the first response. Yet, if we start with God, engaging Him first, we have a chance to experience His power in our circumstances. In times of suffering, we may seek God's deliverance from it or His strength to endure it. In cheerful times, we need to be quick to give Him praise and glory.

- Why is it that God may not be the first place we turn in times of suffering?
- Why is the need for prayer seen as less relevant when times are good?
- What does the Apostle Paul mean in [1 Thess 5:17](#) & [Eph. 6:18](#) to "pray continually"?
- Describe a time when you experienced the power of prayer personally.

II. Pray for Spiritual Sickness (James 5:14-15)

We are also called to pray for others with illness. This can include physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual illness. Along with praying, calling for the elders to anoint with oil and praying is also mentioned. The use of oil in this context is for medical purposes. When someone is physically ill, prayer coupled with medical treatment is what James is referring to.

- Sickness isn't necessarily caused by sin ([John 9:1-3](#)), but what are examples of sin leading to sickness?
- James describes in [vs. 15](#) an outcome of faithful prayer is restoration. Why is it important for the church to be about restoration, not condemnation?
- Describe a time when you experienced the power of prayer in the life of another (physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually)?



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III. Pray for Struggling Saints ([James 5:16](#))

James encourages his readers to confess their sins to one another and pray for healing (spiritual restoration). The confession of sin need only extend to the circle of offense. Connectedness to a local church body and engagement in that body helps us to be less likely to sin. Connectedness brings accountability and edification. It is when we are alone, not engaged in Christian fellowship, that we are more likely to sin.

- What does “circle of offense” mean?
 - Why is it important that confession extends, but not exceed the circle of offense?
- Morningside has groups to help facilitate connectedness to the body. They include Connection Groups and D-Groups. What is the advantage of leveraging these groups to increase your connectedness to the body?
- Describe the value you’ve found in participating in these groups, building relationships, and potentially helping equip you to not sin.
- James finishes [vs. 16](#) describing how much can be accomplished through prayer. What is the criteria to make these accomplishments?
 - What does it mean to be effective and righteous?
 - What can you do to be more effective and righteous?
- Describe a time you experienced the power of prayer in the life of a struggling saint.

The way in which the prayer of a righteous man is effective is when the person praying does so by offering to God his works done according to His commands. Then the prayer is not just a matter of words, blurted out meaninglessly with the empty echo of the tongue, but powerful and living and inspired with the Spirit of the commandments. For the true basis of prayer and supplication is the fulfillment of the commandments by virtue. This makes the prayer of a righteous person strong and full of power.

Maximus the Confessor, (580 – 662)