

CALVARY CHAPEL OF PHILADELPHIA

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY
3RD-5TH GRADE
TEACHER'S PACKET

SUNDAY MORNING

Study 11

James 5:13-20



Prayer for the Sick

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To demonstrate to the kids the importance of prayer, and to show them that God can still move and heal today.

Key Verses

James 5:13-20—Main Teaching Passage

1 Kings 17:1-7

Philippians 4:6-7

Memory Verse - James 5:16b

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, James 5:8.

Read 1 Kings 17:1-7 to the kids.

Ask them what Elijah prayed for.

Ask them if the Lord answered Elijah's prayer.

Ask if there was something special about Elijah that caused God to hear and answer his prayer.

Now read James 5:13-20.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

James 5 finishes by instructing us on the importance and power of prayer. James directs us to pray for two specific things, healing and forgiveness from sin. He starts out by encouraging those who are sick to seek out the elders of the church, who would then pray for the infirmity and pray that the Lord would then heal that person and raise them up.

Secondly we are told that if anyone has sinned, they should confess their sins one to another and pray for forgiveness. Both of these ideas are tied together in verse 16, showing us that through fervent and continuous prayer, God can work in even impossible situations.

James then reminds us of Elijah, who we are told was a man just like us, who prayed fervently and repeatedly. The Lord answered his prayer by not allowing rain to fall in Israel for three and a half years. At that point, James tells us that Elijah prayed again, and the Lord again answered his prayer, brining rain back to the land.

The final thought of the book of James is about the importance of bringing those who have turned away from the faith back to repentance. He tells us that those who have left the faith *can be* brought back, and that if you are the instrument that God uses to do that, you have saved someone's soul and covered over a multitude of sin.

The interpretation/
exegesis of the passage.
What does this passage
mean? How does this
passage apply to my
life?

LOOK

One of the most important things we can do as a believer in God is pray. Prayer is an incredible privilege, and an important practice for everyone who has trusted in the Lord. By dying on the cross, Jesus Christ has given us access to God the Father, so that now everyone can speak to God wherever they are. We don't need to be in Church, or in a great Temple, we can talk to God anywhere and know that He can hear us.

In James 5, we are told that prayer is powerful and effective. There might be situations that we find ourselves in where we cannot possibly see a solution. When we know that there is nothing that can be physically done, James tells us that we can go to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to help us out. The examples that James uses are if someone is sick or if someone needs to be forgiven for a sin that they have committed. In both of those situations, there is nothing that we can do, but God can do anything. If it is God's will that a person be made well, then He can do that. Remember though that James has already taught us in chapter 1 that

LOOK (Continued)

endurance and perseverance in trials cause us to grow and increase in our faith. We know that there are times when God will choose not to heal someone, but we also know that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28).

The important thing to remember from James 5 is that God *does* answer prayer, and that He *can* do incredible miracles, even today. If we know someone who is sick, we should pray for them. If we know someone who is sad or lonely, pray for them. God wants us to come to Him and ask for the things that we need. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. " God wants us to pray, and He wants us to keep on praying.

The final thought in James is for those who at one point in their lives were believers, but now for whatever reason, have turned away from the faith. If you have someone like that in your life, then you should pray for that person too! Again, God can do incredible and miraculous things. He wants us to come and ask Him to work on our behalf.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize 5:16b.

Take the last portion of the class and spend it in prayer for the students and their families. Pray especially for anyone who is sick.

Pray: Pray for all the prayer requests. Lift up friends and family who are sick, people who have fallen away from the Lord, and the sin in our own lives.

Parent Question: What does James 5 tell us to do if we are sick?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on James 5:13-20 by David Guzik

C. Exhortations for Christians to care for one another.

1. (13-14) How to meet needs arising among Christians.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

a. **Is anyone among you suffering?** The **suffering** need to pray, the **cheerful** should **sing psalms** of praise to God, and the **sick** should call for the elders of the church, asking them to pray for their need.

i. Instead of *complaining* (as in the previous verse), the sufferer should **pray**. “Instead of murmuring **against one another** ([James 5:9](#)), or complaining peevishly, or breaking out into curses, pray to God.” (Moffatt)

ii. James has the same advice for both the **suffering** one and the **cheerful** one: take it all to the Lord. In fact, the two commands could be reversed: sufferers should **sing** also, and the cheerful should also **pray**.

iii. “Elsewhere in the N.T. the word **to sing praise** refers to public worship, and always, if the usage in classical Greek and Greek O.T. be decisive, to songs with a musical accompaniment.” (Moffatt)

iv. James clearly set the initiative on the person in need: **let him call**. The hesitancy of people to ask for or to seek prayer from the leadership of the church in such circumstances is a true mystery.

b. **Let them pray over him:** James also said that the **elders of the church**, as they pray, should anoint the sick person **with oil in the name of the Lord**. This **anointing with oil** has been interpreted as either seeking the best medical attention possible for the afflicted (oil massages were considered medicinal), or as an emblem of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power.

i. **Anointing** the sick **with oil** is also mentioned in [Mark 6:13](#). [Luke 10:34](#) mentions the application of oil in a medicinal sense. “The efficacy of olive oil as a medical agent was well known.” (Hiebert) According to Burdick, the word for **anoint** here is not the usual one used in the New Testament, but has more of a medicinal meaning to it.

ii. “*Oil* was and is frequently used in the east as a means of cure in very dangerous diseases; and in Egypt it is often used in the cure of the *plague*. Even in Europe it has been tried with great success in the cure of *dropsy*. And *pure olive oil* is excellent for recent wounds and bruises; and I have seen it tried in this way with the best effects. . . . St. James desires them to use *natural means* while looking to God for an especial blessing. And no wise man would direct otherwise.” (Clarke)

iii. The Roman Catholic Church mutated this command to anoint the sick into the “sacrament” of Extreme Unction, administered to someone to prepare that one for death. Something James intended to heal was made into a preparation for death!

2. (15-16) God’s answer to the prayers of His people.

And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

a. **And the prayer of faith will save the sick:** Many have wondered if James guarantees healing here for the sick who are prayed for in **faith**. Some interpret this as a reference to ultimate resurrection. The reference to sins being **forgiven** adds to the idea that James is considering a spiritual work and healing, not necessarily a physical healing.

i. Yet the context of the statement demands that James does not *exclude* physical healing as an answer to prayer, though he does seem to mean something broader than *only* a physical healing. We should pray for others in **faith**, expecting that God will heal them, then leave the matter in God’s hands.

ii. Clearly, God does not grant immediate healing for every **prayer of faith**, and the reasons are hidden in the heart and mind of God. Still, many are not healed simply because there is no **prayer of faith** offered. The best approach in praying for the sick is to pray with humble confidence that they will be healed, unless God clearly and powerfully makes it clear that this is not His will. Having prayed, we simply leave the matter to God.

iii. Often we do not pray the **prayer of faith** out of concern for God’s reputation if there should be no healing. We should remember that God is big enough to handle His own reputation.

b. **Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed:** James reminds us that mutual confession and prayer brings healing, both physically and spiritually. Confession can free us from the heavy burdens (physically and spiritually) of unresolved sin, and removes hindrances to the work of the Holy Spirit.

i. **To one another:** Confession to another in the body of Christ is essential because sin will demand to have us to itself, isolated from all others. Confession breaks the power of secret sin. Yet, confession need not be made to a “priest” or any imagined mediator; we simply confess **to one another** as appropriate. Confession is good, but must be made with discretion. An unwise confession of sin can be the cause of more sin.

ii. Clarke observes that if this passage actually refers to the Roman Catholic practice of the confessional, then the priest should likewise confess his sins to the people. He also adds: “There is no instance in *auricular confession* where the *penitent* and the *priest* pray together for pardon; but here the people are commanded to pray for each other that they may be healed.” (Clarke)

iii. Noting from the context, sin should especially be confessed where physical healing is necessary. It is possible – though by no means always the case – that a person’s sickness is the direct result of some sin that has not been dealt with, as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 11:30.

iv. Hiebert on **confess**: “The root form means literally *to say the same thing*; hence, it means that in confession sin we agree to identify it by its true name and admit that it is sin.”

v. “Now, in the primitive church this was openly done as a rule, before the congregation. The earliest manual of the church practice prescribes: ‘you must confess your sins in church, and not betake yourself to prayer with a bad conscience’ (*Didache* iv.).” (Moffatt)

vi. The great conviction of sin and subsequent confession of sin is common during times of spiritual awakening. There is really nothing unusual about confession during Revival. Finney – a great apostle of Revival – urged it and described it. In the North China revivals under Jonathan Goforth, confession was almost invariably the prelude to blessing; one writer describing the significant Korean revivals associated with Goforth wrote: “*We may have our theories of the desirability or undesirability of public confession of sin. I have had mine, but I know that when the Spirit of God falls upon guilty souls, there will be confession, and no power on earth can stop it.*” (from *Calling to Remembrance* by William Newton Blair)

vii. Public confession of sin has the potential for great good or bad. Some guiding principles can help.

- *Confession should be made to the one sinned against.* “Most Christians display a preference for confession in secret before God, even concerning matters which involve other people. To confess to God seems to them to be the easiest way out. If offenders were really conscious of the presence of God, even secret confession of private sin would have a good effect. Alas, most offenders merely commune with themselves instead of making contact with God, who refuses their prayers under certain conditions. In the words of our Lord, it is clear that sin involving another person should be confessed to that person.” (Orr)

- *Confession should often be public.* [James 5:16](#) illustrates this principle. A.T. Robertson, the great Greek scholar, says that in [James 5:16](#) the odd tense of the Greek verb **confess** in this verse implies group confession rather than private confession. It is confession “ones to others” not “one to one other.”

- *Public confession must be discrete.* Often the confession needs to be no more than what is necessary to enlist prayer. It can be enough to say publicly, “Pray for me, I need victory over my besetting sin.” It would be wrong to go into more detail, but saying this much is important. It keeps us from being “let’s pretend Christians” who act as if everything is fine when it isn’t. “Almost all sexual transgressions are either secret or private and should be so confessed. A burden too great to bear may be shared with a pastor or doctor or a friend of the same sex. Scripture discourages even the naming of immorality among believers, and declares that it is a shame even to speak of things done in secret by the immoral.” (Orr)

- *Distinguish between secret sins and those which directly affect others.* Orr gives a good principle: “If you sin secretly, confess secretly, admitting publicly that you need the victory but keeping details to yourself. If you sin openly confess openly to remove stumbling blocks from those whom you have hindered. If you have sinned spiritually (prayerlessness, lovelessness, and unbelief as well as their offspring, criticism, etc.) then confess to the church that you have been a hindrance.” (J. Edwin Orr)

- *Confession is often made to people, but before God.* At the same time, we notice that James says **confess your trespasses to one another**. One of the interesting things about confession of sin as I have noticed it in the writings of J. Edwin Orr is that the confessions are almost always addressed to *people*, not to *God*. It isn’t that you confess your sin to God and others merely hear. You confess your sin before others and ask them to pray for you to get it right before God.

- *Confession should be appropriately specific.* When open confession of sin is appropriate – more than the public stating of spiritual need, but confessing open sin or sin against the church – it must be *specific*. “If I made any mistakes I’m sorry” is no confession of sin at all. You sinned specifically, so confess specifically. “It costs nothing for a church member to admit in a prayer meeting: ‘I am not what I ought to be.’ It costs no more to

say: 'I ought to be a better Christian.' It costs something to say: 'I have been a trouble-maker in this church.' It costs something to say: 'I have had bitterness of heart towards certain leaders, to whom I shall definitely apologise.' " (Orr, *Full Surrender*)

- *Confession should be thorough.* "Some confessions are not thorough. They are too general. They are not made to the persons concerned. They neglect completely the necessary restitution. Or they make no provision for a different course of conduct in which the sin is forsaken. They are endeavours for psychological relief." (Orr)

- *Confession must have honesty and integrity.* If we confess with no real intention of battling the sin, our confession isn't thorough and it mocks God. The story is told of an Irishman who confessed to his priest that he had stolen two bags of potatoes. The priest had heard the gossip around town and said to the man, "Mike, I heard it was only one bag of potatoes stolen from the market." The Irishman replied, "That's true Father, but it was so easy that I plan on taking another tomorrow night." *By all means, avoid phony confession – confession without true brokenness or sorrow. If it isn't deeply real, it isn't any good.*

- *One need not fear that public confession of sin will inevitably get out of hand.* Orr tells of a time when a woman was overwrought by deep sorrow for sin and became hysterical. He saw the danger immediately and told her, "Quiet, sister. Turn your eyes on Jesus." She did and the danger of extreme emotion was avoided.

- *Those who hear a confession of sin also have a great responsibility.* Those who hear the confession should have the proper response: loving, intercessory prayer, and not human wisdom, gossiping, or "sharing" the need with others.

viii. According to Moffatt, the English Prayer Book, before the communion service, the minister is to give this invitation: "Come to me or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution." There can be great value to *opening one's grief*.

ix. Real, deep, genuine confession of sin has been a feature of every genuine awakening or revival in the past 250 years. But it isn't anything new, as demonstrated by the revival in Ephesus recorded in [Acts 19:17-20](#). It says, *many who believed came confessing and telling their deeds*. This was *Christians* getting right with God, and open confession was part of it.

c. **The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much:** In writing about the need for prayer for the suffering, for the sick, and for the sinning, James points to the **effective** nature of prayer – when it is **fervent** and offered by a **righteous man**.

- i. The idea of **fervent** in this context is *strong*. "It might be rendered literally: 'Very strong is the supplication of a righteous man, energizing.'" (Meyer)

- ii. "When such a power of prayer is granted, faith should be immediately called into exercise, that the blessing may be given: the spirit of prayer is the proof that the power of God is present to heal. *Long prayers* give no particular evidence of *Divine inspiration*." (Clarke)

- iii. Much of our prayer is not effective simply because it is not **fervent**. It is offered with a lukewarm attitude that virtually asks God to care about something that we care little about. Effective prayer must be **fervent**, not because we must emotionally persuade a reluctant God, but because we must gain God's heart by being **fervent** for the things He is **fervent** for.

iv. Additionally, effective prayer is offered by a **righteous man**. This is someone who recognizes the grounds of his righteousness reside in Jesus, and whose personal walk is generally consistent with the righteousness that he has in Jesus.

v. **Avails much:** "It was so with John Knox, whose prayers were more dreaded by Mary of Scots than the armies of Philip." (Meyer)

3. (17-18) Elijah as an example of answered prayer.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

a. **Elijah was a man with a nature like ours:** Elijah is a model of earnest prayer that was answered by God. His effectiveness in prayer extended even to the weather! Yet this shows that Elijah's heart was in tune with God's. He prayed for the rain to stop and start only because he sensed it was in the heart of God in His dealings with Israel.

b. **Prayed earnestly:** Literally, this is *prayed with prayer*. To truly pray, by definition, is to pray **earnestly**.

i. "*He prayed with prayer*; a Hebraism for, he *prayed fervently*." (Clarke)

c. **Elijah was a man with a nature like ours:** This being true, we then can be men with the power of prayer like him.

4. (19-20) Helping a sinning brother.

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

a. **If anyone among you wanders from the truth:** Having introduced the topics of sin and confession, James reminds us of the need to confront those who have wandered from the truth. **Wanders from the truth** is a good picture. Most people don't wander deliberately – it just sort of happens. Nonetheless, it still gets them off track and possibly in danger.

i. "Read the verse and you will see that it was that of a backslider from the visible church of God. The words, 'If any of you,' must refer to a professed Christian." (Spurgeon)

b. **And someone turns him back:** This shows us that God uses human instruments in turning sinners back from the errors of their ways. God does not need to use such human instruments, and sometimes He does not. The Apostle Paul – or rather, Saul of Tarsus – was not converted through any human instrument, save perhaps the prayers of the dying martyr Stephen for him. Yet no one preached to him, but Jesus decided to meet him directly.

i. One reason God uses human instruments is because it brings Him *more* glory than if He were to do His work

by Himself. In this way God is like a skilled workman who makes incredible things using the *worst* of tools. After the same pattern, God uses earthen vessels to be containers of His glory.

ii. “Most persons have been convinced by the pious conversation of sisters, by the holy example of mothers, by the minister, by the Sabbath-school, or by the reading of tracts or perusing Scripture. Let us not therefore believe that God will often work without instruments; let us not sit down silently and say, ‘God will do his own work.’ It is quite true he will; but then he does his work by using his children as instruments.” (Spurgeon)

iii. Along this line, can we not say that when we refuse to make ourselves available to God’s service – weak and failing as we are – we in fact *rob* Him of some of His glory? He can glorify Himself through a weak vessel like you; you should let Him do it.

iv. “It may not appear so brilliant a thing to bring back a backslider as to reclaim a harlot or a drunkard, but in the sight of God it is no small miracle of grace, and to the instrument who has performed it shall yield no small comfort. Seek ye, then, my brethren, those who were of us but have gone from us; seek ye those who linger still in the congregation but have disgraced the church, and are put away from us, and rightly so, because we cannot countenance their uncleanness; seek them with prayers, and tears, and entreaties, if peradventure God may grant them repentance that they may be saved.” (Spurgeon)

c. He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins: There is a blessing for the one who loves his brother enough to confront him, and who turns him from **the error of his way**. He has saved that **soul from death** and covered **a multitude of sins**.

i. This speaks powerfully of the *restoration* that is possible for those who have sinned. “I know of men of good standing in the gospel ministry, who, ten years ago, fell into sin; and that is thrown in our teeth to this very day. Do you speak of them? You are at once informed, ‘Why, ten years ago they did so-and-so.’ Brethren, Christian men ought to be ashamed of themselves for taking notice of such things so long afterwards. True, we may use more caution in our dealings; but to reproach a fallen brother for what he did so long ago, is contrary to the spirit of John, who went after Peter, three days after he had denied his Master with oaths and curses.” (Spurgeon)

ii. James concludes with this because this is exactly what he has endeavored to do through this challenging letter – to confront those who have wandered from a living faith, endeavoring to save their souls from death, by demanding that they not only hear the word, but do it, because a living faith will have its proof.

iii. “So the homily ends – abruptly, even more abruptly than the First Epistle of John, without any closing word of farewell to the readers, abruptly but not ineffectively. The Wisdom writings on which it is modeled end as suddenly.” (Moffatt)