

March 26, 2023

5. Faith That Works—Works at Prayer

I take great DELIGHT –answers –SPECIFIC PRAYERS / his fingerprints all over it. Don't you?

I take great DELIGHT –answers –VAGUE PRAYERS / great answers – beyond what I knew how to ask or imagine. Don't you?

I DON'T DELIGHT...

- in hard to understand DELAYS
- when DIFFERENT RESULTS than prayed and hoped for.
- when I DON'T UNDERSTAND

Do you ever struggle in that place? ME TOO.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THAT HAPPENS?

- I remind myself (GOD'S WISDOM GREATER) – GOOD FATHER.
- MY FATHER understands more than I do. (we get that as parents...)

MY REQUESTS (are like a child's)

- NOT ON TARGET (not for my good or HIS WILL)
- NOT "In His Name" (not fitting with his character)
- NOT for our BEST

HUGE TOPIC (since we live in a FALLEN, still suffering, WORLD)

James has a lot to say about it.

NEVERTHELESS: Today we are going to talk about powerful and effective praying.

I. Whatever is GOING ON, keep prayer ONGOING

James 5:13 (NIV) Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray...

TITLE: "Faith that Works, works at prayer".

Prayer is not always delightful.

It is a discipline. Faith that works, works at prayer.

Turning to God is James' prescription for everything (even those tough things we don't understand!).

- This is not our natural tendency, however, is it? Our tendency is to be angry at God for allowing us to experience a troublesome situation.
 - We are more frustrated when it lasts longer than seems reasonable.
 - We are more frustrated when one bad thing stacks on top of another.

- Instead of indulging yourself with grumbling, or complaining, look to God with trust.
- James tells us a better way.

Whatever is GOING ON, keep prayer ONGOING

Many people in times of suffering get stuck in their prayers asking God “why?” Job, his wife, and his friends fell into that trap.

Rather than ask “Why?” In times of suffering, perhaps a better question is to ask...

*“**What** are you saying to me through these difficulties, Lord?”*

*“**What** do you want me to learn, Father”, or*

*“**What** do you want me to do?”*

Do you ask “WHY” or Do you ask “WHAT”?

Sometimes, the most appropriate prayer is simply, “Help!” Sometimes we do not have “help” because we don’t ask.

Whatever is GOING ON, keep prayer ONGOING

Corollary truth:

Whatever is going on, keep **PRAISE** ongoing.

This is counterintuitive: While you are experiencing TROUBLES, don’t forget the power of “PRAISE!” (Remember: James’ first lesson in this letter was about how to reframe your troubles by faith.)

Acts 16 records an example of this: Paul and Silas, when they were beaten and put in “stocks” locked in an inner darkness of a Roman prison, what did they do? They began praying and SINGING!!! God surprised them with an answer they didn’t ask for or imagine. EARTHQUAKE!!! The foundations were so torqued and tweaked the doors and stocks came open. Oh, it gets better than that! but for that you will need to read Acts 16.

Speaking of praise:

James 5:13 (NIV) ... Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

- History, and the Bible shows us the **HUMAN TENDENCY** even among believing people to forget God when things are going well!!!
- Don’t let this happen to you!!

"We should pray when we are in a praying mood, for it would be sinful to neglect so fair an opportunity. We should pray when we are not in a praying mood because it would be dangerous to remain in so unhealthy a condition."

—Charles Spurgeon

- Whether down or up, celebrating or anxious, sad or happy, go to God in prayer.
- **Whatever is GOING ON, keep prayer ONGOING**

James 5:14 (NIV) Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.

What's the deal with anointing them with oil?

In the Bible, oil was used **medicinally** & as a **symbol of the Spirit of God**.

- **Medicinally:** Good Samaritan
- **Spirit's presence:** Anointed Kings, Temple Oil in lamps, Christ = anointed one.

Call for the Elders: The united prayer of faith, caring, praying with God's presence is a powerful thing.

James 5:15–16 (NIV) And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

James makes it sound so simple. Is it as simple as it sounds?

I've been a part of praying over people with the elders and anointing people and praying over them many, many times. I have witnessed remarkable answers and healing, as well as times where the answers were not as we had hoped, we had hoped for more on this side of heaven.

(CONTEXT) Although, this section sounds like an unconditional formula for answers to prayer, please look again at the context, the whole previous section from 5:7-12 is on PATIENCE in SUFFERING! **It isn't always as quick and formulaic as it sounds.**

It must be emphasized here that the prayer offered is a prayer offered in faith—not only the faith that God can heal, but also the faith that expresses absolute confidence in God's will.

Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane are great examples to us.

Luke 22:42 (NIV) "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Matthew 26:42 (NIV) He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

Matthew 26:44 (NIV) So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

II. A Prescription for POWERFUL Praying

James 5:16 (NIV) ...The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Before you say, “Aw CRUD; That rules me out!” Let’s talk about what James means by a “Righteous person.”

A Righteous person is in a RIGHT relationship with God.

- This is **Righteousness** (ILLUST: Makita Drill with Powered battery).
 - Right Relationship with God who has the power!
- This is **Unrighteousness** (ILLUST: Take battery out).
- This is **Self Centered Unrighteousness** (Powerstrip plugged into itself)
- This is unconfessed sin... I suppose I could jam paper or something in the connection and it would block the power. That’s unconfessed sin (and James just said something about that).

Prayer’s power is connected power.

- Humble yourself and get right with God.
- Then Pray earnestly

James 5:17–18 (NIV) Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

How did Elijah pray? “He prayed EARNESTLY?” What does that mean?

The words in Greek here are usually translated as “earnestly” or “fervently” in most of our translations. But do you know what it actually says? It says, **“Elijah prayed, praying.”**

Sometimes even in English, we repeat words to intensify them. Here is an example. “*He runs very very fast.*”

James writes that **Elijah prayed, praying.** Elijah had this developed working habit of praying. Barriers did not deter him. He persisted. Jesus also taught about perseverance in prayer and persisting in prayer.

James is saying Elijah was just like you and me, but he had effective results because **He prayed, praying. He just kept on praying.** And because he just kept on praying, he

became effective and powerful in prayer. **He prayed, and he prayed again, and again.** You learn how to pray by praying. You learn how to become a powerful praying person by praying. So keep praying. **Pray, praying.** In fact, let's pray again now!

Talk It Over

Faith that Works... (Week 5) Group Study “...Works Your Wealth”

SMALL TALK

1. When have you (or your community) experienced the effects of an economic downturn? What did that look and feel like?
2. If someone gave you a lottery ticket and you won, how would you use your first \$100,000?

VIEWPOINT

3. **READ James 4:13-17.** Regarding “tomorrow” what's wrong with this type of planning, boasting, or profit making (4:13)?
4. **READ James 5:1-6.** What may be going on behind the scenes with these wealthy people that connect 4:13-14 and 5:1-6? What are they NOT doing (connecting 4:17 with 5:3-:4)?
5. How are they violating the “royal law” (2:8)?
6. What will happen to their wealth? What is the reason for that? (5:2-3)

GETTING PERSONAL

7. Since we live in “luxury” compared to when James wrote, what do we need to do to escape the dangers of “self-indulgence”?
8. At what point does wise planning cross the line into “hoarding” (5:3)?

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

1. How can you “love your neighbor as yourself” (2:8) this week?