

# JAMES

MARK IT UP

## James 5:13-20 **LEADER** Discussion Guide

Week of 5/29/22

**Icebreaker:** How would you describe your “prayer life”? Is it strong, pretty good, inconsistent, nonexistent, etc.? If you feel comfortable, explain your answer.

**Getting Started:** Read James 5:13-20 as a group.

Select 2-3 questions you think will be most helpful for your discussion.

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Back in week 2 we highlighted [Calvary's Shaping Value](#) of *Prayer in Faith*. We return to it again this final week of the series as James again emphasizes the importance of prayer in our lives.

**Prayer in Faith:** We believe God accomplishes His will through our prayers.

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**1.** The word “pray” and/or “prayer” shows up seven times in these verses. What different situations or forms of prayer do you see represented in this passage?

There's a diverse range of prayer here, including prayers for the suffering, prayers by the elders for another person who is sick, prayers of confession, and prayers for supernatural works.

*Application:* In what situations or circumstances in life do you find it most natural to pray?

People often find that there's nothing like a crisis or desperate outlook to bring us to our knees in prayer. There may be other times, though, when prayer is more natural.

**2.** Verse 13 contains a call for James's audience to pray according to their personal experience of suffering or cheerfulness; however, verse 14 calls them to ask others (the elders) to pray for them. Why do you think James would specifically ask the elders to do this?

It's likely because, while individual prayers are also important, the elders—according to NT Scholars Craig Blomberg and Mariam Kamell, “represent the entire local Christian community.” This is an example of the care of the community for the needs of its members. Also, there is a spiritual authority in the elders that is distinct from the rest of the community. (On a related note,

the use of oil referenced in this verse likely has at least one of the following two meanings: (1) it symbolically represented God's presence as it does in OT passages where a king or other figure is anointed, and/or (2) it served as a medicine. As Douglas Moo puts it, "While anointing with oil, because of its uncertain meaning, not unnaturally attracts a good deal of attention, we must remember that it is *prayer* that is James' main concern in these verses.)

*Application:* Do you find it easy to ask others to pray for you? Why?

**3.** Verses 15-16 can sound like a promise that (1) every prayer made with enough faith will lead to healing, and (2) that sickness is the result of sin. What do you think about these?

These are tough verses! The "prayer of faith" suggests boldness in faith, but, as Blomberg and Kamell write, "Somewhere in our prayers we must find a balance between never expecting God to heal and requiring him to heal on demand." Paul's experience of "prayer in faith" in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, for example, did not result in immediate healing because God had a greater purpose than immediate healing. In terms of the second part of the question, the words "And if he has committed sins" are critical. Sickness can result from sin but it does not always directly result from sin. See John 9:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 for examples.

*Application:* What do you think we should expect from God when we pray "in faith"?

Given that every prayer in faith does not result in immediate physical healing, for example, we need to also account for the sovereign will of God. Douglas Moo explains that, "while certainly including the notion of confidence in God's ability to answer," the prayer of faith "also involves absolute confidence in the perfection of God's will...a tacit acknowledgment of God's sovereignty in all matters; that it is God's will that must be done." We should expect God's will to be done, including the possibility of physical healing.

**4. Application:** James calls his listeners to confess their sins to each other and pray for each other in verse 16. How do you think we're doing at putting this into practice?

Generally speaking, we do pray for each other, but we may also find it difficult to be vulnerable about our most significant prayer requests. It can take time to establish a level of trust and safety so that we feel free to share. When it comes to confessing sin to each other, this may require more trust than any other area of life! It might be helpful to point out that James isn't calling us to stand up on stage every Sunday to announce our latest sins, but neither is he recommending that we only keep our sins private. Confession is presented here as a powerful practice of our faith. We should feel challenged here if we currently don't have a means to confess to others.

**5. Application:** Verses 16-18 demonstrate how “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” What is your prayer today that you would hope to see God answer in a way that He answered Elijah’s?

This is a chance for each person to share a request and to then pray together as a group. We recognize that God’s will may not align with ours, but also that prayer is a powerful force that God uses for His purposes.

**6. Application:** After all has been said, verses 19-20 are James’s final encouragement for his audience to not give up on those who have walked away from the faith. Who do you know who has wandered off from the gospel?

Consider praying for them if you’re not already, as well as for yourself, that you would have wisdom and courage related to how you might reach out to them.