

A. When in _____: Pray! (13a)

B. When _____: Pray! (13b)

C. When _____: Pray! (14-15a)

D. When _____ by _____: Pray! (15b-16a)

E. When in _____: Pray! (16b-18)

F. When Others _____: Pray! (19-20)

Introduction

1. We come to our thirteenth and last lesson in the Book of James.
2. We end with a word about prayer, which is a theme woven throughout this book.
 - a. James 1:5 encourages us to ask God when we lack wisdom in facing trying times.
 - b. James 4:1-2 encourages us to think about our motives in what we ask from God.
3. James's nickname was "Ol' Camel Knees." He got that name because his knees looked like those of a camel from the large calluses that formed due to his knelling so much and so long in prayer. (Herbert Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible*, 171).
4. James personally knew the power of prayer, and so he mentioned prayer seven times in the closing six verses of his epistle.
5. **Read James 5:13-20.**
6. We often pray last, when it seems that all is lost. We need to start praying sooner; to be praying in all circumstances at all times.
7. The prayer of faith is still powerful and needed in our lives today.
8. So, when should I pray?

A. When in Trouble: Pray! (13a)

1. The three most important things in real estate are location, location, location. The three most important things in living out the Christian life may be prayer, prayer, prayer.
2. Our most natural inclination for prayer comes in times of trouble. "Oh, Lord get me out of this!"
3. Certainly, James encouraged us to pray in times of trouble (Gk., *kakopatheia*) and suffering.
 - a. Suffering here includes times of persecution for our faith, times of physical suffering, and times of suffering in emotional, mental, or spiritual anguish. That is ANY time of trouble/suffering.
 - b. This suffering may be self-inflicted from bad choices or it may come from the evil world around us.
4. James did not guarantee that all of our problems will be immediately solved when we pray.
 - a. He promised our prayers are heard by "The Lord (who) is full of compassion and mercy" (Jm 5:11c).
 - b. He counseled us not to respond to suffering with vengeance, doubt, grumbling, oaths (cf., Jm 5:7-12).
 - c. God will renew our strength to bear the load and ultimately, he will vindicate us.
 - d. Who knows what blessing God may send our way through a time of suffering—like locking your keys in your car?
 - e. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Ro 8:28).
 - f. God illustrates this critical truth for us through the suffering and death of his own Son, Jesus Christ, who brings us eternal life as we place our faith in him.

B. When Happy: Pray! (13b)

1. So often we pray when we are in trouble, sick, or caught in sin.
2. But we must also lift prayers of praise, or as James says, "songs of praise (Gk. *psallo* = psalm)," when things are good or when God gives us the ability to cope and find joy in our sufferings.
3. The word "happy" (Gk., *euthymeo*) does not describe the emotion we might feel when life is going good.
 - a. Remember James said, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance" (Jm 1:2-3).
 - b. Scot McKnight notes, "This term evokes enthusiasm, courage, and a confident faith and these often in the context of stress" (Scot McKnight, *James*, 433).
 - c. Warren Wiersbe adds, "God balances our lives and gives us hours of suffering and days of singing. The mature Christian knows how to sing while he is suffering. (Anybody can sing after the trouble has passed." God is able to give "songs in the night" (Job 35:10). He did this for Paul and Silas when they were suffering in that Philippian jail. "And a midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God" (Acts 16:25)" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Mature*, 174).
4. By the way, it's not wrong to be happy and blessed. We shouldn't feel guilty for our blessing from God. Instead, we should praise God for our blessings.

C. When Sick: Pray! (14-15a)

1. We quickly turn to God in prayer when we or our loved ones are sick (Gk., *astheneo* – without strength; incapacitated).
2. The original sin of humanity—our selfishness, pride, and fleshly desires—introduced sickness and death to the human race in Genesis 3.
3. Part of the promise of God for the new heaven and earth is that “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev 21:4b).
4. Until that day we must deal with sickness which comes from two sources:
 - a. Sickness sometimes comes from living in a fallen, sinful world.
 - 1) Sometimes there is no relationship between personal sin and sickness.
 - 2) “As (Jesus) went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him’” (Jn 9:1-3).
 - b. Sickness sometimes comes from personally yielding to sin.
 - 1) Sometimes there is a direct relationship between sin and personal sickness.
 - 2) “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.’ And you forgave the guilt of my sin” (Ps 32:3-5).
 - 3) The sin can be forgiven, but sometimes the illness from sin remains.
5. We must remember to pray for God’s will while remembering that it is not always God’s will for everyone to be healed all the time in this life.
 - a. Paul had the gift of healing but left Trophimus sick in Miletus (cf., 2 Ti 4:20).
 - b. Even Paul asked God for healing to remove his “thorn in the flesh,” but God told him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9a).
6. James 5:14b presents a three-step plan for us to follow when we are sick.
 - a. **Call for prayer**—“. . . call the elders of the church to pray over him. . .”—Make the spiritual leaders of the church aware of your need so that we can pray. Call me; e-mail me; or have someone do so.
 - b. **See a doctor**—“. . . and anoint him with oil . . .”
 - 1) “anointing” (Gk., *aleipho*) – to rub or apply lotions or perfumes which had an oil base.
 - 2) a ceremonial anointing (Gk., *chiro*); *Christos* = Christ = “anointed one”; dedicating the sick one to God and to his care for healing. God is the ultimate source of every “good and perfect gift” which includes healing from illness (Jm 1:17).
 - 3) Best meaning here may be to see this anointing as use of the best medical means of the day.
 - c. **Leave it in God’s hands**—“. . . in the name of the Lord.” – We must always submit to God’s plan.
 - 1) Sometimes sickness and dealing with sickness is a source for personal growth, humility, and an opportunity to witness to others.
 - 2) Sometimes God provides ultimate healing by releasing a saint from the painful struggle of this life into the eternal rest of heaven.

D. When Corrupted by Sin: Pray! (15b-16a)

1. We all need help in overcoming sin. We need others to stand with us; pray for us; hold us accountable.
2. “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. . . . Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal 6:1,2).
3. Confession should be in private, Christian to Christian. Begin with your spouse or the Christian to whom you are closest.
4. Public confession of private sins can be as harmful or more harmful than the sin confessed.

E. When in Need: Pray! (16b-18)

1. “The prayer of a righteous man (or woman) is powerful and effective” (16b).
 - a. “prayer” (Gk., *deesis*) – a specific prayer based on a specific need
 - b. “effective” (Gk., *energeo*) – energy; turns average into fantastic; spiritual dynamite
2. Elijah from the Book of Kings is given as an example of a righteous man whose prayers were powerfully answered.

3. How to be an effective prayer warrior: 1) Be right with God; 2) Know how to pray in accord with and use scripture; 3) Deal with specific issues by asking for specific results; 4) Wait on God's timing and will without doubting that hHe will answer in the way that is best; 5) Give God praise for his answer.

F. When Others Wander: Pray! (19-20)

1. The Book of James does not have a formal closing as we often find in the letters of Paul (e.g., final greeting and blessings).
2. However, these final two verses in a way sum up the intent of James in writing this letter to messianic Jews (i.e., "brothers and sisters") in Jerusalem and scattered throughout the Roman Empire (cf., Jm 1:1).
3. James shares, I believe, the reason: "if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back" (19).
4. James wants those believers who are wandering into error to return to the Lord by trusting God for wisdom to bring them through troubles and trials; by treating everyone with respect; by controlling their tongues; by placing God on the throne of their lives; by not resorting to vengeful violence and oaths against those who mistreat them; by praying continually in all situations.
5. We should pray for those who we see wandering, beginning with ourselves. We should be ready to encourage others to return to the faith, even as James has, but we must tend to the beams in our own eyes before removing specks from our brothers' and sisters' eyes.
6. When we and others turn/return to the Lord, we "save(d) . . . from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (20).

G. Closing Thoughts on Prayer

1. Prayer is to be continuous.
2. Prayer is designed for every part of life: trouble, happiness, sickness, sins, every need and circumstance.
3. Prayer is not for the perfect but the imperfect—all of us.
4. Prayer is not a substitute for responsible, intelligent action like healthy living and going to the doctor.
5. Confession and prayer with a trusted Christian friend is a healthy thing.
6. Praying with and for one another is essential.
7. So pray, pray, and give God the glory!