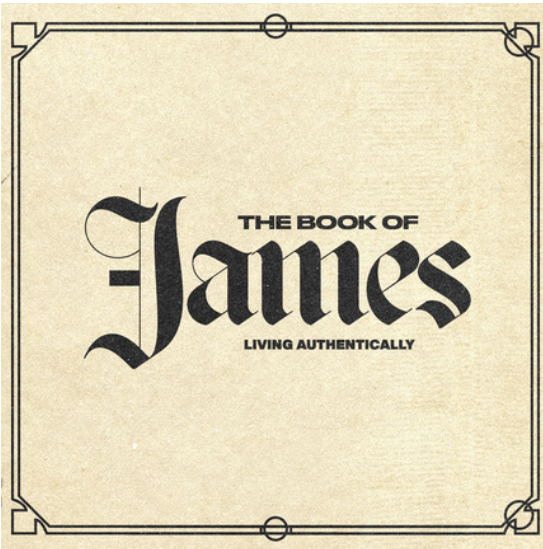


SERMON STUDY GUIDE



05.19.24 // Week 6 // “The Praying Church”



The world's landscape rapidly changed after the resurrection of Jesus. As God's work of redeeming people continued, communities were formed. But the truth is we are still messy even while we are redeemed. James writes with a bluntness and candor that is unique in the New Testament. But amidst the direct, proverbial nature, he speaks truths that still land with us 2,000 years later. Here we learn how to put feet to our faith and live lives congruent with our beliefs!

ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS

- What do you pray for the most in your life right now? How long has this topic been the focus of your prayer life?
- Has your view of prayer changed from when you were a child?
- If you could describe your prayer life in one word, what would it be?

GOING DEEPER INTO THE MESSAGE

Let's read James 5:13-15

13 Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises. 14 Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Point 1 – Prayer empowers us in every season.

James starts his discussion on prayer (talking with God) by broadly encouraging us to pray in all seasons of our lives. Even though God already knows everything, when we take the time to invite Him into every area of our lives by actively speaking with Him about it all, He reveals more of Himself to us and His will for our lives. Prayer is the very thing that gives us strength to navigate anything that life throws our way. When things are going well, and you're full of joy and contentment, talk with God about it (vs.13b). When things are uncertain, and you don't know what decisions to make, talk with God about it.

James also encourages us to cry out to God when we suffer and find ourselves in the depths of despair (vs.13a). We can lift up our concerns to God and know that God cares for us, hears us, and wants to take action on our behalf. When facing sickness, James reminds us that divine healing is possible when we pray (vs.14-15). We can bring our physical ailments to God in prayer and trust in faith that God is still able to do the miraculous on our behalf.

Sometimes, our healing happens in an instant. Sometimes, healing happens hours, days, or weeks after being prayed over. And sometimes healing doesn't happen at all on this side of eternity. When our healing doesn't come, it's important to remember Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is perfected in weakness." God's power is always at work in our lives. Either in our healing or in our endurance in suffering. He is near in both situations! God makes us strong from our weakness, or God gives us his strength in our weakness. In the end, God's healing wins because our ultimate healing is what happens beyond this life and in the promise of future resurrection.

For more insight on this topic, we recommend reading the book [Miracles Today](#) by Craig Keener.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What impact has prayer made on your life? How has God used prayer to shape your relationship with God and outlook on life?
- How can you become more expectant when you pray? What are some disappointments that you need to share with God so that you really open up to Him when you pray?
- Keep a record of your prayers and ask God to highlight when He answers the prayers you pray. Glorify Him in answering your prayers.

Let's continue reading James 5:16-18

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect. 17 Elijah was a human being as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its fruit.

Point 2 – God-sized prayers produce God-sized outcomes.

According to Ephesians 3:20, God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine because His power is at work within us. I can imagine some big things, and God wants to do even more than that through prayer! Elijah was able to ask radical things of God, and God answered because Elijah was asking in order to show God's glory to others. James refers to this example because if you were to read Elijah's story, he prayed a God-sized prayer (stop the rain), and it produced a God-sized outcome (NO RAIN FOR THREE YEARS). Then he prayed another God-sized prayer (RAIN), and it produced a God-sized outcome (RAIN!).

God wants His awesomeness to be shown to the world. That happens when our God-sized prayers reveal how truly amazing God is. Elijah prayed audaciously because he had a clear understanding of who God is and what God can really do. Elijah believed God when God says to ask and it will be answered.

Our prayers are small sometimes because we have a small vision of who God is or what God wants to do in our lives. E. M. Bounds puts it like this, “Our praying needs to be pressed and pursued with an energy that never tires, a persistency which will not be denied, and a courage that never fails.” God wants us to pursue Him. He wants to build strength and perseverance in us and He does that sometimes by not answering our prayers right away. He is growing us and maturing us all the time. When we don’t give up asking, seeking and knocking, what we receive is of more worth to us.

Let’s pray prayers as big as our God, knowing that He wants to be revealed to the world through our answered prayers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What big prayers do I feel called to pray today?
- What does my current prayer life say about what I believe to be true of God?
- When is the last time that you saw God answer one of your prayers? How does that embolden you to pray with more frequency and with more confidence?