

INSPIRATION

James 5:13-18 ¹³ *“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”*

In this passage, it says that if we have a specific need, we should pray. James tells us to pray if we are suffering, cheerful, sick or in need of forgiveness. He reminds us that Elijah, a righteous man, received quite an amazing answer from God when he prayed for no rain, and then later, for rain. It is safe to say that James meant for us to pray about everything, but how do we know that God hears our prayers? Do we always get what we pray for if we are *righteous* enough? Let's take illness as an example. The Bible tells us to pray for healing. But we still know people that remain ill, whether it be a minor illness or one that is terminal. Does that mean God does not answer prayer? Or, does it mean that God only answers the prayers of those deemed righteous, like Elijah? Perhaps, we have the wrong

idea about prayer. Prayer is how we converse with our Father, God. As Christians, we should love God with all that we are. Is our prayer life evidence of that?



APPLICATION

We all know that person that just talks and talks, never letting anyone else get a word in. If we are honest, we have been that person a time or two. But, that's not a real conversation. Webster defines conversation as an oral exchange of sentiments, observations, opinions, or ideas. When we do all the talking, it is no longer a conversation since there is no exchange happening.

Have you ever seen a newly dating couple that really enjoys talking to each other? They listen to one another intently, hanging on every word, and take turns sharing their thoughts. They cannot wait to talk to the other when they are apart. Prayer with God should be like that. We should long to converse with Him. Then prayer becomes more about our relationship with God than about asking Him for things. We should ask of Him, but the focus should always be Him and how we fit into His plan.

We often do not know what to pray for. It's not that we do not know what we want or that we do not see areas in desperate need of prayer. Rather we do not want to ask Him for something that is not His will. Psalm 37:4 tells us to delight ourselves in the Lord and He will give us the desires of our hearts. Most people only remember the latter part of this verse and forget that we are to *delight* in the Lord. It is like a cause and effect relationship. When we seek the Lord and delight in Him, THEN He gives us the desires of our heart.

This means He places within you the desires He wants to fulfill in you when you please Him. If you are single and desire a Godly mate, pray for that. But also pray for God to put the desire in



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you that fulfills His plan for your life. If you need healing, pray for that. But also pray that He brings glory to Himself through your life. If you want a new job, pray for it. But also that He places you where you need to be to further His kingdom. It may be right where you are! You get the idea. Pray for God to place desires within your heart that bring about His purpose.

If you struggle with prayer, you are not alone! Try asking God to teach you how to pray. Yes, that seems very simple, but can be effective when you just don't know where to begin. Sometimes you can talk to God as though He were one of your friends that you hang out with. Just be yourself, He wants something real with us. You can also pray scripture – yes, actual Bible verses. This can be a great way to allow Him to speak to you through His word. Another idea is to write down your prayers, or prayer journaling. Whatever you choose is a great option. Just talk with Him.

CONTEMPLATION

1. Have you given thought to what you should be praying for? Do you make it a habit to ask God what you should pray for and about?

2. Do you long to talk to God? Is He your “go to” when you need someone to listen? If not, why is that?



3. Are you struggling with your prayer life? If so, can you identify the issue? Maybe you just don't know what to pray for, or maybe you feel like God is not listening to you? Take some time to reflect on what is keeping you from a fulfilling prayer life.

4. When you think about the desires of your heart, are they Godly pursuits or is it your own will deep inside?

ELABORATION

Exodus 12:40 tells us that the Israelites were in Egypt for hundreds of years before God rescued them from their captivity. During this time period it must have been very difficult to see generations crying out to God and he chose not to answer yes on their time. God's time is certainly different than ours. II Peter 3:8 says "with the Lord a day is like a thousand years." Paul's letter to Peter is trying to help us remember that our time and God's time are not always the same. Is it difficult imagining God's time as opposed to our time? Why do we sometimes want God to act very quickly? Why does God sometimes seem to act very slowly?

Further Reading - Philippians 4:6; John 15:7; Mark 11:24; Romans 8:26; Matthew 6:6-7; Luke 11:9; I Timothy 2:1-4

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