

7. As one who has been forgiven by God, are there sins in your life you need to confess? Are you struggling from an ongoing sin, believing that God won't forgive you for it? If so, would you be willing to share with a trusting friend this sin so that they can walk beside you, praying for you and allowing you to be set free from it? Do you come before God confessing your sin before you approach him in prayer with your requests?

8. Has there been a time in your life where you have wandered from the Truth? If so, who was the significant person that brought you back to the Truth and how did they do it? Who do you know that is wandering from the Truth? What will you do about it?

9. Have you ever thought about praying for your prayer life? What would an ideal prayer life be for you? Is it realistic? Is there anything you want to change in your prayer life? If so, how will you go about changing? What obstacles stand in the way?

James 5:13-20

Discussion Group Questions

June 29, 2008

LESSON 13

Dr. Jerry Nelson

For discussion following the sermon on June 29, 2008

The Prayer of Faith

Key Points

In light of our challenge to be patient and persevere under trials, what means are available to live beyond our self-centered propensities? How do we engage life with a biblical worldview rather than living the way the world lives? What will change our conviction to action? James ends this book with a challenge to pray:

- Pray in all of life's circumstances
- Pray in faith
- Seek prayer from the elders of the church
- Pray for and engage in the spiritual restoration of one another

Over the past twelve weeks we have examined God's plan for authentic Christianity. We have had to take a hard look at our inner thoughts and the motivation of our hearts. We have been confronted with our tendencies to either engage or tolerate the cultural norms of slander, favoritism, hoarding, and selfish ambition. Our hearts have been drawn to help the poor and oppressed, and we have been given a godly perspective on trials, persecution, and endurance. We are encouraged to take scripture seriously and to live obediently. How do we respond?

While conviction and desire for righteous living may motivate us to change, what do we need beyond resolve, for resolve alone is not enough? We need the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. We need to engage conversations with God about every aspect of life; in trials of all kinds as well as in times of joy, in sickness (both physical and spiritual) and in our everyday struggles with sin.

We must seek out spiritual community—the body of mature believers—to encourage us, pray for us, and yes, even confront us with our sin as a means of spiritual restoration. That means we pray. We pray for God to do that which we are unable to do, and we pray for the strength we need to obey when we are sorely tempted to do otherwise.

James knew the power of prayer. He saw first hand the life-changing effects of the gospel. Our desire is to experience that same kind of transformation in our lives and in those around us. May God himself strengthen our faith. May we, too, find the power to live as genuine Christians and may our lives be a living testimony to the saving grace of God!

Leader's Guide

Personal Preparation

- As a leader, no doubt you have spent significant time in prayer on behalf of those in your group, issues you have had to face, and for wisdom and discernment as you lead. As you think back over the past thirteen weeks, how has God answered those prayers? What happened in you as a result? What happened to the people in your group?
- If you are challenged by this week's lesson on prayer, ask God to reveal areas that you need to change, and to enable you by his Spirit to do so.
- In our church we are called to pray for many, many people and life situations. How do you find time to pray for so many requests? You might want to help your group wrestle with this and offer suggestions that you have found helpful.

Group Preparation

- This lesson is on prayer. You are encouraged to set aside some time to pray in response to this lesson. Rather than spending most of the time discussing specific needs at this time, just pray.
- As you end your time (and this series), we encourage you to also take time to worship, thanking and praising God for all that he has revealed and accomplished.

Discussion Questions

1. We are called upon to pray in all of life's circumstance. How do you pray when you are in trouble (afflicted)? How do you praise God when life is good? How can we use Jesus' example of prayer in our own lives? (*Romans 12:12, I Thes. 5:16-18, Col. 3:16-17*)
2. Do you most often pray to God to engage *him*, to understand his will and direction, or do you find that you most often pray for relief from life's problems? What is the difference in motivation?
3. Why is it important to ask for the Elders to pray for you?
4. What can you expect as you pray for healing? Does James provide a guarantee of healing? Why or why not?
5. It is very important to engage other believers and ask them to pray. Why is this so vitally important? Why can't we just pray by ourselves?
6. What does a "prayer of faith" mean to you?