

Reflection

1. Respond to this quote from a high school student. Do you agree with her? How would you explore this comment with her? *"I think it's possible for a Christian to be a Christian without making prayer a regular thing. Being a Christians is all about faith and belief. In these modern times, I know for a fact that many Christian families don't make prayer a regular thing, but they still believe."*
2. We have all prayed for someone to be healed from disease, illness or injury and they haven't been healed. Why should we still believe that prayer is powerful even though we have these experiences of un-answered prayer?
3. Have you ever been embarrassed been nervous or refused when asked to pray aloud? Why do people frequently NOT want to pray out loud around other people and based on all that we have studied, how might James respond to that person?
4. React and respond to this quote from Tim Keller: *"I can think of nothing great that is also easy. Prayer must be, then, one of the hardest things in the world. To admit that prayer is very hard, however, can be encouraging. If you struggle greatly in this, you are not alone."* Do you agree? Disagree? How can admitting prayer is a struggle be encouraging? Do you resonate with this personally?
5. What is one thing you can commit to doing THIS WEEK to help you grow in prayer?

Action –

1. Go to a quiet place in your home without any distractions. Set a timer on your phone for 20 minutes and spend that time praying. Don't worry, it will probably be hard! When you're done, write your reflections. What was hard? What was easy?
2. Read Ephesians 3:14-21. List some things that Paul prays for in this passage – could you pray the same things? For whom?

Pray – If studying in a group, pray for one another and for each other's spiritual growth throughout the coming week.

Sermon Study Guide

November 15, 2020

Living Faith [a study of James] – James the Just, a central leader in early church and the half-brother of Jesus, cares deeply for his Christian *brothers and sisters* and writes to them to encourage wise and faithful living. Bringing both a deep connection to Christianity's Hebrew roots and a solid recognition of the lordship of Jesus, James provides wise, practical, godly instruction on *living faith*—faith which is necessarily, consistently and broadly manifested in action. His teaching provides everyday ways we can apply our faith and thereby expect to grow.

Begin with Prayer – *Father, with an expectation that you will use this study to grow me/us more into the image of your Son, I/we open our hearts and minds to your Spirit. Amen.*

Follow Up on *Speak with Integrity* – What thoughts, questions, actions, etc. resulted in your life this past week as a result of last week's sermon study?

The Sermon's Main Point – *Pray*

Prayer is a tether to the presence and power of God. Prayer is for everyone in all circumstances and we must choose to pursue it.

Begin – Choose from the following questions to begin thinking about the study's topic.

1. How would you describe the role that relationships play in your life? Do other people have a lot of influence on you or a little? How much mental energy do you spend thinking about your different kinds of relationships and the health of those relationships? (family, friends, coworkers, strangers, God, etc.)?
2. What does prayer usually look like in your life? What are times you might normally pray (early morning, before a meal, at bedtime, etc.) Is it easy for you to pray regularly or not? Why?
3. In a 2020 study by Barna Group, 69% of Americans say that they pray weekly, and yet we know that a majority of followers of Jesus also report difficulty praying and that their prayer life is weak. How would you explain these two realities? Why do we say we pray regularly AND that we struggle to pray?

Living Faith [a study of James]

Pray

James 5:13-18

Grasping, Sharing, Learning and Appreciating

1. Read today's passage (James 5:13-18) and underline or circle every time you see a form of the word "pray". Based on this reading, answer these questions
 - a. Who should pray?
 - b. When should they pray?
 - c. For what should they pray?
 - d. What happens when they pray?
2. James teaches us that prayer is powerful and effective. And that it is linked to spiritual and physical health, as well as being connected to faith, righteousness and forgiveness. What are some general principles about prayer and faith that you can discern from this passage?
3. We are pretty confident that James is familiar with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and that his letter reflects many of the themes of that sermon. Read the following passages about prayer from Jesus' sermon. How do they support and flesh out James' teaching on prayer?
 - a. Matthew 6:5-13
 - b. Matthew 7:7-11
4. Our passage specifically names trouble, happiness, sickness and sin as times we should pray. What are some ways that people might respond to these four things that AREN'T prayer?
5. James' example for us to consider is Elijah. (If you need/want to re-read the story James refers to it is in 1 Kings 17-18). James points out three things about Elijah and prayer: FIRST, that Elijah is just a normal guy; SECOND, that Elijah prayed fervently and THIRD, that Elijah prayed for three and a half years. Why does James make these three points and what do they tell us about how prayer works?