

“PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER”

James 5:16-18

Week 14

Central Teaching/Learning Aim: To help the learner believe in the power of prayer and to call him/her to commit to pray for others in his/her SGM.

A. Display – The following question on the power point or marker board. “Do you believe in the power of prayer to change lives?”

Share – The following story:

In a sermon on prayer, Bruce Wilkinson said:

On my first trip to Israel I was on a ship that docked on the Isle of Patmos, where John wrote Revelation. I was so lonely for my family I didn't even go back up to the cave where he wrote it. I wanted to be by myself so I walked the streets of Patmos until I found a coffee shop. I sat down and prayed. "Lord, I'm in the middle of nowhere. I don't know anyone. Send someone who needs you."

The guy at the next table said, "Do you want some coffee? I'll buy. Are you off that ship?" "Yes," I said. I moved over to his table and he bought me a cup of coffee. "What's the matter?" He said, "What do you mean what's the matter?" I said, "I don't know. What's the matter?" "I just left my wife, and I'm not going back. I'm going to try to go on the ship to get to the next island so I can fly out of here." "Would you believe I'm all the way from Atlanta, Georgia, for one reason—to get you back to your wife?"

"Impossible," he said. "Let me return the favor of the coffee." And for the next hour God broke through and that young man came to know Christ. I told him, "If you make it up with your wife before the boat leaves, you come wave." "It'll never happen." "You're a miracle. Give God a chance."

I got on the boat, and was praying like crazy. I went to the back of the boat overlooking the harbor and will never forget what I saw. Down off the rocky cliff came this young couple holding hands and waving! I'm convinced that if I hadn't prayed, that man would have never said a word to me.

Doug Banister, The Word and Power, pp. 97-98, (Zondervan, 1999)

ASK – *Do you believe in the power of prayer to change lives?*

Next – Share the following statistics from Barna Research:

82% of Americans surveyed believe that “prayer can change what happens in a person's life.”

What do Americans pray about?

95% Thank God for what He has done in their lives.

76% Ask for forgiveness of specific sins.

67% Acknowledge His unique and superior attributes.

61% Ask for specific needs to be met.

State – Today we are going to discuss the power of prayer to change lives and transform our SGM.

B. Optional Method -

Optional Method -- Share the following information:

In the movie Bruce Almighty Jim Carrey plays an angry, down-on-his-luck television newsman. After tiring of the newsman's complaints, God offers him the chance to take over the Almighty's job.

Something else unusual happens in this movie. God's phone number appears on the Carrey character's pager when the deity tries to call him, and although movies and television shows usually use a phony 555 telephone exchange, this time the seven-digit number displayed in the movie is real, at least for certain area codes. As a result, all over the country people are dialing their area code and then that number, leading to some fascinating contacts between callers and those who are unwittingly acting as God's answering service.

One woman told the answering machine at Radio Colorado Network, "I'm in jail right now. Like I said to you last night, 'I love you.'" She promised to go straight and prayed to be able to return to her husband and children.

Another caller said, "Hey God, I've done some really bad things in my life, and I need to repent. So please answer my prayers."

Another caller said, "I know this isn't the number for God. But I'm calling to see if you have the other number."

In San Diego, callers who used the movie number got a business cell phone number for Cathy Romano, president of a company that manages the practices of 70 doctors. After overcoming her initial irritation at getting as many as 40 calls a day from Bruce Almighty watchers, the busy executive started playing along. "Hello, this is God," she answered one call, on a whim. Her woman caller gushed, "I can't believe it; it's God, and it's a woman!"

In Westchester, New York, Bobby Guido's secretary came into his office in tears after a woman caller asked for God, said her husband was dying, and asked for help.

Judith Graham, "Phone Calls to God Are Bedeviling," Chicago Tribune (5-29-03)

Ask– What reaction comes to mind when you hear so many people calling a number that they think connects them to God? Do you believe that prayer has the power to change lives? Share some examples from your life.

State – Today we are going to discuss the power of prayer to change lives and transform our SGM.

C. Optional Method – Movie Clip - “Meet The Parents”

Start: 24:30

Stop: 26:15

Synopsis:

Greg (Ben Stiller) is asked to say a pre-meal prayer at his future in-laws home. He is not accustomed to praying and offers up a random hilarious prayer.

Ask – Is prayer a routine or a privilege in your life? Is your prayer life stuck in a rut? Do you believe in the power of prayer?

State - Today we are going to discuss the power of prayer to change lives and transform our SGM.

BOOK Getting Into the Word

Utilize the questions in the *Discussion Guide* to examine the Scripture passage.

LOOK Getting the Word into Life

Utilize the handout, **"Overcoming Barriers in My Prayer Life"** and have members complete it.

TOOK Conclusion

A. Display – the words and play the song “*Pray*” by Darlene Zschech (Darlene is the lady who wrote the hit song “Shout To The Lord”).

Place – Members into groups and have them pray for one another and to depart as they finish.

B. Optional Method – Movie Clip – “Bruce Almighty”

Start 1:26:30

Stop 1:29:00

Synopsis:

Bruce breaks down crying and decides he does not want the responsibility of being God anymore. He asks God to take control of his life.

State – God hears our prayers just like He did when we first asked Him into our hearts. Let’s use the power available to us through Him and pray for one another. It’s great to have a God that cares for our needs.

C. Optional Method – Share the following story:

For sixty years the members of Oak Grove Baptist Church in Mount Carmel, TN prayed for Joe Arnott to come to Christ. Even though he wasn’t a Christian, he was a religious man and attended Sunday School and Church for all those years, but never accepted Christ as his Savior and Lord.

Several church members witnessed to him, but his answer was always the same, “I’m not ready yet.” No one gave up, they kept praying for him.

March 5, 2000 their prayers were answered. Arnott made a public profession of his faith. The congregation wept as they watched 60 years of prayers walk the aisle to give his life to Jesus. Seeing what was happening, the men in his Sunday School class followed Arnott down the aisle and stood with him as he made his decision.

His pastor, Benny Keck said, “I suppose fewer words will ever sound sweeter to my ears than hearing Joe say, ‘I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.’”

-BP, 5-12-2000

James 4:2 “You do not have because you do not ask.”

State – We should never give up praying for others. God answers prayer. Share prayer requests and have a time of prayer to close the lesson.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

(Teacher's Copy)

1. What 3 commands are given in (James 5:13-14)?
 - a. If you are suffering – Pray.
 - b. If you are cheerful – Sing.
 - c. If you are sick – Ask others to pray with you.
2. What are the results listed in (vs. 15)?
 - a. A prayer offered in faith will restore the sick.
 - b. Sins will be forgiven.
3. Do you believe that God answers every prayer? How?
4. What hinders prayer? Search the following passages to discover prayer hindrances.
 - a. (Isa. 59:1-2) Unconfessed sin
 - b. (James 1:6-8) Doubt, double-mindedness
 - c. (Prov. 28:9) Disobedience
 - d. (Prov. 28:13) Lack of Transparency
 - e. (Mark 11:25-26) Unforgiveness
 - f. (James 4:3) Wrong motives
 - g. (Jer. 1:5) Disregard for God's sovereignty
5. What action steps are suggested in (James 5:16)?
 - a. Confess your sin to one another.
 - b. Pray for one another for healing spiritual/physical.
6. Why would James encourage believers to confess their sin to one another?
7. Do you believe that the "effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much"?
Why or why not?
8. What do the following passages teach about praying for one another?
 - a. (Col. 1:9) We should pray for one another to be filled with spiritual wisdom.
 - b. (Col. 1:10a) We should pray for one another's walk in the Lord.
 - c. (Col. 1:10b) We should pray for one another to glorify the Lord.
 - d. (Col. 1:10c) We should pray for one another to bear fruit.
 - e. (Col. 1:11a) We should pray for one another to be strengthened with power.
 - f. (Col. 1:11-12) We should pray for one another to live joyously thanking God.
9. How can you establish a quality prayer time for those in your family and in your SGM family?
When?

Where?

How Often?

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What 3 commands are given in (James 5:13-14)?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

2. What are the results listed in (vs. 15)?
 - a.
 - b.

3. Do you believe that God answers every prayer? How?

4. What hinders prayer? Search the following passages to discover prayer hindrances.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g.

5. What action steps are suggested in (James 5:16)?
 - a.
 - b.

6. Why would James encourage believers to confess their sin to one another?

7. Do you believe that the “effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much”?
Why or why not?

8. What do the following passages teach about praying for one another?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.

9. How can you establish a quality prayer time for those in your family and in your SGM family?
When?

Where?

Overcoming Barriers in My Prayer Life

Barrier #1 Stop doubting that your prayers make a difference.

Record answered prayers in your life.

If God has answered prayers He will continue to do so. Trust in Him.

Barrier #2 Stop questioning the goodness of God.

When have you been mad at God or blamed Him for trials in your life?

God allows man to live life, and man sometimes makes poor choices. Don't blame God --- blame man.

Barrier #3 Stop feeling like you are all alone.

When have you felt deserted by God?

We are in partnership with God to bring about His purpose. In a partnership there must be communication. How can you increase communication with God?

Barrier #4 Stop giving God your leftovers.

Give God your best time. What is your best time of day? Give it to Him.

Do not go to Him only with needs --- go with adoration as well.

Work through the following acrostic as you pray:

Adoration – Spend time adoring Him
Confession – Confess your sins before God
Thanksgiving – Spend time thanking Him for what He has done
Supplication – Intercede for the needs of others

Pray

We call upon Your Name.
Humble ourselves and pray.
Move in our hearts, move in our land.
Every nation, tribe and tongue will proclaim Your Kingdom come.
We pray, pray, open the windows of Heaven on us.
Today, we pray, pour out Your Spirit, Your wonders on earth.
We come on bended knees.
We bring an offering.
Lead us in Your way everlasting.
Every heart of every man will pray Your will be done.
Our Father, who art in Heaven.
Hallowed be Your Name.
Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
And lead us not into temptation.
Deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.

Word for the Week

James 5:16-18

"Living in Peace with One Another"

Monday – Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

- Ø What are Paul's three exhortations regarding a proper attitude toward church leaders?
- Ø How could peace be an issue between church leaders and their followers?
- Ø If Satan wrote down some guidelines and commands to get people to do just the opposite of these exhortations, how do you think his message might be worded?
What encouragement do you receive from the God of peace (5:23) to fulfill these commands?

Tuesday— Read Mark 9:42-50; Matthew 5:13; Luke 14:34-35

- Ø What are the two commands in Mark 9:50?
- Ø How does the admonition to be at peace relate to Mark 9:43-48?
- Ø Where should we focus our attention in order to maintain peace with each other?
Salt depicts a distinguishing mark of a disciple. What can you do to "salt" your relationships with peace this week?

Wednesday— Read Romans 12:17-21

- Ø Verses 17-21 relate primarily to believers relationships to unbelievers.
- Ø What is the condition Paul places on our peaceful coexistence?
- Ø When is it not possible to live in peace with someone? Who should not be responsible for the lack of peace?
- Ø This week how can you practice "love and peace" with those outside the family of God? With those in the family of God?

Thursday— Read 2 Corinthians 13:5-11

- Ø Recall a time when your actions or words were misunderstood or misconstrued. Did you correct the misunderstanding? How?
- Ø Misunderstanding is a common problem even among believers. How does it thwart our peace?
- Ø How can a person's positive traits result in negative actions and reactions?
What does God supply for us to realize our true unity? (11b)

Friday— Read Matthew 5:1-16

- Ø Peacemaking is the ability to harmonize differences between others without causing either person to "lose."
- Ø Would you say verses 3-10 are more about values and attitudes or actions?
- Ø How do we appropriate these character traits?
- Ø How are the beatitudes related to being salt and light (5:13-16)
"Blessed" means happy or fortunate. Are you blessed? Are you fortunate? Praise God.

EXEGETICAL What it meant to Theophilus back THEN

REAL LIFE

“Praying for One Another” James 5:16-18

(Exegetical . . . What it meant to the Scattered Jewish Christians back THEN)THE
CONTENT OF JAMES' COMMAND TO THE SCATTERED JEWISH
CHRISTIANS, WHO COULD EASILY BECOME “WEAK” IN THE TRIALS OF
LIFE AND BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE EXEMPLIFIED BY ELIJAH THAT“
THE HARDWORKING, PERSISTENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS PERSON
WAS STRONG (EFFECTIVE)” . . . WAS THAT THEY CONFESS TO AND
PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER.

- I. The PURPOSE for which The Scattered Jewish Christians were To Confess to and Pray on behalf of One Another, according to James' command, was so that They Might Be Healed (Restored), (16).
 - A. The Inferential [in the context of 14-15] Command of James to the Scattered Jewish Christians was that They Confess to One Another Their Sins, (16a).
 - B. The Accompanying Command of James to the Scattered Jewish Christians was that They Pray on behalf of One Another, (16b).
 - C. The Purpose for which The Scattered Jewish Christians were To Confess to and Pray on behalf of One Another was so that They Might Be Healed (Restored), (16c).

NOTE: James was writing to his beloved, yet scattered, Jewish church. He had been their pastor in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18). But persecution had swept them off to the far reaches of the Roman Empire (Acts 8:1). There they suffered trials and tribulations because of their faith that Jesus was the true Messiah.

Some, under the pressure of persecution, were failing to act in faith (James 1:22). James wrote to encourage these true believers to count it all joy when they experienced trials (1:2) that would mature their faith (1:4). He gave them a sweeping plan for enduring through the difficulties of life: “Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to become angry,” (1:19).

In the closing verses of his letter (5:13-18), James addressed the possibility that some among them might fall into a time of suffering as a result of sin. A wrong response to life's trial could result in increased suffering. James' cure for such an illness was confession and prayer. Through the powerful prayers of a righteous man of faith the wayward and weak could be forgiven and restored. And, of course, anyone who admonished a sinner to turn back to faithfulness would deliver him from a life of futility and cover many sins, (5:19-20).

- II. The BASIS upon which James Command the Scattered Jewish Christians To Confess to and Pray on behalf of One Another, with the expectation of Restoration, was the Principle, exemplified in the Life and Prayer of Elijah, that “The Hardworking, Persistent Petition of a Righteous Person was Strong (effective),” (16d-18).
 - A. The Basis upon which James Command the Scattered Jewish Christians To Confess to and Pray on behalf of One Another, with the expectation of Restoration, was the Principle that “The Hardworking, Persistent Petition of a Righteous Person was Strong (effective),” (16d).
 - B. An Example of the Principle that “The Hardworking, Persistent Petition of a Righteous Person was Strong (effective)” was the Prayer of Elijah Who Prayed that it would Not Rain and It Didn't, and then Prayed that it would Rain and It Did, (17-18).

1. The Nature/Experience/Feeling of James' Example, Elijah, was Like that of the Scattered Jewish Christians [Elijah was nothing special], (17a).
2. The Result of Elijah's Prayer that It would Not Rain was that It Did Not Rain for three and a half years [cf. 1 Kings 17], (17b).
3. The Result of Elijah's Prayer that It would Rain was that It Did Rain, with the earth once again bearing fruit [cf. 1 Kings 18], (18).

The Master-Planned Community Prays for One Another

- I. The Goal of the Master-planned Community in Praying for One Another is Restoration, (5:16a-c).
- II. The Principle of the Master-planned Community in their Praying is that, "The Prayer of the Righteous is Effective," (16d).
- III. The Example for the Master-planned Community in their Effective Praying is Effective is Elijah, (17-18).

PEDAGOGICAL What it means for us NOW

- I. The Need for Prayer: Life Brings Trials, Joys, and Brokenness, (5:13-15).
 - A. Sometimes Life Brings Trials.
 - B. Sometimes Life Brings Joy.
 - C. Sometimes Life Brings Sickness/Brokenness.
 - D. Only Prayers of dependent faith in God can Restore.
- II. The Goal of Prayer: Intercession Brings Wholeness, (5:16a-c).
 - A. Confess Your Sins to One Another.
 - B. Pray for One Another.
 - C. Seek Wholeness.
- III. The Principle of Prayer: The Prayer of the Righteous is Effective, (16d).
- IV. The Example of Prayer: Elijah's prayers were Answered, (17-18).
 - A. Elijah was just a man – like you.
 - B. Elijah Prayed (two opposite prayers) and God Answered.
 - C. Pray for One Another.