

Sermon Series: The One Another Commands**Sermon Title: Pray for One Another****Sermon Text: James 5:13-16****Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry**

Sermon Summary: This study looks at James' instruction to God's family to Pray For One Another! The study begins by looking at the fact that God practices what He preaches! Jesus prayed for His disciples and for us, and the Holy Spirit intercedes for us! There are three reasons to pray for one another which are derived from the text of James 5:13-16. We all have issues to pray about. We all need the healing that prayer brings. Prayer is powerful and effective. There are some important spiritual principles for any disciple of Christ found in the explanation of these three reasons to pray for one another!

Full Sermon Notes:

"Born that we should live with joy and hope and expectation, our King will come again! Glory to God in the highest!" But aren't you glad we don't have to wait until He comes again to talk to Him? Aren't you glad we can pray to Him, and call on Him, and cry to Him, and know that He hears our prayers and responds to our prayers and speaks to us through His precious and Holy Word the Bible, and that His Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts and gives us understanding of His Word! Prayer is a gift, a precious gift and a gift we are commanded to use not just for ourselves, but for others! And as we pray today I think it would be good if each of us here this morning would lift in prayer the folks impacted by the devastating tornadoes the night before last. So as I pray for us this morning, please pray for them! Prayer!

James writes this in our text for today, James 5:16...

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Now I know this verse says: "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." However, I've got to remind you that in Bible days they commonly used the male gender when speaking and writing. Is there anyone here who could deny that the prayer of a righteous mother is powerful and effective? When it comes to this "Pray for one another command," I believe Moms have got it going on! Who on the planet is more faithful to pray for others than Mothers? If it hadn't been for my mother's prayers, I don't think I would be here today. She still prays for me and I still need the prayers!!!! Don't get me wrong, there are Godly dads who are on their knees, praying and interceding for their family, my Dad is one of those, but unfortunately, not nearly enough men are leading the charge when it comes to prayer! And sadly, not nearly as many mothers in today's world understand the extreme value, importance and critical nature of praying for others, especially their children. Our families need to recapture the importance of prayer. Our churches need to recapture the importance of prayer. Our nation needs to recapture the importance of prayer. Has our nation gotten to the place where it no longer needs prayer? Are things going so much better in America that we don't really need God's help anymore? Are our families more stable and healthy than ever before, so we don't really need to worry about this "pray for one another" thing? I believe the answer to all of the above is a resounding

no! Someone might be inclined to say this: "I can understand praying to God for myself, but why am I supposed to pray for others? Can't they just pray for themselves?" Sure they can.

However, I don't know if you've ever been in a place where if God didn't intervene you knew you were in trouble? I don't know if you've ever been in a place where you've prayed all that you know to pray and don't know what else to say? I don't know if you've ever been in a place where you just needed to know that someone else cared so much they were willing to pray for you?

If you've ever been in any of these situations, then you know how vital it is to have others lifting you up in prayer. And they call it lifting you up in prayer, for several reasons. One, is your needs are being lifted by prayer to God on high. Secondly, there's just something about others praying for you that will lift your spirit. And did you know that God practices what He preaches? First of all, Jesus prayed for others...

John 17:15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

John 17:18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

John 17:19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

John 17:20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,

And then check this out...

Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

Romans 8:27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

I don't know about you, but when I realize that Jesus prayed for His disciples and for those of us who would believe because of their testimony, and then I realize that The Precious Holy Spirit of Jesus intercedes for me, there's a certain confidence that enters my soul! Not only that, but I realize the extreme importance of praying for others! A few years ago I had a couple of staff members knock on my office door. I was deep in thought and preparation for the responsibilities that lay before me that day. I said, "what's up?" They replied, "We know you're busy, we just want to take a minute and pray for you." Wow! You can't imagine what that meant to me! Just knowing they cared enough to take the time to pray for me lifted my spirits!!

So let's look at the reasons we should "Pray for One Another."

REASON # 1 - We all have issues to pray about!

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Sometimes I think a person who doesn't think he or she needs prayer, or who isn't willing to pray for others may have a serious pride problem or they are just blind.

Listen...

1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

How does claiming you haven't sinned make God out to be a liar? Simple. God's Word says we have all sinned.

Romans 3:20 Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Romans 3:21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

Romans 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 3:24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

We need to confess our sins to God first and foremost. Admitting to God we have sinned brings God's forgiveness and mercy into our lives. God wants us to confess, not because He doesn't know what we've done. Oh He knows. Kind of like my Mom, when I was growing up. I used to wonder how in the world she knew when I was up to no good! Have you ever felt like your Mom had eyes in the back of her head? And so many times when my Mom said don't and I did, I ended up getting hurt or things just didn't turn out so great! It's like that country song that says, "Mama Knows!" Well we all know Mama is not all knowing, but God is and God knows our very hearts. Confession is more for you than it is for God. Confession puts us in a position of willingness to be changed by God for the better! If we won't admit we're wrong, we won't ask for God's forgiveness or help.

And by the way, did you know you can talk to God directly? Jesus is our High Priest.

Hebrews 4:13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Did you hear that? God doesn't get angry when we confess. He sympathizes with us. Why? When Jesus walked this earth, He faced every temptation we face in one form or another. He knows the struggles of living in the flesh. Yet He overcame sin. He wants to help you overcome! And did you notice that last verse? It says we can approach the throne of God with confidence. What's that all about? Prayer! You don't have to worry about being struck down when you approach God. You can approach God with confidence that He loves you, and He is anxious to hear your prayer. All of it. The good, the bad, the ugly! God stands ready with mercy and forgiveness. Okay, if this is true, then I'll just confess to God and that's that! Why did James have to put "that confess your sins to each other" thing in there? Sounds like another "One Another Command", and I'm pretty sure I wouldn't like that one! After all, why should I tell anyone else my troubles? Several reasons!

1. It's a great thing to have others praying for you!
2. Confession of your struggles with a person you love and trust brings accountability into your life.
3. Confession to someone else is sometimes vital to your victory over your sin and weakness.
4. It also brings you their encouragement, and their experience in how they have overcome struggles in their life with God's help!

Accountability comes because they're going to ask you how you're doing from time to time. And it helps them to know how they can pray for you! That's important. And they can bring encouragement to you by letting you know you're not alone in having an issue. They may have dealt with the same thing in the past and have experience, and can share with you how they overcame, or are overcoming! That's so important. And let me just give you this advice when it comes to confessing a struggle with someone and asking them to pray for you. It's called "accountability up!" In other words try to find someone who is not actively struggling with the same thing you are. Because that could become discouraging to them or the conversations might just turn into a "you too? I guess everybody struggles with that, so we just have to live with it!" No, you don't have to just live with sin! None of us are perfect or will be perfect on this side of heaven, but God wants us to find victory over the sins we are struggling with and when you get victory over a particular sin, don't worry about all of a sudden finding yourself perfect. You've got other things that God just hasn't shown you yet. You see, He wants you to deal with one thing at a time and once you get that right, you can move on to the next thing on your "to become more like Jesus list!" And God has that list for everyone of us no matter how long we've been following Jesus! It's kind of like a country gospel song I wrote years ago says..."I've got so far to grow in my quest to be like Jesus, every day's a learnin' day as I seek to know, how He would live and what He would do, I've got so far to grow as I onward go!" If this is your goal, then one important thing you can do is to try and find someone you know who has, by the Grace of God, found victory in some of the areas you're struggling with and someone who can be a spiritual mentor. Accountability up means that the maturity of the other person is important. I'm

not talking about finding a perfect person, or someone who has no troubles at all in their life, they don't exist, but the person you ask to pray for you and to be your accountability partner needs to have their eyes on Jesus! It needs to be someone who will stand shoulder to shoulder with you and move in the same direction with you towards Jesus!

"But Brother Larry, it would be so humiliating to have to tell someone my issues. The Apostle Peter is not addressing this topic directly in 1 Peter 5, however, he gives some principles that apply. It takes humility to open up to a brother or sister with your struggles and ask them to pray for you! Listen to these words from 1 Peter 5...

1 Peter 5:5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

It takes humility to ask others to pray for you and it takes humility to be willing to spend time praying for others! Why? Because it takes humility to admit we all have issues to pray about! And this takes us to the second reason we must obey James' one another command to pray for one another...

REASON #2 - We all need the healing prayer brings!

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed...

We all need healing. It may be physical. It may be emotional or mental. It may be spiritual. We all need the healing power of prayer. Let's read the verses James wrote which are found just before our verse for today...

James 5:13 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.

James 5:15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.

James tells us here that prayer is appropriate for every situation in our lives. James says if you're in trouble, pray. Some translations say distressed, or discouraged! James says if you are happy, pray by singing songs of praise. In other words, prayer is appropriate no matter what your situation in life is, good or bad! James then says if you're physically sick, pray. James says if you're spiritually sick because of sin, pray, more on this in just a minute! And in our focal verse it says we should pray for one another! Emotional healing can begin to flow into our lives just because we know someone cares enough to pray for us. I just visited someone in the

hospital yesterday who said, "I could feel that people were praying for me!" That is one of the benefits of our "pray for one another" command! It is so encouraging when you know someone is praying for you in your time of need! I can't tell you how many times God has put someone on my heart to pray for them and when I called to check on them and to tell them God had put them on my heart, they were overwhelmed and many times with tears tell me what they were going through and how much they needed those prayers! I can't tell you how many times that's happened to me when someone has told me they've been lifting me in their prayers and it was at some of my most difficult times! Missionaries have some of the most amazing stories of how a prayer warrior on the other side of the world prayed for them at just the right time!

Physical Healing

Now I want to be very honest and transparent with you. I've struggled with a few of these verses at times. It seems, when I read verses 14 and 15 at face value, it is saying if someone is sick and the elders of the church anoint them with oil and pray for them, they will be instantly and completely healed. However, this has not always been my experience in real life, so I have prayed and sought the Lord to help me understand these verses. The Broadman Commentary says this...

"Unfortunately, this passage has been misused in the context of both faith healing and church ceremony. James does not intend to say that this procedure would cure every fatal illness for the Christian- this would make this passage absurd by forcing it to teach that Christians could escape death."

Songer, H. S. (1972). James. In C. J. Allen (Ed.), *Hebrews–Revelation* (p. 137). Broadman Press.

Some of my Christian friends say it's always God's will to heal immediately and completely, if you just have enough faith, while others say it just means God will give you the strength to get through it and no more. What's the truth? It depends! First of all, let me say a word about the oil. I believe the oil is a symbol of the healing power of God. It is a symbol of the Holy Spirit of God. It is a symbol only. It has no magical powers. It reminds us of the anointing of the Holy Spirit of God in our lives. James said that a prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well. I want to share with you what I've come to believe about wellness in this old world. I believe God has a plan and a work for each of us to do. I believe when a person gets sick, and they pray, and others pray, God hears those prayers. God answers those prayers in different ways depending on His divine will for the person involved. Ultimately, it was never God's will for us to get sick, suffer and die. However, because of the fallen nature of this world, we will all face death at some point. However, because of God's grace and Jesus' work on the Cross, we know death and the grave have been defeated, and we'll live in heaven someday. But what about the here and now?

I've been with people in situations where Doctors had no hope, but God had a different plan and worked a miracle. That person still had a work to do, a purpose to accomplish. At other times, I've witnessed persons of amazing faith, who trusted God as much as anyone I've ever known and yet they were not healed in this world. However, while they were not physically healed,

these individuals were well in every other sense of the word. They had a peace and a strength that inspired everyone who knew them. They trusted their life and the length of their life into the hands of their good Shepherd.

The Psalmist put it this way...

Psalm 73:23 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.

Psalm 73:24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.

Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

Psalm 73:26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

We pray for one another. We pray for healing. Physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. We pray for that in this world, this life. But we know when our work in this world is done we will receive our most complete healing as we are received into God's Glory. By the way, having faith like this may add years to your life, because you just aren't worried about it anymore. You just put it in His hands. Once again the Psalmist has words of wisdom...

Psalm 138:7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me.

Psalm 138:8 The LORD will vindicate me; your love, LORD, endures forever— do not abandon the works of your hands.

And Psalm 23 speaks powerfully of God's provision for us on this earth and His complete and perfect healing for us when He calls us home to heaven someday...

Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

Psalm 23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

Psalm 23:3 he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Psalm 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Psalm 23:6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Spiritual Healing

The New International Version, which I preach from says this in verse 15...

James 5:15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well;

Other versions translate this verse in this way...

And the prayer of faith will **save** the one who is sick.

Save them from what? It may mean to save them from the actual sickness so that they are healed! It could mean they are saved from hopelessness! Saved from despair! Saved from the loss of hope so they can know God has a plan for them even in sickness and will use every circumstance in their life for ultimate good! Paul said in Romans 8:28...

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

When James says, "and the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick," it could mean that in some circumstances if a person's main issue is not physical sickness but spiritual sickness, that they are saved spiritually from their sin!! This is why James says this...

James 5:15 ...If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed

Now let me explain something here that is sometimes misunderstood or even twisted by some folks. While it is certainly true that sin can sometimes cause physical sickness, that does not mean that every time you get sick it's because you sinned or you are being punished for something you did wrong. It could be that you got sick because you were exposed to someone with the flu. It can be that simple! However, there are times when we are living in sin and that can affect our health. Like living in anger, bitterness, hatred, or envy! Those kinds of things can make a person physically sick! I believe it's always better for our health to live in God's will and purpose and to be more like Jesus in our attitudes! Amen? Amen! It's not that God would never use sickness to get our attention, but remember, God is not the author of confusion! If God is using something in your life for discipline purposes, it will be clear. Let me give you an example: If you are driving under the influence and you wreck your car and are injured, you can't really blame that on God, but God can certainly use that to get your attention. And if God allows the circumstances and troubles surrounding that incident to cause you some serious discomfort, that could be God's discipline. And God's discipline in that situation would be to try and get you to walk away from the sin that is hurting you! He wants you to be well spiritually!

But when it comes to sickness in general, we are all subject to illness regardless of our actions! It's a part of living in what we call a fallen world. As I said earlier, by fallen we mean that the world was impacted by sin in general when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden and disobeyed God and decided not to trust God's heart for them. This original sin caused things in this world to no longer be as God had intended them to be for you and me. Sin separated humankind from God. God was heart broken, but He didn't give up on us! He began the great story of redemption that we see played out in the Bible and which is ongoing in our world today as people are confronted with the truth of the love of God through Jesus! The good news is Jesus' offer to forgive sin and restore us to a right relationship with God and give us the possibility of daily fellowship with God. This is available to all who will receive His very gracious

offer of forgiveness, grace, mercy and love! However, we will not be completely free from the impact of living in a fallen world until we leave this world and begin our eternal life in glory! Jesus was totally transparent about this when He said...

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

In the meantime, we are to...

Pray for one another!

And the final reason to do so is that...

REASON #3 - Prayer is powerful and effective!

James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

The prayer of a righteous man or woman is powerful and effective. Most churches are looking for better methods to do ministry. God is looking for better men and women to do ministry! Not perfect people, or people who think they are better than others, but men and women who are better off because they have trusted Jesus to forgive them of their sins and to give them power over sin to live more like Jesus. Men and women who trust Jesus when they are healthy or when they are sick to give them everything they need to accomplish God's will for their lives! Men and women who are willing to tap into His resources through prayer and not just prayer for ourselves, but prayer for one another! You know, our methods may not be nearly as important as we think. It may be that God can use the ministry methods of any church if their efforts are bathed in prayer. Prayer is powerful and effective.

And what makes praying for one another so powerful and effective? Jesus said...

Matthew 18:18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Matthew 18:19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

It's the presence of God that makes the difference. When God shows up, good things happen. Lives are changed. Real, effective ministry happens, regardless of the methods used. And did you notice our main verse said the prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective. You can be slick, modern, cool, and even wear high top converses, but if your heart is not prayed up and in tune with the holy purposes of God you will not be effective. You can be real smart and know a lot of good theology and doctrine, but one of the most prolific writers on the subject of prayer, E.M Bounds said this...

"The pride of learning is against the dependent humility of prayer."

Our refusal to pray indicates that we may think we've got it all figured out and don't really think we need God, His wisdom, or His power in our lives. And our refusal to pray for one another indicates we may not be that concerned about what happens to others. I pray Northshore Church will never fail to follow the one another command to pray for one another!!

I want to close with these words from Paul the Apostle written to the Church at Ephesus...

Ephesians 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father,

Ephesians 3:15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

Ephesians 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Ephesians 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

Ephesians 3:18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

Ephesians 3:19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Ephesians 3:21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Let's pray!

Study Guide Helps

Can you share how someone praying for you has made a difference in your life?

Do you have someone in your life that you can talk to, pray with, and share your struggles with? Why is this so important?

1 Peter 5:12 With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

Col 4:7 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.

Col 4:8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts.

Col 4:9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.

Being well is not just about physical wellness. What are some other things that being well could mean?

James 5:15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

The prayers of righteous men and women are powerful and effective. Since the Bible says we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God, is it even possible for us to be righteous men and women?

1 Cor 1:27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

1 Cor 1:28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are,

1 Cor 1:29 so that no one may boast before him.

1 Cor 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

1 Cor 1:31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."