

James the Just: Effective Prayer

Prayer is essential to the Christian life. Prayer is simply conversing with God, this means it's two-way. We speak to Him, He speaks to us.

A popular saying in the American Christian church is that we don't have religion, we have a relationship.....it's good if it's actually true.....how is your prayer life? Because MOST people say that they pray:

- Barna research says 84% of adults in the U.S. claim they had prayed in the past week.
- 64% say they pray more than once a day.
- 41% say that their prayers are answered often.
- 1.5% say that their prayers are never answered.

People who don't go to church pray. People who don't know Jesus pray. But is it enough to just pray? Does prayer even accomplish anything? If it doesn't, what is the point?

I don't know about you, but for me, I want my prayers to be effective. I want to know that it is impacting my life, my relationship with God, and the lives of others.

In James chapter 5, we see instruction on prayer. I believe you can converse with God anytime you want. Prayer can be scheduled or spontaneous, loud or quiet, wordy or simple, long or short.

While prayer is just conversation with God, there are different parts to prayer:

- **adoration**, which is appreciating God just for who He is.

When you adore God, you behold the wonder and beauty of God. You realize His greatness. You worship Him. It's effective because you are filling your heart with the glory of God as it should be.

- **confession**, acknowledging to God our specific sin asking for forgiveness

When you confess to your sin to God, you are agreeing with God about what He sees. You are seeing your life through His eyes acknowledging that you need Jesus. This is effective because it leads to repentance. Without confession, repentance is you just trying to change on your own!

- **thanksgiving**, appreciating God for what He does

When you thank God, you are recognizing His saving grace, provision, blessing, protection and His love for you. This is effective because it reminds us that the good we do have in life is because God is good!

- **supplication**, petitioning God on our own behalf or interceding on behalf of others according to God's will

When you petition God or intercede for others to God, you are asking God to intervene, change things, invoke His will over yours/theirs. This is effective because you are asking God to take over in your life or someone else's. You are giving it over to Him.

Unless you aren't.....

When 84% of people say they prayed this week, this is the type of prayer that most of them are referring to.....they petitioned God for something they need or want, or they asked for something on behalf of someone else.

Unfortunately, this is the most common type of prayer but it also can be seen as the least effective. But why?

James 5:13-18 (HCSB)

13 Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing praises. 14 Is anyone among you sick? He should call for the elders of the church, and they should pray over him after anointing him with olive oil in the name of the Lord. 15 The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will restore him to health; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours; yet he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its fruit.

Hear what James is saying to you today. No matter what you are facing, good or bad, you need to be communicating with God.

Martin Luther said, "As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray."

This means that if you are a follower of Jesus, you are to pray, you are to talk to Him. It should be second nature to go to Him at all times about all things. Most people have a go to person that they can't wait to tell everything to, how much more should we be open with our Lord and Savior.

When Jesus died on that cross for your sin, He also tore the veil, giving you access to the throne of heaven, where you can communicate with God Almighty, day and night! Take advantage of it!

Is anyone among you suffering? - Do you have troubles? Hardships? Issues? This isn't speaking of physical problems, this is when you are going through tough times....

When you are being treated poorly or unfairly by life or by people, what is your response?

HE - SHOULD - PRAY - church, today I want you to just commit to pray when you are suffering....First pray. There is not hidden meaning, he should pray....prayer is the antidote for a beat up, downcast, weary heart

Pastor and writer William Graham Scroggie once said, "Pray when you feel like it, pray when you don't feel like it, pray until you do feel like it."

If you want a change, repaying evil, complaining, and feeling sorry for yourself will NOT bring change, prayer will....it may not be instant, it may be a process, but during that process, the Lord will strengthen you!

Psalm 55:22 (HCSB)

22 Cast your burden on the Lord,
and He will sustain you;
He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

Is anyone cheerful? - Do you have joy? Are you in good spirits?

If you are....have you stopped to think why? I guarantee there is something to be thankful for, there is something to praise God for. There always is, but when you are cheerful, it's easier to recognize.

HE - SHOULD - SING - PRAISES.

When you are on the mountain top, don't forget how you got there. Don't forget who gives you a reason to sing! The natural response to a **joyful** heart is to sing praises to God.

When you sing praises, you view things from a different perspective. Maybe in your time of praise, you will see the answer to your suffering.

If you are suffering - pray

If you are joyful - sing praises

These are things you can do on your own, just you and Jesus.

v14 ***Is anyone among you sick?*** - This does include physical sickness.....but it is so much more.....You may not have a physical sickness or ailment right now.....but are you weak, without strength, powerless, lacking? Has the suffering from the last verse moved to sickness?

James 5:14b (HCSB)

He should call for the elders of the church, and they should pray over him after anointing him with olive oil in the name of the Lord.

This should be one of the primary functions of “church”. Healing the sick by the power of the Holy Spirit through prayer! We were actually commanded to do this....

Matthew 10:8 (HCSB)

8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases, drive out demons. You have received free of charge; give free of charge.

Whether you are sick in body, mind, or spirit, there is healing available for you. It's by the power of our miracle working God. But there are steps of obedience. First, YOU pray. Second, praise Him. Third, call the elders to pray over you anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord!

Man this is sooo good! The anointing with oil is symbolic, the oil represents the Holy Spirit, the anointing (rubbing it on your head) represents your consecration to God. We are saying “this one is set apart, declared as the Lord’s”

This is why we do it in the name of the Lord - He is the one to whom you belong, He is the one with the power! Through this act of obedience, we declare you as His, and as you submit to Him, the sickness must also! Praise Jesus!

If you are sick.....ask the elders to pray for you!

James 5:15 (HCSB)

15 The prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will restore him to health; if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

OK, let's be honest here.....when we don't pray about something, it's because we don't have faith. That's true, I don't care who you are. Because if you REALLY believed God could do something about your situation, you would ask him.

The prayer of faith will save the sick. When you come to the elders and ask them to pray, they will pray in faith, they believe God is who He says He is, and Jesus is Lord over all.

You might not have the faith to pray for yourself, that is OK! Come to someone who does. The prayer of faith is believing the truth, trusting in God, having confidence in Him. It is through THAT kind of prayer that the Spirit of God moves! This is why we offer prayer times....

I love what James teaches here, the prayer of faith will save the sick. To save means deliver, save from evils which obstruct deliverance. The word for sick here means weary.

This means that if you are weary, worn down, even to the point that you don't have the faith, trust, or confidence, to pray, through the prayers of others, God can deliver you from that weak state. Sometimes you are sick in spirit because you are sick in body or mind. It doesn't change who Jesus is and what He can do.

You have to get connected to the vine.....maybe through a person of faith!

When you do this, by the power of the Holy Spirit, He can restore your health! This means to arouse from sleep of death to life, stir up. Don't give up because you are weak. There is no reason to just accept what's going on in your life.....ever!

Even if your faith is weak, anything done not from faith is sin, but our God is a loving God. He is always willing to forgive, heal, and restore. It doesn't matter if you have missed the mark. What matters is that you aim again!

James 5:16 (HCSB)

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.

There is POWER in confession. In my personal life, I have found freedom in areas once confessed not just to God, but people. We know that we can't hide sin from God.....oh we think about it, maybe even try, but we know that He knows. But you can totally hide it from people, once you reveal it to people (righteous people that care and will help you) it can bring healing, it can make you feel whole.

There is a release that happens when you confess your sin, your issues.....NOT OTHERS'.....YOURS!

People, we must find people that we can confide in, again not to tell them what others do to us, but confess about us, how we feel, what we think, say, do. But it's got to be the right people.

The urgent request of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.

A person that is in right standing with God, if they have faith, pray with fervency, meaning serious, intentional, with purpose and effort. This is the "I mean business" prayer. James says this prayer is very powerful.....it is a force to be reckoned with.....

This is the kind of prayer that is effective!

If you are suffering.....YOU pray!

If you are cheerful.....YOU sing!

If you are sick....YOU come, ask people who are right with God, to pray over you!

This is an effective order of prayer. God does move in response to prayer. God does empower His people to shake and move heaven and earth.

God does this through ordinary people like you and me....

James 5:17-18 (HCSB)

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours; yet he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the land. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land produced its fruit.

It's God's plan for people to communicate with Him and for Him to respond. There is no thing too small or too big for Him. ALL things are possible through Christ!

When you can't do it, when you are weak and need help, God has a plan for that too.....His people. When you aren't strong enough to stand, someone else is! When you don't feel connected to God, someone else is!

Isaiah 59:2 (HCSB)

2 But your iniquities have built barriers between you and your God, and your sins have made Him hide His face from you so that He does not listen.

Confess, pray for one another. Every single person is born terminal. Everyone has issues. Everyone has access to the God who can change everything.

Don't focus on whether God will heal or not. That's not faith. Know that He CAN. Know that it doesn't always look the way you want.....

Ephesians 6:18 (HCSB)

18 Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.

There is prayer, and then there is effective prayer. Are your prayers just routine? Are you just doing them because you are supposed to? Or are your prayers shaking heaven and earth?