“How To Pray About Your Problems”, Developing A Faith That Works, Part 15 of 15 – April 28, 2013 at SBC

 James 5:13-20

James 5:16 – *"The prayer of a righteous man, is powerful, and effective."* The word "prayer", . . . is mentioned seven times, in this passage. That's, what it's about. Prayer.

James had a reputation, for being a man, of prayer. His nickname, . . . was “Camel Knees”, . . . because, he had such big knots, on his knees, from spending, hours and hours, in prayer. There is tremendous power, . . . in prayer. Prayer is the greatest privilege, of the Christian, . . . being able to talk to God, . . . and, it's the greatest power, . . . in the Christian life.

**What prayer can do, . . . is what God can do**. Anything, that God can do, . . . can be done, . . through prayer. Jesus said, *"The things that I do, you'll do also, even greater works."* How do you do greater works, . . . than, Jesus? Jesus said, . . . “It's by, prayer.”

It's our, . . greatest responsibility. It's probably, our greatest failure, in the Christian life. We talk a lot, . . about prayer, . . . we study, about prayer. But, a lot of us, are not too satisfied, . . . with our prayer life. Today, we're going to look at, . . . When should I pray, What kind of person, can pray, and, How can I pray, more effectively?

**\*\* WHEN SHOULD I PRAY? J**ames mentions there are three specific times, . . when I really, need to pray:

**1. When I am hurting, . . . emotionally**. James 5:13 – *"Is any one of you, in trouble? He should, pray."* The word in Greek, literally means, "to suffer misfortune, to be in distress", to be under stress, under tension. In Timothy, . . . it's translated, "hardships."

He's talking about, internal distress, . . . caused by, external circumstances. It may be, . . . a financial crisis, . . . a relational crisis, . . . something on the outside, . . . your heart is breaking, . . . tension is at an all time high, . . . when life gets hard. David said, in Psalm 18:4 – *"In my distress, . . . I call unto, the Lord."*

James 5:12 – *"Above all, my brothers, do not swear."* When you're under tension, that's when you're tempted, to swear. When you have distress, in your life, you have two alternatives – swear, or prayer. v. 13, or v. 12. You can pray, about your problems -- your financial condition, if that's creating stress, in your life.

James 5:13b – *"Is anyone, happy? Let him sing songs, of praise."* Have you noticed, that life, . . . is a series of alternations, between high and low, feast to famine, problem to joy? The Bible says, *"Weep, with those who weep, and rejoice, with those who rejoice."*

Life is sometimes, like a roller coaster. A lot of people are up, and a lot of people are down. There's situations in life, when you're down, . . . and, when you're down, you pray. When you're happy, live it, to the hilt. Some people, are afraid, that if they really enjoy, what God is doing, . . . then, He's going to zap them, with a bummer. If I think it's great, . . . then, the bottom, is bound to fall out. It's, too good!

They're afraid to pray, . . they're afraid, to rejoice! Joy, should be, contagious. Christians, and the joy, we have, ought to be, contagious. It ought to be fun, . . to go to church. The Bible says, *"I was glad, when they said unto me, let us go, into the house of the Lord."* Not sad, or mad, or bummed out. So, when you're happy, you sing. On Sunday morning, when we sing a song, it's a celebration, a day of joy. James says, it's valid, to be happy.

"Praise" is used 550 times, in the Bible. It is to be, the lifestyle, of the Christian -- to be happy. If you want, the secret of a rich, personal, devotional life, . . . nothing, can do more, for our own personal life, . . . than, singing, to the Lord. We can sing, . . . in our quiet time.

**2. When I'm hurting, . . . physically, I ought to pray**. James 5:14-15 – *"Is any one, of you, sick? He should call the elders of the church, to pray over him, and anoint him with oil, in the name of the Lord. 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 word "sick", in Greek, . . . literally means, "without strength". You are totally wasted, fatigued, bedridden, unable to work. Not just, acid indigestion, or postnasal drip. This guy, has a serious illness here, that is keeping him, . . . from actually working. It's the word, most frequently used, . . . for illness.

It's the same word, . . . describing Lazarus. When Lazarus got sick, . . he died. And, the same word, to describe Dorcas, and she died. And, the same word, that describes the man, . . . at the pool of Bethesda, who sat there for years and years, and didn't have enough energy, to get up, and get into the pool. He's talking about, a serious illness, here. When you're beyond, the help of a doctor, . . . you pray. The elders, of the church, are to come, and pray over him, . . . and, anoint him, . . . with oil.

\*\* The Scripture teaches, that there are, . . . **three different kinds, of sickness**. There's a lot of teaching, going on, today, . . . about healing.

The Bible says, that first, there is the sickness, for death. It's covered, in 1 John 5:16. That kind of sickness, God allows, to take us on home, to be with Him. There are some sicknesses, that you never, recover from. There will be an illness, someday, that you will never, recover from, . . . because, God doesn't want you, to live indefinitely. If every sickness, could be healed by faith, . . . then anybody, who had a lot of faith, . . . would never die. There is a sickness, for the purpose, . . . of taking you, on home.

Then, second, there's a sickness, . . . for discipline. The purpose, for a sickness, for discipline, which is covered, in 1 Corinthians 11:28- 32, . . . where they were abusing, the Lord's Supper. Paul said, because, they were abusing, the Lord's Supper, was the reason, . . . some of them, were sick. The Lord is disciplining some, because, they’re out of, the will of God. When we sin, it can, . . . bring sickness, into our lives.

The third kind of sickness, is sickness, . . for the glory of God. The sickness, for the glory of God, is a sickness, that God, has allowed in your life, simply, because, He wants to heal you of it, and let it be a testimony, . . . to the world. In John 11:4, a man came to Jesus, who was ill, and blind. The disciples said, "Lord, who's sinned, . . . him or his parents?" Jesus said, "Nobody's sinned, this is a sickness, . . . for the glory of God." Then, he healed the guy, . . . and, it brought, glory to God.

There are three kinds, of sickness: sickness for death, . . . sickness for discipline, . . . sickness for the glory of God. The last, is the kind, . . . God wants, . . . to heal.

**There are, five different attitudes, . . toward healing**. There are a lot, of different opinions, . . about healing.

1. The sensationalist. These are the guys, . . . you see, on TV. They come into town, and hold giant meetings, in large auditoriums, . . advertise miracles. There's bright lights, TV cameras rolling. Often, the healer, is flamboyant. He shouts at the people, slaps them on the head. It is often, a highly charged, emotional atmosphere. The guy might say, "Do you feel, warm?" and, he's standing before 20,000 people, rolling TV cameras, . . . and spotlights! Of course, he would, . . . feel warm!

There is, psychological motivation, . . in all of this. Be careful, of this. Be, discerning. I don't see Jesus, doing this. He did, . . . the exact opposite, in His healing. In all of Jesus' healing, . . He took them aside, from the crowd, where they are out of the glare, of the public, . . . talked with them, on a one on one basis, . . . healed them there, . . . and, then, it was reported, . . . to the crowd.

Jesus, never manipulated people, and never used them, . . . for show. He always, cared about their needs, more than, He did, . . . about, making an impression, . . . on the crowds. He healed people, . . . quietly.

By the way, just because, something is a miracle, doesn't mean, it's from God. Just because, something is done, in the name of the Lord, doesn't mean, it's of God. Jesus said, in Matthew 7, "Many will come, in that day, and say, `Lord, Lord, didn't we do many miracles, in your name?' Jesus will say, `I didn't even, know you.'"

2. The confessionalists. The confessionalists say, that it is always, . . God's will, . . for everybody, to be healed. This is the, Name It, and Claim It, group. Sickness, is a result of sin, . . and, all you need to do, is claim your healing, . . . and, God will heal. If you're, not healed, . . . you lack faith.

The result of that is, if there's no healing, . . there's an awful lot, of guilt. "Maybe, I just didn't believe, enough." False doctrine, always creates, false guilt. Always. That's one of the problems, . . with legalism. When you make up, all of these rules, and regulations, . . . it takes the joy, of knowing Jesus, out of your life.

The Bible says, *"Where the Spirit, of the Lord is, there is liberty."* These confessionalists say, it's just the way you talk, you'll get it. I claim, I have a Cadillac, and I get a Cadillac. The problem with this is, . . . it makes God, . . . a genie. All of a sudden, God is serving me, my needs, my whims, rather than, . . . me, serving Him.

I Peter 5:19 – *"Those who suffer, according, to the will of God*.” Sometimes, suffering, . . . is the will of God.

3. Dispensationalists. The dispensationalists, are those who say, the gifts of healing, . . . were only, for New Testament times, . . . and, they're no longer around, anymore. Don't bother, looking for, those gifts. It was great, back in those days, . . . but, they're not here, . . . today. I have a problem, with that view, . . . because, . . . Hebrews 13:8 says, *"Jesus Christ, is the same yesterday, today, and forever."*

4. Rationalists. These are the people, who say it's just, . . . all in your mind. If you're ill, it's because, . . . you think, you're ill. Just, deny it, and you'll be OK. This is the Christian Science cult, among others. Just deny, it's happening, . . . and, it will go away.

5. I think James, would be, . . . a Realist. This recognizes, two facts: One, the fact that God still, . . . does heal. He does heal, . . . but, not everybody, . . . gets healed. That is also, a fact of life. God does heal people, today, . . . but, two, He doesn't heal, . . . everybody. Life, is an example, of that.

\*\*\*\* So, what does James say, to do, . . when you are sick? You should call the elders, . . of the church. James says, you call the spiritual leaders, of your church, to pray for you. These guys, aren't professional healers, who go around, . . . holding healing meetings. An example of that, in Scripture, is Jesus. If anybody, had the right, to hold mass meetings, . . . He could have. In the New Testament, . . healing, was a private matter.

It’s strange, that people who claim, to have the gift of healing, always insist, that the sick people, come to them, rather, than, . . . them, going to the sick. And, it says *"He should call, the elders."* Who's doing, the calling? The sick person. James is talking about, a house call. If you're so sick, you can't get out of bed, you call the spiritual leaders, to come to your house, . . . and, you ask them, to pray for you.

This implies, support, . . . for belonging, . . . to a local church. Every Christian, needs to identify himself, with a particular, body of believers. Why? One good reason is, that when you get sick, . . . you know who, to call on.

In the New Testament, there was no such thing, as a free-floating Christian, who would just float around, listen to Christian radio, and TV, . . . bounce around, from this church, . . . to that church. There was no such thing, as that, . . . in the New Testament.

Every person, was a member, of a specific, . . local church. Because, it says, you are the body, and each of you, are members of it. The value of it, is when you're in need, . . there is somebody there, . . to care for you.

The sick person, . . . takes the initiative. If you don't call, the elders, of the church, . . . how will they know, about it? The word "sick", is talking about, . . . a life-threatening illness. *"Call for the elders, of the church, to pray over him, . . ."* The guy is, probably in bed, . . . so, they are praying, . . . over him. He is, seriously ill. *". . . and, anoint him, with oil."*

Oil is a symbol, . . . of the Holy Spirit. All through Scripture, oil is used, . . . as a symbol, . . . of the Holy Spirit. Some interpreters believe, that this oil means, the best modern medicines, of the time, were to be used. In New Testament times, . . . they did use oil, to rub on to people, . . . to massage, use as a salve.

There was a medicinal value, in that. Remember, the Good Samaritan, . . . when he found the man, at the side of the road. He applied oil, to his wounds, and then, bandaged him up. Oil was used, for medicinal purposes. But, I think the emphasis here, is the anointing. It was of symbolic value, of the Holy Spirit -- an aide, to faith.

Remember, when Jesus, went to, the blind man. He spit into the dirt, and made mud cakes, and put them, on the man's eyes. Nobody believes, that the mud, . . . had curative power. But, it was simply, an aide to faith, for the guy, who was going to believe. It was his faith, . . that, healed him. It wasn't the mudpacks, on his eyes.

The emphasis, is on the power of prayer, not the power of the oil. It was just, a symbol, to be used, *". . . in the name of the Lord . . ."* God is the healer, . . . **not any person**. The name, represents the character, of the Lord. All healing, . . . is based, . . . on God's character.

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."*

There may be times, when a church is obedient, to the request of the sick, . . . and, they go and pray, and anoint with oil, . . . and, some may be healed, . . . and, others may not, . . . be healed. We humbly accept, . . . the will of the Lord, . . . in that matter. But, it is scriptural.

\*\*\* The Bible says, when I'm hurting emotionally, I ought to pray, when I'm hurting physically, when I've got a major illness, I call for the spiritual leaders of the church, to pray, . . . in private. Why private? In private, . . . people can feel loved, . . . not used. They don't feel, . . . put, on display.

**3. When I'm hurting spiritually**. James 5:16 – *"Therefore, confess your sins, to each other, . . . and, pray for each other, so that you may be healed."* In Jesus' day, and in many places, today, it is taught, . . that, all sickness, . . . is a result of sin. If you are ill, then supposedly, . . . you had some hidden sin, in your life. If you confessed, and still, were sick, . . . then, you still had, . . . some other, hidden sin.

Jesus, blew that idea, out of the water, in John 9, . . . where he said to the man, who had been born blind, . . that, nobody sinned. This is, a very, unfair concept. You think of babies, being born, with birth defects -- obviously, . . . that baby, hasn't sinned. We live in, . . . a fallen world.

On the other hand, Jesus did teach, that a lot of the sickness, we have in our lives, we do bring, upon ourselves. If I don't follow God's principles, my body is going to know it. If I don't take care of my body, eat right, sleep right, exercise right, . . . then, all kinds of ailments, will come upon me.

If I don't listen, to God's Word, . . where it says, *"Don't be anxious, about anything, but pray, about everything"* and, I worry, fret, get anxious, and I get an ulcer, . . then, I'm to blame for it.

If I allow resentment, to build up, in my life, . . doctors say, it's not so much, what you eat, . . but, what's eating you, that makes the difference. Resentment, can take its toll, in your life, and it makes a big difference.

If I don't trust God, and I allow these things, to come into my life, there will be sin. *"Therefore, confess your sins, to each other, and pray, for each other, so that you may be healed."*

Why isn't, everybody healed? I don't know. God has the power, but, it isn't His purpose, in different situations. It is always, in God's power, to heal, . . . but, it is not always, . . . in God's purpose, . . . to heal. A clear example, of this, is Paul, in 1 Corinthians. It said, Paul prayed three times, for God to heal a problem, in his life, . . . but, three times, God said, . . . "No, I've got a better plan, for you."

What's the condition, for healing? **Confess**. We'd rather conceal, and camouflage our sins, than, confess them. It is a liberating experience, to confess your sins, and get them out, and share them, . . . not just, with the Lord, . . . but, with each other.

People come in, for counseling, and say, "I've never, told this, to anyone else, in the world." Once they say that, we know that something great, is going to happen. We know, what a relief it is, . . to not carry a burden anymore, . . . to get it out and share it, with somebody else, . . . so, you can be loved, and accepted, for who you are, . . . without having to pretend, . . . you're perfect, . . . and, wear a mask.

*". . . confess, to each other"* -- Does that really mean, I get up and confess, . . . to the whole church? There is a principle, . . . about confession. Only confess as widely, . . . as it involves, other people.

If I've got, a private sin, . . . just, between me, and the Lord, . . . then, I ought to just confess it, . . . to the Lord. If it's a personal sin, between me and you, . . . then, I need to come to you. If it's a public sin, . . . then, I need to apologize, . . . to the whole church.

He says, confess your sins, . . not, broadcast them. If it involves somebody else, you ought to go to, that person. And, yet, there ought to be, at least one person -- husband, wife, pastor, friend – you have, . . . that, you can share everything with, . . . and, know you'll be loved, and accepted, unconditionally.

Job says, *"A man needs his friend most, when he's doubting God."* He needs somebody, to stand, and walk him, . . . through, that time of doubt, . . . to, that time of faith.

In the New Testament, the Christians, . . . confessed, to each other. But, today, too many of us, . . . aren’t going to confess, . . . to anybody. As a result, . . . we've got, a lot of problems, and hang-ups.

\*\*\*\*\* When, should I pray? James says, you can pray, whenever you've got a need -- a physical need, . . . an emotional need, . . . a material need. No matter what it is, . . . you ought, to pray.

**WHO CAN PRAY?** What kind of person can pray? Some people think, you have to be a spiritual giant, . . . to pray, and get those, kinds of answers. "I could never pray, and see somebody healed", . . . or, "I could never pray, and see a financial miracle." Many Christians, . . . feel inferior.

James uses Elijah, . . . as an illustration. James 5:17-18 – *"Elijah was a man, just like us. He prayed earnestly, that it wouldn't rain, and it didn't rain on the land, for three and a half years. He prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops."*

I Kings 19: This is after, the big god contest, on Mt. Carmel. He runs to the other side of the desert, . . and goes through, a fit of depression, . . . and prays, "God, kill me. I'm so depressed."

He wasn't afraid, of 400 prophets of Baal, . . . but, he runs from a woman, named Jezebel. In that passage -- the first 10 verses -- Elijah demonstrated fear, resentment, guilt, anger, loneliness and worry. Now you know why, it says, “Elijah, was a man, . . . just, like us.” We have anger, fear, resentment, worry, loneliness.

The lesson, of Elijah's life is, . . . you don't have to be perfect, to pray. You don't have to be perfect, . . . to see answers, to your prayers. It's for, ordinary people. I Kings 18, Elijah got alone with God, and humbled himself, praying for rain. It says he prayed, . . . seven times. He was, persistent. He would not, give up. One day, a little cloud formed in the sky, . . . and, the rains came, and flooded the place.

**\*\* God uses ordinary people, . . . to do extraordinary things, . . . through prayer.**

**HOW CAN I PRAY EFFECTIVELY?**

 We want to review, **four conditions**, for praying effectively, that James mentions, in his book:

**1. I must ask.** That sounds simple, . . . but, in a lot of our prayers, we never ask for anything. We say, "Thank you for, . . .", and, "Bless, . . ." and, that's it. We never pray, . . . specifically. The more specific, your prayers are, . . . the greater, you're going to be blessed, . . . in the answer.

We trust Him, for great things. James 4;2 – *"You do not have, because, you do not ask."* Be specific. Throw away, all your cliches. I love to hear new Christians pray, . . . because, they don't know all the language, . . . and, they're, so honest. It's refreshing. You ought to write down, the prayers, . . . your kids pray. They say, the most honest, and genuine things, . . . that are, really meaningful.

**2. Have the right motive.** James 4:3 **–** *"When you ask, you do not receive, because, you ask with the wrong motives, that you may spend, what you get, on your pleasures."* If you're going to ask in prayer, . . . make sure, your motives, are right. Not for selfishness, but, for a genuine reason -- the glory of God.

**3. Clean life.** James 5:16 **–** *"The prayer, of a* ***righteous*** *man, is powerful, and effective."*  If you're a Christian, . . . you are, righteous. We're not, talking about, . . . perfection. We're talking, . . . about, righteousness. Righteousness, is your standing, . . . before God, . . . when you, became a believer. It has nothing, to do, with your perfection. If God, only answered, the prayers, of perfect people, . . . how many prayers, . . . would get answered? None.

But, God does, want us, to have a clean life. Psalm 66:18, David said, *"If I hide iniquity, in my heart, then the Lord, will not hear."* If I am willfully, and knowingly, doing something, I know is displeasing to God, and say, "God, I'm going to continue doing this, . . . but, by the way, help me out." It's like saying "Dad, will you loan me, the keys to the car, . . . but, I'm never going to do, a single thing you ask."

We need to have, a clean life, . . . before Him. Proverbs 28:9 – *"He that turneth his back, from the hearing of the law, even his prayers, are an abomination."* Isaiah 59:2 – *"Your sins, have separated you, from your God. Your God, has hid His face, so He cannot hear."*

**4. Ask in faith.** Expect, . . . an answer. James 1:6 – *"But, when he asks, he must believe, and not doubt, . . ."* When you, come to God, . . . believe, that He wants, to answer your prayer. Trust Him. Don't doubt.

How important, is your prayer life, to you? We all struggle with this, more than any other area, in our life – this area, of being consistent, in prayer. We talk to the Lord, all the time, . . . but, we don't really, . . have the prayer life, . . . we want to have. We’re never, satisfied with it. We want to know Him, in a deeper way.

“How To Pray About Your Problems”, Developing A Faith That Works - Part 15 of 15

James 5:13-20

*"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."* (vs. 16b)

**I. WHEN SHOULD I PRAY?**

1. WHEN I AM \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

*"Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray."* (vs. 13a)

*"Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise."* (vs. 13b)

2. WHEN I AM \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

*"Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him, and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 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."* (vs. 14-15)

3 Kinds of Sickness

 1.

 2.

 3.

5 Attitudes Toward Healing

 1.

 2.

 3.

 4.

 5.

3. WHEN I AM \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

*"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."* (vs. 16a)

**II. WHAT KIND OF PERSON CAN PRAY? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

*"Elijah was a man just like us ..."* (vs.17a)

 See 1 Kings 19:1-10; 18:42-45

**III. HOW CAN I PRAY EFFECTIVELY?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

James 4:2 – “Y*ou do not have, because you do not ask God.”*

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

James 4:3 – “*When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”*

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

James 5:16b – “*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”*

 Psalm 66:18; Proverbs 28:9; Isaiah 59:2

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

James 1:6 – “*But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt.”*