



November 3-4, 2020

Series: James

Message: James 5: *Prayer*

Teacher: Nathan LaBorie

The Main Thing: *God answers every prayer. Often, we're the ones not listening.*

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS:

Icebreaker: Have you ever tried to get a reply from a celebrity on Tik Tok/Insta/Twitter?

Did you come to Journey to allow God to change you?

What Journey message has spoken to you the most this Fall and what changes have you made in your life as a result?

Have you ever asked "Why didn't God answer my prayer?"

What was the situation?

Did you realize later why God didn't answer it right then?

Is God required to explain himself to us?

How can we learn to be thankful for God's "no" in our lives?

What are the three ways God answers prayers? (Yes, No, Wait)

Which of these answers have you had to a major prayer request?

What does it mean to you to hear God's answers to prayer?

What are some practical ways we can hear from God (even when we don't audibly hear his voice)? *Examples: His Word; wise leaders (SGLs, pastors, etc.); wise friends; wise parents; the Holy Spirit.*

What is the point of praying? (God wants to hear from US.)

Why should we wait for God to tell US what to do instead of telling HIM what to do?

Why is this an important distinction? How does prayer change US?

What things do you need to surrender to God's will?

God notices you, even if no one else does.

How does it feel to know that you have a God who is there to listen to you at any time, 24/7?

Scriptures Referenced: James 5:13-18; Psalm 116:1-2; Luke 11:42; Hebrews 12:2

Bible Background Notes:

James 5:13 Nonresistance (to the oppressors) didn't mean for the Jews at that time to pretend things didn't matter or that they should wait unconsolated. It was time for them to pray.

All Christians experience trouble and are tempted to call the goodness of God into question. Instead of anger or stoic resignation, James recommends prayer. This response "allows us to be active and positive and keeps us in communication with God." When we suffer, we should pray.

The word "trouble" here implies having to endure misfortune, through which, we can pray for strength to endure it. (vs our culture, which wants to eliminate any discomfort.)

Happiness here refers to prayer leading to good spirits even when changing conditions are difficult, due to deep trust in the trustworthiness of God. "God desires and deserves our prayers and praise in both difficult and pleasant times."

Redemptive suffering=finding the value in it.

5:14 Olive oil was used for cleansing, healing headaches, and to avoid certain diseases. Pouring oil on the head anointed priests or rulers, consecrating them to God. They combined medicinal use with God's power. Prayers for physical healing were said in the synagogues. In the Christian church, recognized leaders gather to pray with someone who needs physical healing. The healing comes from God's power. One is to pray in faith.

5:15-16 Jews often associated sickness with sin. Prayers for healing were often followed by prayers for forgiveness. A connection was made between God healing the sick and renouncing sin. James doesn't imply this direct relationship between all sickness and sin. He does teach that sickness that IS caused by sin can be alleviated through public confession and prayer for healing. The "righteous man" here is one who is committed to doing God's will and cultivating a relationship with God that knows God's heart. Sin hinders our ability to pray, as we become less in tune with God.

5:17-18 Jews all prayed for rain, but believed that only a rare few miracle workers could secure this answer to prayer (thought equivalent to raising the dead). James uses Elijah as an example to show that he was a regular person just like his readers, and God answered his prayer. Prayer was for him a function of faith and trust in God, even in a difficult situation. The righteous person is in touch with the heart of God.

Sources: *The IVP Bible Background Commentary OT/NT; The NIV Application Commentary: James (David P. Nystrom)*