

Greetings in Christ Jesus. This week concludes the series on James with Francis Chan. I have always enjoyed the book of James, but these past 12 weeks have shed new light on familiar Scriptures. That's the way it is with God's Word – no matter how many times that we read a passage, or study a section of Scripture, there are always new learnings, a new nugget to be mined, or new insight gained. May God's blessings continued to be poured out upon us as we seek Him in Scripture and follow His Word for our lives.

VIDEO - Session 12: James 5:13–20 (10 minutes)

*James 5:13-20 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. <sup>17</sup> Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup> Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. <sup>19</sup> My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, <sup>20</sup> remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

Don't we find solace in how timely and pertinent God's Word always is.

vs 13, "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray.

During these troubled times (and good too), Paul says, "Pray without ceasing"

The below passages show how important prayer was to Jesus. I always think, if Jesus prayed that often, how much more do we need to be on our knees.

#### Jesus' Prayer Life

Lk 3:21- at His baptism

Mk 1:35 – in a solitary place

Lk 5:16 – in the wilderness

Lk 6:12-16 – spent the whole night in prayer to God before choosing the 12

Matt 14:23 – before His invitation "Come unto Me

Jh 6:11 – feeding of the 5,000

Lk 11:1-4 – when He gave the Lord's Prayer

Lk 9:18 – at Caesarea-Philippi

Lk 9:28-29 – before His transfiguration

Matt 19:13 – for the little children

Jh 11:41-42 – before the raising of Lazarus

Jh 12:27-28 – in the Temple

Matt 26:26-27 – at the Supper  
Lk 22:32 – for Peter  
Jh 17 – prayer for the Disciples  
Matt 26:36, 39, 42, 44 - in Gethsemane  
Lk 23:34 – on the Cross  
Lk 24:30 – Emmaus

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F. Chan asks the question - How would you define prayer? What is it?  
Are there certain ways we need to do it?  
If prayer is, essentially, talking with God, then there must be many ways to do it.  
Certainly, we want to speak respectfully to the Creator of the Universe, but that didn't stop Abraham, Moses, David, Jeremiah, or other biblical heroes from speaking their minds. It's a conversation with a great God who loves us. With that in mind, Chan says choose whatever format makes sense.

I would only emphasize the acknowledgement of who God is – Romans 9:<sup>20</sup> *But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’* <sup>21</sup> *Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use?* When the question of “how” we should approach God in prayer is asked, I often think of the relationship of my earthly father (Paul Ledbetter). I could ask him nearly anything, I could call him anytime, our conversations were easy, natural, and informal, but there was always RESPECT and an acknowledge that he was my father.

<sup>14</sup> *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.* <sup>15</sup> *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*

In the video Francis paraphrased James this way,  
He says get the elders. Get them to pray, because hopefully these are the righteous people in the church. And he says, there's a power in the prayers of the righteous. So, gather them together and you could see a miracle right there—like actual healing!

There are always questions about how prayers are answered. Why was this one answered and that one not?  
Jesus taught us to pray, “Your (God the Father) will be done” Matt 6:10, I Jh 5:14  
We know that faith (Jam 1:6), humility (Matt 6:5-6), forgiveness (Matt 6:12) are some prerequisites for prayer.

Conversely - pride, doubt, selfishness, how husbands treat their wives, can hinder prayer.

Matt 6:5,7- praying to be heard by others, use of vain repetition

Jam 1:6-7 Ask in faith without doubting, the one who doubts should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

Jam 4:3 – You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you spend it on your pleasures,

I Pet 3:7 – Husbands, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

I know during my life there have been times when my most sincere and faithful prayers were not answered the **way I wanted**. It can sometimes be difficult to understand God's will, but that is where faith is necessary.

Here are some things that I do know:

**Isaiah 55:**<sup>8</sup> “For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> “As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

**John 4:24** God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

**1 Corinthians 1:25** For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

**Job 38** – Who are we to give an answer to God for the wonders of His creation?

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them (Acts 19:11-12)

Yet, Paul was unable to heal himself (II Cor 12:7-9) and he did not heal Trophimus who he left sick in Miletus (II Tim 4:20)

Lastly, Jesus knew what it meant to pray, “Thy will be done”

Matt 26:39 - Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” In our limited, confined minds, we might have asked, why wouldn't God answer His only begotten Son's prayer the way that Jesus wished? I am thankful when His will is fulfilled and not ours!

*Vs <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

Chan asks - What do we say to God when we're sick? Is this a time when we ignore God, or pay more attention to Him? Sickness often brings about a spiritual crisis. We beg God for healing. We promise to live better lives. Yes, we even confess our sins. Somehow, we bring together the physical and spiritual in our own reactions.

Learn more about sickness, sin, and prayer in the following passages. John 9:1–3; 1 Corinthians 11:29–30; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 7:21–22; Isaiah 38:1–5

What do these passages suggest about a connection between physical ailments and spiritual need?

Do you think sin really causes sickness, or was that just something people thought back in that pre-scientific age?

How did Jesus correct that notion in His disciples (John 9)? But then why would he forgive the paralytic first, before healing him (Mark 2)?

Why did Jesus heal people? Wouldn't it have been better to spend that time telling them about God?

How did King Hezekiah (Isaiah 38) model the teachings of James 5:13–14?

James reminds us that mutual confession and prayer brings healing, both physically and spiritually. Confession can free us from the heavy burdens (physically and spiritually) of unresolved sin, and removes hindrances to the work of the Holy Spirit.

The end of verse 16 has a sentence that many people know and often quote. *“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”* What do you think that means?

Do you think the original readers of this epistle would agree with this, or would it be a new idea for them? If we're right about these readers being Pharisee-like—proud, judgmental, but religious—then they would completely agree with that, wouldn't they? Wouldn't see themselves as the “righteous” people who remain unpolluted by the world, and therefore their prayers are effective.

So, let's ask the natural question: Who is righteous? Are we righteous? How do we become righteous? What distinguishes the righteous from the unrighteous?

We often read this verse something like this: We must live good lives, so we'll be righteous enough to make God answer our prayers.

But where does righteousness come from? From a relationship with God. We can't earn righteousness. We become righteous as God forgives our sins. So, this verse is not about being good enough to get our prayers answered. It's about connecting with God. We recognize our unrighteousness, confess our sins, and are welcomed into a relationship with God, in which we pray for the things He wants.

*Vs 17-18 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup> Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops*

How does James describe the Old Testament prophet Elijah?

It's interesting that he does not call Elijah “righteous.” Maybe that was assumed, but the point James makes is that Elijah was a human being. He was just like us.

Peek at the Greek in verse 17 James uses the word *homoioopathes* to describe Elijah (the ESV translates as “with a nature like”). The first part of that word means similar and the last part (*pathos*) has to do with feelings or passion. So, Elijah was a person who experienced similar feelings and circumstances to all of us. Barnabas and Paul used this same word in Lystra when the locals thought they were Greek Gods (Acts 14:15). “We also are men, of like nature with you...”

So, while Elijah was a highly respected prophet, it's important that we not make him superhuman. He shared our human nature. In fact, his story shows some pretty major mood swings. (Just compare 1 Kings 18 to 19.)

*Vs 19-20 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, <sup>20</sup> remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

James finishes his letter with one of the most uplifting thoughts in the New Testament; That man has not only saved his brother's soul; he has covered a multitude of his own sins. In other words, to save another's soul is the surest way to save one's own.

It has been said that those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves; and certainly, those who bring the lives of others to God cannot keep God out of their own.

#### CONCLUSION:

James has challenged his readers to humble themselves before the Lord. In this last part of his letter, he shows what that looks like. The church community is praying together, confessing their sins to one another. They accept the fact that they're "only human," but they still expect great things from God when they pray. And when someone strays from the faith, they don't alienate that person with harsh words of judgment. They pray. They forgive. They restore.

James has long had a reputation as a book of works. But there's a lot of grace coming through these pages. James will not stand for boasting. He opposes the judgmental spirit of his readers, with their harsh words. The Christian faith is not about setting up some ideal of perfect behavior, but of connecting with God humbly, listening to Him, letting Him reorder our priorities, and living out His passion for the needy.

Our faith in Christ changes us. We haven't experienced the life-changing power of the gospel if we confess that Jesus is Lord with our mouth, but live like we are our own Lord through our actions. A true faith, a living faith has the natural outworking of good works. And good works, no matter how good, can't produce authentic faith—faith is always a gift and never earned.

So, as we face trials, as we experience temptation, as we minister to the needy, as we suffer, have faith in God. Trust Him for wisdom. Trust Him for compassion. Trust Him for patience. Trust Him for endurance. Trust Him for healing. Trust Him for the faith that produces a harvest of righteousness.

*The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."*

Jeff

Sources: Francis Chan, [Righnowmedia.org](http://Righnowmedia.org)  
[StudyLight.org/commentaries/dsb/james-5](http://StudyLight.org/commentaries/dsb/james-5)

