

JAMES: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

Week 5:
Prayer in All Things

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

As followers of Christ, we can approach every season of life through prayer. Whether we are experiencing joy or suffering, we are encouraged to come to God in prayer. This lesson will help your college-age participants examine the importance of praying with and for each other, as a community of Christians.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: God does not call us to be in prayer only during the roughest times in life, but to approach every situation with prayer.
2. WHY: The prayers of a Christ-centered community have the power to be both powerful and effective.
3. HOW: This lesson will encourage your college-age participants to seek God in all things through prayer and to seek God together as a community of Christians.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

James 5:13-20

SECONDARY SCRIPTURE

Philippians 4:4-7

TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with participants, you'll definitely want to refer to it as you lead your lesson.

Read James 5:13-20.

We live in a society that teaches independence. Think and do for yourself. Do not lean on others, but pull yourself up by your bootstraps and make it work.



LEADER
TIP



James ends his letter with yet another countercultural and counterintuitive lesson, calling Christians to turn to Jesus in every circumstance and situation. He says we can approach God, through prayer, in every season of life. Whether we are happy, sick, going through smooth times, or in the midst of hardship, we can constantly turn to God.

James also teaches that confession to God brings forgiveness, and confession to each other brings healing. This lesson will provide your participants with an opportunity to practice confession so they can be prayed for and find healing. This may be a difficult and vulnerable time for some individuals, so please be sensitive to what God might want to do.

Challenge participants to not see God as a “wish genie” or someone who can help them escape tough situations, but as their Lord who cares about every aspect of their lives.

THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We've provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to participants prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one or both of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- What is the purpose of prayer? What role should it play in the life of a Christian? Let's talk about it at group tonight.
- Are you happy or sick, going through an easy or hard situation? We can approach all of those situations with prayer. More thoughts at group tonight.

Continuing the Conversation

We've provided you with some thoughts below that you can post on your blog or a social networking site following the lesson. Our hope is to encourage you and your college-age participants to continue the conversation after the lesson ends. Feel free to edit and customize the content to fit your ministry needs.

Jesus said he would use his church to reach the entire world for God's kingdom. We often find ourselves only praying when we are really in need of something. It's easy



to turn God into the guy who listens to our wish list. But James teaches us that we should be in prayer for every situation of our life. When was the last time you prayed just because you were in a good place in life? Read James 5 this week, and set aside time for prayer with God. Instead of asking for the things you want or need, spend time offering praise for who God is and what God has done. Maybe this week, instead of heading to the movies or watching TV, grab some friends and spend time praying together as a community.



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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

As you begin, welcome your participants and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then ASK:

- *On a daily basis, when you are most likely to pray—is it at times like before a meal, before heading to bed, before taking a test, before hitting the road? Why?*
- *When are you least likely to pray—and why?*
- *What stops you from spending more time in prayer?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Jesus regularly prayed and taught his disciples to pray. This is an area of our spiritual life that often gets overlooked. It's common for us to approach God when we are in the middle of a tough circumstance. But James teaches us to view our prayer life differently—it can be part of our regular way of living.*



LEADER
TIP

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you'd like to share it with other small group leaders, please email us at ideas@simplyyouthministry.com.

TEACHING GUIDE



LEADER
TIP

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help participants capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) God calls us to pray in every situation, and (2) God brings restoration through the prayers of Christ-centered community.



LEADER
TIP

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read James 5:13-20 together as a group. Consider having one or more of the participants read the text.



SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's spend a few minutes discovering what James says about how we can view the role of prayer in our lives.*

1. God calls us to pray in every situation

ASK:

- *As you've gotten older, how has your perspective on prayer changed? How are your prayers today different from what or how you prayed a year ago, or five years ago?*
- *How does James' view of prayer look different from what you've been taught or what you are used to?*
- *How does living in a culture that encourages us to be independent affect the way that we approach God through prayer?*
- *Did your parents pray with you as a child? Do you have mentors or friends who have spent time in prayer with you? Tell us about how you've seen prayer modeled.*
- *When are you most comfortable praying or talking about prayer? What makes you feel uncomfortable about prayer?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *It's tough to imagine praying in every situation. But James is once again teaching us that being a follower of Jesus looks much different from what many of us expect or what we are used to. If we are serious about the life that Jesus has called us to, we must learn to pray in both the best and worst of times.*

2. God brings restoration through the prayers of Christ-centered community

ASK:

- *In verses 14-15, we learn that we should have the elders of the church pray for us. Why would James encourage this?*
- *In verse 16, James tells us about the purpose of prayer and confession with other Christians. Why are these important disciplines for us to practice?*
- *How often do you feel comfortable sharing your prayers with a community of Christians? What helps you feel greater comfort or safety when praying in groups?*



- *If we've experienced God's forgiveness through prayer but feel like we have yet to experience the healing of a past decision or situation, how can we move forward? What is a right way to address this?*
- *What would need to happen in a Christ-centered community for there to be a safe place where people can confess their sins and be healed from them?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Scripture teaches us that if we confess our sins to God, he is faithful and just to forgive us. But James is taking it a step further and suggesting that if we confess our sins to each other and pray for each other, we would be healed of them. It's important to remember that we need God's help to practice the things we've learned in this series. We need the Holy Spirit working in our lives, transforming us into more Christ-like people. That's why prayer is so important—it's time spent in God's presence, and it's an opportunity for God to provide healing and restoration as we pray with other Christians.*

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

ASK:

- *Read Philippians 4:4-7. What would it be like to pray about every situation you face in life? How easy or difficult do you think that would be?*
- *Do you think this passage means you should pray about what cereal to eat, what color of pen you should write with, what kind of haircut to get—in other words, are some items “too insignificant” for prayer? Why or why not?*
- *What's the relationship between worrying and praying? How are they similar, and how are they different?*
- *How does prayer open the door to experiencing God's peace?*
- *What do you feel like you need to learn in the area of prayer to make it a more effective discipline in your daily walk?*

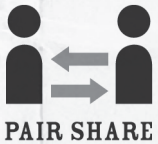


APPLICATION

Ask participants to form groups of two or three for these questions.

ASK:

- *There may be sin in your life that has kept you from feeling like you have experienced healing and freedom. If you have confessed them to Jesus, he has already forgiven you. But as James teaches, healing can come when you confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. Spend time in prayer, praising God for whatever situation you are in. If you feel led by the Lord, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you might be healed.*



- *What practical things could you do today that would help you incorporate prayer more consistently into your life? Examples might include buying a prayer journey, finding a prayer partner, or posting reminders in places that will help you remember to pray throughout the day.*
- *Set aside time in your calendar this week that you will use to spend time with the Lord. Write out a list of things you want to pray for. You can include praise and adoration of who God is, repentance of sins, prayer for friends and family who aren't yet Christians, and prayer that God would use your church community to advance his kingdom here on earth.*

SUMMARY



End your lesson here. Provide participants with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles individuals are facing, and (4) the big picture of your ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.





LEADER
TIP

SCRIPTURE TO PROCESS

Encourage and/or challenge participants to engage with the passage below. We encourage you to return to these passages throughout the series to illustrate their point of connection to God's story.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working (James 5:13-16).

