

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, November 20, 2011

Passage: James 5:13-18

Memory Passage: James 5:16

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 5:13-18.** The word translated “suffering” means more than sickness, although it includes sickness (see the noun form James uses in v. 10). It refers to any kind of suffering or trial. Write down the suffering you have experienced during the last week. Be specific. Now write down the first thing you did in response to each incident of suffering. Was it prayer, or something else? What does your first response reveal about your expectations of relief from that suffering? What does it reveal about the place/person in whom your trust is placed?

(b) When James says we should “sing praise” when we are cheerful in addition to pray when we are suffering, he is intending to cover the entire scope of our lives. Write down the last 3 occasions in which you were cheerful. Now write down what you were thinking about during this time of cheer and what you did as a result. Was your response to your cheerfulness “singing praise” to God? Were you thinking of/praising/being thankful for the experience/person/situation that brought you cheer, or were you thanking and praising God for His blessing to you that caused your cheer? What does this reveal about your understanding of the origin of “every good gift” (James 1:17).

(c) **Family: Read James 5:13.** Explain that “suffering” refers to any kind of trial or painful experience (show them that the noun form of this verb is used in 5:10). Ask, “In what ways have you, or have we as a family, suffered in the last week?” Help them remember times in which they/your family was sad, hurt, sick, etc. Write these down on the left side of your white board. Then ask, “What was the first thing that you/we did?” Answers might range from, “Nothing” to “Complain” or “Pout” etc. Then **Read James 5:13** and ask, “What should you/we have done?” and discuss ways that you could have prayed to God in each situation. You can also use the 2nd half of this verse in addition to (or instead of) the first half in the same manner.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 5:13-18.** What is your normal first response to being sick? Does it match James’ command (v. 14)? Is James prohibiting other responses like going to a doctor, taking medicine, staying home from work, etc? What would you say to your best friend if they came to you and said that they were not going to take their child to the doctor or use medicine because James commands us to pray, not use doctors? What other commands or examples from Scripture would you bring to them?

(b) Is James commanding us to “call for the elders of the church” in every instance of sickness or just in certain instances? What evidence do you find in the text to inform your answer? Why do you think James gives us this command? Are the elders’ prayers somehow more efficient or effective than others, or are there other reasons?

(c) Why must the elders anoint the sick person with oil? Was this medicinal? Symbolic?

(d) Think of the last time you or someone in your family were seriously sick. Did you/they call the elders to pray? Why/why not? Will you call them the next time? Why do you think people so often neglect this command?

(e) **Family: Read James 5:13 & 1 Thess. 5:16-18.** Explain that James is exhorting us to pray in every circumstance of life (at one end of the spectrum is suffering, and at the other is cheerfulness), and this echoes Paul’s teaching in 1 Thess. as well. Lead you family in a discussion of (1) what it means to pray without ceasing (explaining how to constantly pray but still be engaged in all we have to do in life), (2) specific examples of how to rejoice and give thanks in every circumstance. Be specific, giving examples from your own life and from your children’s life, and (3) the grace God shows to us by informing us that this wonderful way of life is His will for us! Maybe this should be the first thing for which your family gives thanks?!

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 5:13-18.** What is “the prayer of faith” of which James speaks in v. 15? Is there anything special or different about this prayer than others? What have you already learned from James about prayer that informs our understanding here?

(b) Will the salvation of the sick person be physical, spiritual or both? Upon what do you base your answer? Upon what basis will the possible sin (“if he has committed sins”) of the sick one be forgiven? What does the sin have to do with the sickness?

(c) **Read Deut. 28:58-63, John 5:1-15 (esp. v. 14), 9:1-3, & 1 Cor. 11:27-30.** What do you learn about the relationship between sin and sickness from these passages (i.e. is sickness always caused by sin? Can it ever be caused by sin? Etc.)?

(d) **Family: Read James 5:15.** Ask, “What promises are made in this verse?” Let your family find the three promises in these verses and write them on your white board. Then ask, “Does this mean that when the elders pray over someone who is sick that God will always heal the person?” (Notice that the text says, “will save” and “will raise”!) Explain that the “prayer of faith” is the prayer that is asked by one believing that God will heal. Then **Read James 1:6-8, 4:3, Matt. 6:10, & John 14:13-**

14 and explain that asking in faith means that we are trusting in God to act according to His will (“in my name” means to ask according to God’s character & will) and that God is able to accomplish what we ask (see Eph. 3:20-21).

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 5:13-18.** What function does the “therefore” at the beginning of v. 16 serve? Is the command to “confess your sins to one another” a command for us to confess all sins to all people at all times? What are some guidelines you think would be wise to observe with regard to confessing sin?

(b) What is the 3rd priority of prayer James addresses here in v. 16 (v.13 = pray for yourself; v. 14 = elders pray)? What is the connection between confessing *to* one another and praying *for* one another?

(c) Who is the “righteous person” in v. 16? Why does their prayer have “great power as it is working” and what is that power? Do you think of your prayers as having “great power” when you pray them? If not, how will your prayer life change when you think about & believe this truth?

(d) *Family: Read James 5:17-18.* Ask, “What do you know about Elijah?” Take note of what your family knows and be prepared to fill in the missing details about this prophet’s life and ministry. Then **Read 1 Kings 17:8-24** and discuss what Elijah did (we will look at the story James references tomorrow). Ask questions like, “What did Elijah pray? What was special about Elijah? About his prayer? What did God do? Who raised the boy, God or Elijah?” so everyone understands the work of God through the prophet. Then remind them that James says that Elijah was “a man with a nature like ours,” which means he was “just like us: a human being!” Remind them that the prayers of every believer are powerful because of the power of God who answers them and accomplishes His will, so we should pray boldly!

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 5:13-18.** Why does James use Elijah as an example at this point in his letter? What about Elijah should we observe, according to v. 17?

(b) **Read 1 Kings 17:1-7, 18:1-2, & 18:19-40, 19:1-8.** Write down what you learn about Elijah, his prayers, his boldness, his frailties, and the work of the Lord through his ministry. What do you learn from these verses about the way God answers prayer and your response, especially 1 Kings 18:41-46?

(c) In what ways do you resemble Elijah? In what ways do you not resemble Elijah, but should? Since Elijah, a person just like you, is James’ example of how you should pray, what ways should you endeavor to change in your prayer life to obey James’ command on prayer?

(d) *Family:* Walk your family through questions (a) – (c) above.

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Praying Like Elijah