

Sermon Study Guide

Pastor: Pastor Henry Schorr

Date: February 25 /26, 2017

Sermon: Prayer Matters -- James 1:1-5; 4:1-3; 5:13-20

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. Have someone look up the following website and tell why James, the brother of Jesus was referred to as 'Camel Knees.'

<http://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/45451/origin-of-the-story-that-james-had-knees-as-hard-as-a-camels-because-of-prayin>

2. Who is a 'person of prayer' whom you appreciate? Why?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Read the three passages that James wrote about prayer. Summarize each section. What is a similar thought he expresses?
2. What does James mean when he writes, 'The prayer of a **righteous** person is **powerful** and **effective**'? (5:16) Describe a 'righteous' person.

What would have been the importance to the original readers of James' reference to Elijah?

(Read 1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41-46; Mal 4:5-6; Mk 9:9-13; Lk 1:17)

3. How do 2 Chronicles 16:9; Eph 6:18 (note the repeated word) and James 4:2 support the principle that 'Prayer is a relationship with God.'
4. Pastor Henry said, 'James talks about prayer as a way of life for the Christ follower.'

What does 1 Thess 5:17 tell us about this way of life?

What directions do the following verses also give us?

Ps 95:1-7; Psalm 139:23-24; 2 Cor 10:5; Eph 1:16; Phil 4:6; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:18; James 5:13

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. What was significant for you in hearing the story of young Larry Crabb?
2. The main thing for me this week is _____
3. Pray for one another and for decisions required at Centre Street Church as the congregation seeks to follow God's will.

Resource:

The Pressure's Off: Breaking Free from Rules and Performance,
Larry Crabb, 2012

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT)

THE WORD (NIV)

James 1:1-5

¹ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

James 4:1-3

⁴ What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 5:13-20

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

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

Sermon Study Summary

As James, the half-brother of Jesus, nears the end of his letter, he focuses on the importance of prayer. He opened his letter talking about prayer, (James 1:1-5) then wrote again about prayer in the middle (4:1-3) and now closes his letter (5:13-20) by talking about prayer. James was passionate about prayer and spent much time on his knees in prayer. (Note the historical reference to his having 'camel knees.')

Based on what James wrote, we can learn two major principles of prayer from him.

His **first** principle is: That prayer is powerful and effective. James believes that prayer changes things. It is not the prayer that is powerful: it is that God is all-powerful and He chooses to release this power through us. God calls us to accomplish His redemptive purposes in the world in primarily two ways: by doing what He calls us to do, and by our prayers. Through prayer we receive the supernatural power to do the supernatural work of God. Prayer can change circumstances, attitudes and relationships; heal physical, emotional and spiritual problems; restore broken relationships and meet financial needs.

James says, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective". We may think that we need to find a 'holy person' to pray for us, that we are not righteous enough. But righteousness does not mean "perfect;" it means that, while we are sinners and unrighteous by nature, we are in a right relationship with God and forgiven by putting our faith in what Jesus accomplished for us on Calvary's cross. A righteous person is one who is forgiven by Jesus, is a friend of Jesus, and is seeking to live for Jesus. It is also important that you realize your prayers make a difference. Turn to the Lord in prayer and ask God for His perspective and help: we can be sure He Who created and sustains the universe; Who resurrected His Son Jesus from the grave will surely not find our problems too big for Him to handle.

James' **second** principle is that prayer is communication in a relationship with God. God did not create us to ignore us or to have us ignore Him — He created us for relationship with Him. Prayer is not a formula for getting what we want; and it is not something we reserve only as a last resort when we are out of options and strength. Our heavenly Father grieves deeply when we decide to be in charge of our own life, when we ask for God's help only in the direst circumstances. He is constantly seeking us, looking for a heart committed to him. He wants to strengthen and empower us, to guide and bless us, to release His power through us in response to our prayer. When we pray we show our heart to God; because prayer is how we communicate with God. We need to trust God and let Him be in charge of our life. Then we can communicate with Him as the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 6:18. Paul teaches that prayer is not just an add-on to our lives; indeed, prayer is to be at the very centre and in every part of life. Prayer is not a five-minute ritual but a continual interaction with God and conscious awareness that God is with us at all times.

For many, struggling to stay focused, prayer may be difficult. How can we pray continually, without feeling overwhelmed? James gives us some guidance. If you are troubled, anxious or fearful, take it to the Lord in prayer. If you are happy, take it to the Lord in praise. Prayer is not just asking, it is also giving thanks and worshipping God for who He is, praising God for what He has done. As we grow in our relationship with God, we will find ourselves thanking Him throughout the day for many things: for who He is, for what He has done and is doing in our lives; for His protective care of us and our loved ones.

Praying continually is also to hear and respond to the voice of God. We hear His voice when we read and meditate on the Scriptures. Often, when thoughts come to our minds, we may be tempted to dismiss them as distractions. Or should we consider that these thoughts might be from God? When a particular person, worry, anxiety, fear or other need comes to mind, why not ask the Lord how He would have you pray, and then pray then and there? When we take all this to God every day, we not only grow close to God, but we will never again find prayer boring or run out of things to talk to God about. Prayer becomes a faith-building adventure in our life in Christ.

Author Larry Crabb writes his story when he was three years old. He locked himself in the bathroom by mistake, and was only able to get out of the room when his father climbed in through the window to unlock the door. Larry ran out to play, and forgot about the incident. In adult life, he reflected on that situation and came to realize that when we are locked in a crisis or difficulty of some kind, God often comes in through the window and rather than unlocking the door right away, just sits on the floor with us. His presence gives us peace and encouragement as we talk to Him in prayer.

It is Pastor Henry's prayer that through this study we will all come to realize in a new way that prayer is not checking in with God once in a while; that prayer is being consciously aware of how wide and long and deep and high is God's love for us, that He is with us, and how much He wants to sit with us, walk with us, talk with us, all day long.