

TEXT: James 5:13-18

TITLE: "THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER"

DATE: January 23, 2011

SERIES: THE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER (#1 of 7)

This series is on our Core Values. Core Values are the DNA that define who we are in Christ Jesus. They are not just creeds on plaque or notes in a book somewhere or banners on a wall. They are the essence of who we. Prayer is the first core value.

INTRODUCTION: *(John draw cartoon- second copy with the boy's answer) I heard about a little boy who was asked to pray before the meal. The boy looked over the meal set on the table before bowing his head. He then picked up his fork instead and began to eat. His parents asked him why he didn't pray before his meal. The boy answered, "I already prayed for this food; these are left-overs."

Does prayer really matter? Does prayer really make a difference? A difference in your life, family, the church, the nation, and the world. Do your prayers really matter? James focuses on the necessity of prayer. We will look at three areas James uses to teach on the necessity of prayer.

I. (vs.13-14) THE EXERCISE OF PRAYER

1. Prayer is something to be used.
2. What you believe should not be separate from what you do.
3. James was a man of faith.
4. The theme of faith runs through the entire book.
5. Prayer is based on the belief there is a God who is a powerful, listening, caring and answering God.
6. Because James is a man of faith, he has a passion for prayer.

ILLUSTRATION: The ancient historian, Eusebius of Caesarea (\yü-^l sē-bē-əs\.) (AD 263–339), testified regarding James, "His knees grew hard like a camel's because of his constant worship of God, kneeling & asking forgiveness for the people."

7. James is writing against prayerlessness.
8. Prayer is the way to face the issues of our lives.
9. James engages his readers personally, because he wants so much for them to put prayer into practice.

ILLUSTRATION: *Author, Wesley Duewel, in his book, Mighty Prevailing Prayer, suggested, “All you need to do to learn to pray is to pray.”

10. James wants the people to do life with prayer.

11. Effective prayers are prayers that are prayed.

12. Prayer is the right response to the challenges, opportunities and difficulties of life.

ILLUSTRATION: (*picture of symbol, etc.) The U.S.F.R.A or the U.S. First Responders Association is a non-profit, professional and social network of firefighters, EMS, rescue, police officers, military and civilian support teams prepared to be the first responders to a need or an emergency.

13. The first response to every situation and circumstance of our life is to be prayer.

“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.” (James 5:13)

14. Each person is to take personal responsibility to pray for the circumstances and challenges they are facing.

15. The person who is in trouble should be praying.

16. The person who is happy should be singing prayers of praise.

17. The term “trouble” signifies hardship and relates to misfortune, including circumstances or personal situations that cause the person distress.

18. Many in this congregation have faced troubles this last year.

19. Trouble is the classroom where many have learned to pray.

20. Trouble is an open door to the throne room of God.

21. A time of trouble is the right time to pray.

“This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.” (Psalm 34:4)

22. We are to pray through the troubles in life.

23. Prayer may not remove the troubles, but it most certainly can transform us and our troubles.

24. The great theological truth of this passage is that when you are in trouble you are not alone.

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1)

25. There is a God you can talk to that can help you through the troubling times.

ILLUSTRATION: *In a time of turmoil and trouble in the history of America, this call for prayer was written. “I pleadingly urge our

people everywhere to pray. Believing that prayer is the greatest contribution that our people can make in this critical hour, I humbly urge that we take time to pray--to really pray. Let there be prayer at sunup, at noonday, at sundown, at midnight--all through the day. Let us all pray for our children, our youth, our aged, our pastors, our homes. Let us pray for our churches. Let us pray for ourselves, that we may not lose the word 'concern' out of our Christian vocabulary. Let us pray for our nation. Let us pray for those who have never known Jesus Christ and His redeeming love, for moral forces everywhere, for our national leaders. Let prayer be our passion. Let prayer be our practice." (Robert E. Lee, Commander of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia in the American Civil War.)

26. James was saying, "Let prayer be our practice."

"You do not have, because you do not ask God." (James 4:2)

ILLUSTRATION: *John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church said, "God does nothing on the earth save in answer to believing prayer."

27. The habit and lifestyle of prayer should be the obvious identifying mark of a Christian.

ILLUSTRATION: Betty Traver tried to instill in her children the need to pray about everything. Years ago, a perfect opportunity for prayer arose in their old 1956 station wagon. They were setting off on an errand when the old clunker refused to start. Seizing the moment, Betty turned to her-four-year old son and asked him to pray. Closing his eyes tightly, he prayed, "Dear Lord, please help this piece of junk start." No fancy words just the facts.

28. She was teaching that prayer is the priority and first thing of our lives when we face trouble.

ILLUSTRATION: **Edward Payson, an important spiritual leader in America in the early 1800's said, "Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, the third thing..."

29. We must learn to live with a God-ward, God-dependent focus.

30. When we are happy, cheerful or in good spirits we are to pray or sing prayers of praise.

31. Good times might make us complacent, so we pray less, but happiness is the very time to pray prayers of praise so that we do not take the good times for granted.

32. The call is to pray in every circumstance of life.

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” (Ephesians 6:18)

33. We are to pray about everything not because He does not know our needs and He needs us to inform Him.

34. Prayer is meant for us, to remind us that we need Him.

35. We are to pray because God wants us to understand our need of Him.

36. It is only in this way – praying – that man understand he is weak and in need of God’s help.

37. When we are troubled, we need Him.

38. When we are happy, we need Him.

39. When we are sick, we need Him.

40. Prayer is the acknowledgement that we need Him in our lives.

41. Prayer is the right course of action for the full range of life situations and for anyone.

”Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” (Philippians 4:6)

42. Prayer is to be our very approach to life.

43. Nothing is beyond the scope or reach of prayer.

44. Don’t put off prayer or allow prayer to be the fall-back plan of your life.

ILLUSTRATION: The film, *The Perfect Storm*, is based on a true story about an ocean-going fishing boat off the coast of Massachusetts. An unusually intense storm pattern catches some commercial fishermen unaware and puts them in mortal danger. It was a terrific storm. The captain is up in the wheel house with one other crewman. All the other crewmen are below deck. They’re going to go up the face of a wave and turn, surfing back down. And so, the captain says, "Now, we’ve only got one chance at this." And, his mate says, "And if we don’t make it?" He says, "Then we pray." Isn’t that typical? Isn’t that typical?

45. People often try everything they know first then they pray as a last resort.

46. James is talking about a lifestyle where prayer is the first thing.

47. Respond to the issues of life with prayer.

48. Prayer is the way to face the issues of our lives, for we are not alone.

49. Prayer is the way to face the issues of our lives, for we need Him.

50. The exercise of prayer is a necessity.

51. Apply prayer to your daily life.

II. (vs.14-16) THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRAYER

“Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.”(James 5:14)

1. Prayer is an effective way to address the needs of our lives.
2. The word “sick” can refer to weakness or sickness.
3. Both reflect our own helplessness to resolve the issue on our own.
- ILLUSTRATION: *O. Hallessby, author and teacher on prayer, wrote, “Helplessness is the real secret and the impelling power of prayer.”**
4. When you are part of a healthy church body, you are not alone when you are sick.
5. There are others in the body that we can ask to pray for us.
6. We can call on the elders or the people of faith and experience in the church to pray over us.
7. The concern of James for the vitality of the community is evident.
8. James understood how much we really do need the body of Christ.
9. A sick or weak person’s faith is expressed in asking the elders to pray.
10. The elders are to pray, which is their primary role, and anoint with oil, which is the secondary.
11. There is nothing magical about anointing with oil, for the power of prayer rests on the Lord.
12. They were to pray in the name of the Lord and acknowledge His presence and His power to minister to the present need.
- EXAMPLE: During this *Vital Church* series in our Sunday classes, we are focusing on the book of Acts. In Acts 3, the story is recorded of the cripple begging at the temple gate when Peter and John went in to pray. Peter responded to the beggar by saying, **“Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” (Acts 3:6)****
13. The man was healed and went walking, jumping, and praising God.
14. He was healed by the power of Jesus.
15. Prayer is powerful because God is powerful.
16. To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray by the character, authority, or direction of the Lord in accordance with His will.
17. James continues on, saying, **“And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.”(James 5:15)**

18.As I mentioned earlier, faith is an underlying theme for James in his letter.

19.The 'prayer of faith' is a prayer offered in accordance with His will.

20. God answers prayer, but He is not compelled by prayer.

21.James is pointing out the power of the Lord.

22.God has the power to heal and forgive.

ILLUSTRATION: Someone insightfully observed, “All that God has and all that God is, is at the disposal of prayer.”

23.James continues, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” (James 5:16a)

24.Prayer within the framework of community is the theme of this passage.

25.When we pray for others, we become partners with God in His work of salvation, healing, comfort, and justice.

26.God can accomplish those things without us, but, in His plan, He gives us the privilege of being involved with Him through prayer.

27.Prayer assumes authentic love for one another.

28.In that kind of environment, transparency, confession of sin can take place.

29.Injury or injustice must be confessed so that grudges or attitudes are not blocking prayer.

30.Confession of sin keeps spirit, soul, and body healthy

31.The point is, don't let sin get in the way of your prayers.

32.Instead of judging others, confess to each other.

ILLUSTRATION: There is an old story about a group of people who decided they would all confess their most secret and troubling problems, sins, and temptations to each other. The time came for the last person to share and they said, “My problem and sin is gossiping and I can't wait to get out of here and tell all the things I have heard.”

33.It is not the indiscriminate public confession of sins.

34.A sound principle is that the area of commission should be the area of confession.

35.Instead of criticizing each other, intercede for each other in prayer.

ILLUSTRATION: **“A loving spirit is a condition of believing prayer,” wrote the anonymous author of *The Kneeling Christian*. “We cannot be wrong with man and right with God.”*

36.In that kind of environment, healing can take place.

37.We are to pray for each other.

“As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you.” (I Samuel 12:23)

38. We need the prayers of each other.

39. God works through the prayers of His people.

40. Someone needs your prayers today.

41. Prayer is a contribution that every Christian can make to the life of others.

ILLUSTRATION: *The book, *The Kneeling Christian*, by an anonymous author, has greatly impacted my life. The book says, “A man’s influence in the world can be gauged not by his eloquence, or his zeal, or his orthodox, or his energy, but by his prayers.”

42. The value of being in community and in groups is having others who can pray for you.

43. Prayer for others bears results and can bring healing.

“...The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”(James 5:16b)

ILLUSTRATION: (John draw cartoon) A sign that reads, “A funny thing happens when you don’t pray,” followed by a large, nearly empty space carrying just one word in small print: “Nothing”**

44. James is convinced that prayer brings results.

45. He wants us to see how much can be accomplished through the prayer of a righteous man.

EXAMPLES:

- **Moses prayed and God spared Israel from judgment.**
- **Joshua prayed and God caused the sun to stand still.**
- **Samson prayed and God gave him back his strength**
- **Hannah prayed and God gave her a baby boy – the prophet Samuel**
- **Solomon prayed and God gave him wisdom.**
- **Elijah prayed and God sent fire down from Heaven.**
- **Elisha prayed...and God gave life back to a dead child...**
- **Jonah prayed and God brought him out of the belly of the whale.**

- The thief on the cross prayed and God gave him eternal life.
- Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God...and the prison they were in was shaken and the jailer got saved!

46. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

ILLUSTRATION: My dad told about a boy who found a big, black cigar. Knowing it was against the rules of his house and against his parents will, he slipped into an alley and lit it up. It didn't taste good, but it made him feel very grown up... until he saw his father coming. Quickly, he put the cigar behind his back and tried to be casual. Desperate to divert his father's attention, Norman pointed to a billboard advertising the circus. "Can I go, Dad? Please, let's go when it comes to town." His father's reply taught Norman a lesson he never forgot. "Son," he answered quietly but firmly, "Never make a petition while at the same time trying to hide a smoldering disobedience."

47. A righteous person is one who has a personal relationship with the righteous Lord.

48. Effective prayer cannot be separated from our intimate relationship with the Lord.

49. Righteousness comes from faith in Jesus Christ."

"And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." (Philippians 3:9)

50. Righteousness is a right standing before God that is followed by right living.

51. Intimacy with God, really knowing God, is the key to powerful prayer.

52. Do you know God personally?

53. A righteous person is one who is right with God and with others.

54. A righteous person is a person who has confessed any known sin.

55. A man who walks uprightly with God will pray in a manner acceptable to Him.

56. Genuine faith expresses itself in righteousness.

57. A righteous life is a key to an effective prayer life.

"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry;" (Psalm 34:15)

58. Commit yourself to doing what is right without compromise, through His power, and your prayers will be powerful and effective.

Songwriter, Elisha A. Hoffman was a minister and songwriter who wrote over 2,000 songs. One of those songs ask the question, “Is thy heart right with God?

Have thy affections been nailed to the Cross?

Is thy heart right with God?

Dost thou count all things for Jesus but loss?

Is thy heart right with God?

Is thy heart right with God?

Washed in the crimson flood,

Cleansed and made holy,

Humble and lowly, right in the sight of God?”

59. James is talking about the kind of prayer that makes a difference.

ILLUSTRATION: In the 4th century, in Antioch Syria there was one called John of Antioch. He was one of the greatest preacher’s w/unmatched eloquence. He was given the nickname Chrysostom, “Golden-mouth”. Here is his description of the power of prayer!

“The potency of prayer has subdued the strength of fire, it has bridled the rage of lions, hushed the anarchy to rest, extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, expanded the fates of heaven, assuaged(a-swaj) diseases, dispelled frauds, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, & arrested the progress of the thunderbolt. There is (in it) an all-sufficient panoply, a treasure undiminished, a mine which is never exhausted, a sky unobscured by clouds, a heaven unruffled by the storm. It is the root, the fountain, the mother of a thousand blessings!”

60.If we really believe what God says about prayer, we will pray, and prayer will make a difference, for the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

III. (17-18) THE EXAMPLE OF PRAYER

1. James provides an example of the difference prayer can make.

2. The power of prayer is emphasized by an Old Testament prophet known for performing many miracles beyond human powers.

“Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.” (James 5:17-18)

3. From this example James gave, we discover elements of prayer.

AN EXAMPLE THAT TEACHES WE CAN PRAY PRAYERS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

4. Prayer is not reserved for the chosen few.
5. Answers to prayer are in the reach of any believer.
6. Elijah was godly but human, a man just like us.
7. James does not want us to postpone prayer until we attain some false level of perfection.
8. Prayer is God's chosen benefit for weak and frail human beings.
9. Prayer is a privilege God has given to you and me.
10. There is no inherent power in prayer itself, but prayer links human people like you and I to the divine God who is all-powerful.
11. It was prayer to God that solved problems and worked miracles.
12. When we pray, we communicate with the Almighty Creator of Heaven and earth, who loves us and invites us into His presence to receive His grace.

ILLUSTRATION: **Edward McKendree Bounds, who passed away in 1913, was a clergyman of the Methodist Episcopal Church South and the author of eleven books, nine of which focused on the subject of prayer. Acknowledging the power of God, he said, "Prayer can do anything that God can do"

AN EXAMPLE THAT TEACHES US TO PRAY IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WILL

13. Elijah's commitment to God was obvious.
14. No double-mindedness.
15. The story of Elijah is recorded in I Kings. The land had been in drought and needed rain. In 1 Kings 18:1, God wanted to send rain so He spoke to Elijah and said, "**Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth." (I Kings 18:1)**
16. God is going to send rain; in fact, it was His idea.
17. We later find Elijah persevering in praying for something that God has already promised.
18. The 18th chapter records the story of the contest on Mount Carmel. If Baal answered the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah with fire, then he would be God. If God answered by fire, then He would be God and the people were to serve Him. An altar was built and the sacrifice of a bull placed on it but Baal did not answer. Then, Elijah prepared an altar and the sacrifice:

"At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: 'O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have

done all these things at your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” (I Kings 18:36-37)

19. Elijah was living in obedience and praying in accordance with the will of God.

20. God acts when people are praying with obedience in accordance with His will.

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us-whatever we ask-we know that we have what we asked of him.” (I John 5:14 15)

21. Elijah had prayed earlier for the rain to stop and it did.

22. He prayed for the rain to come and it did.

23. He was praying that God’s will be done.

24. We are taught to pray, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” in the Lord’s Prayer.

25. Elijah was a man who lived in ungodly times, but his prayers affected the entire nation.

26. Prayer is partnering with God.

ILLUSTRATION: *Missionary to China, Hudson Taylor said, “I used to ask God to help me. Then, I asked if I might help Him. I ended up by asking Him to do His work through me.”

27. God has chosen to work through people.

28. He worked through the prayers of Elijah and He will work through the prayers of you and me.

29. God has given us the responsibility to pray, to bring about a change in our world today through prayer.

30. People’s lives are changed because of prayer.

31. Prayer changes things, because God acts in response to our prayers, in accordance with His will.

AN EXAMPLE THAT TEACHES US TO PRAY EARNESTLY

32. How would you describe your prayers?

33. Routine, habitual, normal, or would you call them earnest?

34. His prayer was not listless, indifferent, cold, lifeless, as if there were no vitality in it, or power.

35. Elijah’s prayer was earnest, sincere, hearty, persevering and fervent.

ILLUSTRATION: One writer tells this story, “Our son-in-law was getting after our little three-year-old granddaughter because her prayers seem to be developing sort of a rote. And, he said, “Now Kristen, when you pray, you should pray not just quick little prayers,

and the same prayer every time, but really start praying from your heart and really mean your prayers. Think about them and really mean your prayers when you talk to God." Because she was usually just praying, "God bless our food, strengthen our bodies, in Jesus name, Amen," and then start eating. So, dinnertime came and they called on her to pray and she said, "Lord, bless our food. I mean really bless our food, Lord."

36. Elijah prayed intensely.

37. He literally prayed with prayer.

38. He was genuine.

"So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees." (I Kings 18:42)

39. He was not merely being religious, nor was he trying to impress God by falling on his knees.

40. This simply shows us Elijah prayed earnestly or fervently.

41. Kneeling merely expressed the genuineness of his heart.

ILLUSTRATION: "It is not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they are; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they be; nor the music of our prayers, how sweet our voice may be; nor the logic of our prayers, how argumentative they may be; nor the method of our prayers, how orderly they may be -- which God cares for. Fervency of spirit is that which availeth much." -- William Lee

42. He prayed for quite a while, because his servant went to look for rain clouds seven times. And, even on the 7th time, the cloud was just the size of a man's hand. But the rain did come.

43. Elijah held on what God had promised and prayed.

44. We can approach the throne of God with confidence.

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."
(Hebrews 4:16)

45. Elijah did not give up, even though he did not see any sign of God's answer on the first time, the second time... the sixth time. He didn't doubt God, until he saw the answer.

46. His confidence is in the goodness of God and His word.

47. His faith is not in the clouds, not in the signs, but in His promises.

48. We can trust what He has said.

49.* **PROP:** (Use the “Trust in the Lord” plaque in my office) At Christmas, I received this plaque from a couple of our people- “Trust in the Lord.”

50. Prayer is really a matter of trusting the Lord.

51. Your prayer life reveals your trust and your dependence upon Him.

52. Do you trust in His promises and His goodness?

53. Do you trust in His timing and His ways?

54. The Psalmist said, **“He will call upon me, and I will answer him;”**
(Psalm 91:15)

55. Prayer is powerful when a righteous man takes God at His word and prays.

ILLUSTRATION: History records that William Penn, the founder of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the 1600’s, was well liked by the Indians. Once they told him he could have as much of their land as he could encompass on foot in a single day. So, early the next morning, he started out and walked until late that night. When he finally went to claim his land, the Indians were greatly surprised, for they really didn’t think he would take them seriously. But, they kept their promise and gave him a large area, which today is part of the city of Philadelphia. William Penn simply believed what they said.
Should we do less with God!

56. James gave us an example of what prayer can do.

57. Will you believe what God has said about prayer?

58. Let’s commit to being a people of prayer.

CONCLUSION: Prayer is a necessity. We need to pray. We have looked at:

I. (V.13-14) THE EXERCISE OF PRAYER

II. (V.14-16) THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRAYER

III. (17-18) THE EXAMPLE OF PRAYER

AN EXAMPLE THAT TEACHES WE CAN PRAY PRAYERS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

AN EXAMPLE THAT TEACHES US TO PRAY IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S WILL

AN EXAMPLE THAT TEACHES US TO PRAY EARNESTLY

Will you commit to be a person of prayer?

Will you grow in your relationship with God?

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