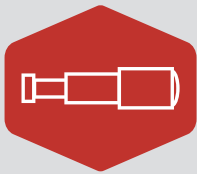




Lesson 13: Faith in Prayer

Main Idea: In this section of Scripture, James concludes his letter with a series of appeals on the wise use of one's words in community. He challenges believers to live with mutual accountability in the ways of the Lord. He shows how right actions in daily life display our beliefs. In this lesson, you will learn the effects of righteous living in Christian community.

Scripture: James 5:12-20



The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.

In this final passage, James proposes a way to reverse the patterns of negative action especially wrong speech by choosing to live by a different kind of wisdom. James also challenges Christians to practice plain speech. Here he proclaims almost word for word the practical teachings of Jesus, quoting from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:37). James challenges believers to pray in times of suffering. Believers tend to pray "why" during suffering rather than "what." We should pray, "Lord, what do you want me to learn?"

Next, James encourages the believer to sing. The idea here is to sing when you are in good spirits. Then James provides a three-part solution to the problem of physical sickness. First, call for church elders to pray for healing. James believes God has entrusted the ministry of healing to church elders. Second, anoint the sick person with oil. Anointing with oil was used for both spiritual

and medicinal purpose. Perhaps James is teaching that God is the source of both spiritual and physical healing. Third, have the church elders pray over the sick individual in person with them. God can be trusted with your life, your body, and all that you have because He is your Lord.

James admonishes believers to rebuke someone in the community who has strayed into sin. He calls upon the church to respond with directness. And when they practice these actions, believers will not fall under judgment. Here Leviticus 19 is again the backdrop for his thoughts.

James reminds readers that integrity lies close to the heart of Kingdom life and ethics. He cautions Christ followers to speak plainly—to say what they mean and mean what they say. Furthermore, James challenges believers to trust God for justice and vindication, not to rely on human reactions to life’s difficulties.

During this time, people used oaths as part of daily conversation. Pharisees, who often used them, claimed that certain oaths were binding while others were not. For instance, an oath based on the temple was not binding, but one based on the gold of the temple was. Jesus in Matthew 23:16–22, rebuked this hypocrisy. In Matthew 5:33–37, Jesus taught His disciples to tell the truth and keep their word without using oaths.



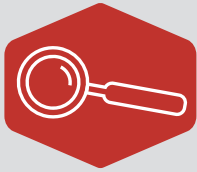
My Lens (Eyeglasses)

What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God’s Word is saying to you.

James was written to bring wanderers back during a tough time for Christians. Today, we are also experiencing tough times. There is no believer who has not at some point wandered away from the Lord to some degree, or who is unaware of some disobedience to Him. It may not be intentional or premeditated. You may not consciously think, “I will just wander away from the Lord.” In fact, wandering is quite subtle. It is a soft sliding that comes from being careless. Then suddenly you find yourself away from Him. The letter of James was written to turn the sinner back to the Lord, who covers the multitude of our sins. Consider these important points:

- You should not use God’s name in a reckless manner; and you should be careful to speak the truth (5:12).

- As a believer, you should pray personally (5:13).
- As a believer, you should pray for the sick (5:14-15).
- As a believer, you should pray among fellow believers, which is powerful and effective (5:15-18).
- Do not let your circumstances cause you to wander away from God (5:19-20).



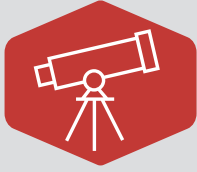
The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)

How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit's leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God's Word to your daily life.

Application:

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
 - » Who appears in this passage?
 - » Where is this passage taking place?
 - » When is this passage occurring?
 - » Why is this passage important?
 - » What is happening in this passage?
 - » How does this passage apply to my life?

- Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.
- Why are oaths not helpful for honest people?
- From James 5:12–20, what are four keys James gives to praying well?
- Describe a time when God answered your prayer without giving you what you asked.
- Do you think prayer is more vital in times of trial or times of success? Why?
- Why do you think you should unite your prayers with elders or other believers?
- How does your daily living affect your prayers being answered?
- How can you avoid wandering from the truth?



Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God’s Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?

- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



Using My FireBible

Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.

- James 5:12. What does James warn people to do before they speak? Why is this important?

- James 5:13. What invitation do you have when you face trouble?

- James 5:15. What are four things you should consider when you ask for prayer from church leaders?

- Why should you examine yourself as you seek prayer for your sickness?

- James 5:16. What is an important aspect of healing?

- In the *FireBible* note on verse 16, read the 17 characteristics of the prayers of the righteous, along with the supporting verses for each. What did you learn?

- James 5:18. Why is the concept of “fate” a dangerous teaching you should guard against?

- How does God deal with His children?

- James 5:19–20. What should your priority be regarding Christian community?