

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**Sunday June 30, 2019. "James: A Practical Guide for Life. Faith"**

### **I. Intro.**

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

### **II. Theme and recap.**

Whew...we finally hit the end of James. What a long and winding journey thru a deep and important letter. We won't review every Sunday. You can go back and check out the messages and notes if you want to get some perspective. The primary purpose of this letter was to help make us perfect or complete. Which simply means to grow this well-formed maturity within us. And to help us help bring about the kingdom of heaven that Jesus said his ministry was about. Or as we pray in the Lord's Prayer, to bring heaven to earth.

James is a really important teaching about the specifics of what this life is about, and the things we can do to move our lives in the direction of wholeness and health.

### **III Sunday.**

We were so fortunate to have Broderick Santiago back in the pulpit. If you have not heard him before then I know it was a treat. Or if you missed Sunday, then I want to as strongly as possible go watch the message on the website.

Broderick wrapped up our journey thru James chapter 5, with the most important aspect of what it means to grow this mature, complete, faith. So read chapter 5 and then we'll discuss it in more detail.

**What jumped out to you about that chapter?**

**Did anything speak to you in a more personal way?**

He began his message around the teaching that has been a recurring theme all thru James. And that is about how we treat the poor, oppressed and marginalized in our society. It's another reminder we are to move to the poor and forgotten because that's what Jesus did and that's where we will find God.

Then chapter 5 moves into another conversation about suffering and struggles, and ultimately to where Broderick landed and that's about prayer and the growing of our faith. There was even the promise there would be a 'blessing' or benefit from the suffering the early readers of James were having to endure.

**Can you look back and see a benefit or blessing of a suffering you experienced?**

**What did it take to be able to frame that struggle as something positive?**

Then Broderick landed on the primary truth in chapter 5, and that's growth and maturing of our faith thru prayer. And as he walked thru verses 13-18, he unpacked three purposes, benefits, of prayer that can grow us into the completeness, wholeness, James mentioned at the beginning of the letter. Prayer is seen as the fuel, the not-so-secret weapon that can help us not only endure, but to thrive. It is the most foundational and important element of a strong and growing faith. But if we're honest, we have to admit it's also probably one of the most difficult of any of the disciplines to not only practice regularly, but to feel like it's actually helpful.

**So... why is that? Why is prayer so difficult?**

**What makes prayer hard for you?**

**Have you found anything that helps your ability to pray in a way that seems to help?**

Broderick gave us this quote to emphasize the importance of prayer.

***"To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing".***

-Martin Luther.

Then there were three primary purposes of prayer given.

**1. Prayer is praise and petition.**

It's asking God for those things to help us thru life. And that begins with an understanding, acknowledgment, and acceptance of just who God is. That's where praise comes in.

**So...what helps you acknowledge and embrace God?**

**2. Prayer is not solely communication, but it's also access.**

Prayer is opening up of ourselves, giving up our position and privilege in order to gain provision from God. It's not contractual. Where each side is fulfilling an agreement. It's covenantal. Each side, because of their love for the other, wanting to please and honor the other.

**What might be some things difficult for you to 'give up', in order to open that access to God?**

**3. Prayer is confession.**

It is the honest recognition, and admission that we are unable to completely take care of ourselves by ourselves. We confess our illness, fallenness, weakness, and sinfulness. This is simply the practice of humility and our utter dependence on God.

**What might be some of the things standing in the way of you being able to freely confess your shortcomings or struggles?**

Again, prayer, honest surrender before God for the purpose of growing the relationship, AND that completeness in our maturity is the cornerstone of all that James addressed in his letter. This has been a roller coaster journey thru James, and we hope that it has given you some specifics you can use in your daily life. I would encourage you to go back and review each of the Sundays.

And watch for our new series in July; ***"Soul Keeping"***. How to care for the most important part of us.