

PRAYER 2023
Praying for Others
James 5:14-20

This series on prayer has been refreshing . . . and convicting! For the last 3 weeks, we have been talking about the meaning and importance of PRAYER. We have learned HOW to pray, and we have even learned HOW LONG we should pray. **But today, I want to spend some time learning about one other aspect of prayer: INTERCESSION. We need to pray for OTHERS.**

[Jesus said that his house should be a HOUSE OF PRAYER!]

The longer I live, the more I have learned to LOVE PRAYING FOR – and WITH – OTHER PEOPLE. I have seen God do some remarkable things in prayer.

[Talk about prayers we have seen answered here at CH over the years.]

***He meets their needs.**

***He comforts their soul**

***He strengthens their faith.**

***He INVADES their space!**

Prayer is a great way to SERVE the people around us for the glory of God. It is truly ONE WAY that we can help CARRY the burdens, sorrows, and struggles of others straight to the Lord. **James 5:14-20 NIV**

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.

Do you ever ask other people to pray for you? There is something beautifully PERSONAL and POWERFUL about being asked to pray for another person. Earlier this year, I CHALLENGED the STAFF and then the entire CHURCH BODY to take this a step further. I want us not simply to PROMISE that we will pray with someone when they ask, but I want us to STOP and pray RIGHT THEN . . . WITH THEM. **Have you been doing this?** Oh, that we would learn to be this BOLD in prayer! This passage in James instructs us to take this step when we are SICK. Over the years, I have prayed alongside many other pastors for people who were ill and needed healing. This is not a message simply on the process of calling for PASTORS to pray for you, but I am so glad that I have seen God use this to bring about some amazing answers to prayer over the years in this way.

Today, I want to focus on the fact that ALL OF US should embrace the privilege of praying for others. This is not just for MISSIONARIES and MINISTERS! It is for

housewives and plumbers and lawyers and teenagers and old folks. **James reminds us that ELIJAH was just a HUMAN BEING . . . JUST LIKE US.** This means he had the same struggles, the same temptations, the same tedious problems and unexpected joys that we have. But his prayers CHANGED things in his world that normally don't change. His prayers stopped the rain ON COMMAND, and then started it up ON COMMAND again!

I think it is significant that James uses this story of Elijah praying for rain in this context. He is encouraging us to pray for others who ask us to pray, **but the story of Elijah's prayer was actually a prayer that the people initially RESENTED!** They did not want the rain to stop, but they NEEDED the rain to stop! They were in absolute REBELLION against God, and God had promised that he would remove his hand of blessing from them if they turned against him. **[Refer back to James 5:19-20]** Elijah was the one that God BURDENED with this prayer at that time for a single purpose:

1 Kings 18:36-39, 41-45 NIV

36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "LORD, the 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.** 37 Answer me, LORD, answer me, **so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.**" 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. 39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!". . . 41 And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain." 42 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.** 43 "Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked. "There is nothing there," he said. Seven times Elijah said, "Go back." 44 The seventh time the servant reported, **"A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea."** So Elijah said, **"Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'**" 45 Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel.

This was a prayer that brought the people into the presence of God for their REDEMPTION. Do you realize that God gives us this privilege in our life? **What is intercession? It is the act of going before God on behalf of another for God's good will to be done in their life.** [Healing/Restoration/Protection/Guidance/etc.] **But when we intercede for others, we are not just telling God about their needs (He already knows those needs anyway!). Instead, our prayers can actually BRING THEM into the PRESENCE of GOD so that they can EXPERIENCE HIM in a PERSONAL and POWERFUL way!**

***This is for THEIR GOOD – NOT YOURS. True intercession is SELFLESS!** It is a pouring out of yourself before God on behalf of another person. I know that I can be especially PASSIONATE when praying for things that I WANT or NEED, but you know that God is working in us when we pray just as passionately for the NEEDS OF

OTHERS! This glorifies God, and is actually EVIDENCE of the Holy Spirit STIRRING us to his work!

***This is what the Holy Spirit does THROUGH, WITH, and FOR us when we pray!**

Romans 8:26-28 NIV

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but **the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.** 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because **the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.** 28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Sometimes we do not know what to pray AT ALL. That's ok. **Just groan!** (Truth is, we NEVER know ALL that we need to be praying for anyway!) **I believe that the BURDEN TO PRAY for others like this actually COMES FROM GOD in the first place. He loves to place this beautiful burden on those that long to be used by him for his glory and the good of others! Have you ever felt this burden? Then PRAY!** This was what Abraham experienced when God came to visit him!

Genesis 18:16-17, 20-21 NIV

16 When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. 17 **Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? . . .** 20 Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous 21 that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know."

-Abraham's response was a BURDEN to INTERCEDE for Sodom and Gomorrah!

The Holy Spirit intercedes based on the will of God!

-Tie this to how great saints interceded for others according to God's will/character:

Abraham – Genesis 18-19 [Intercession according to God's MERCY/JUSTICE]

Moses – Exodus 32-33. [Intercession according to God's WORD and REPUTATION]

Like Elijah, these men interceded for others based on God's CHARACTER and his WILL that was KNOWN by them. **These men KNEW GOD! The better we KNOW God, the more confidently we will be able to pray according to the will of God!** I am learning in this season about the PRIMACY of focusing on who I am addressing, on why HE ALONE is worthy of our prayers, and on WHAT HE WANTS! **DON'T RUSH THIS!**

***This is what Jesus is doing for us constantly. Romans 8:31-35 NIV**

31 What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34 Who then is the one

who condemns? No one. **Christ Jesus who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.**

-He functions as our ADVOCATE; asking God for his BEST in our lives.

-This is not based on what we DESERVE!

*When I am at my WORST, Jesus is interceding for me AT THAT MOMENT!

Moses's intercession for Israel - Exodus 32:9-11, 14 NIV

9 "I have seen these people," the LORD said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people. 10 **Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them.** Then I will make you into a great nation." 11 But Moses **sought the favor** of the LORD his God. "LORD," he said, "why should your anger burn against your people, whom you brought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand? . . . 14 Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.

["Sought the favor" = "To stroke or caress the face of another to soothe"]

Moses did not seek the favor of God for himself! He sought the favor of God for people that were AT THAT MOMENT worshipping a golden calf and committing other unspeakable sins! How incredible is it that Jesus intercedes for us in this same way? He is EVER FAITHFUL! **Hebrews 7:23-25 NIV**

23 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; 24 but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. 25 Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, **because he always lives to intercede for them.**

Aren't you grateful that Jesus NEVER CEASES to INTERCEDE for us? I am! I know how fickle and prone I am to falter and fall, but Jesus will never forsake me. He is even now standing before God on my behalf, pleading for God's perfect will do be done IN ME and THROUGH ME.

What BURDENS from the Lord for others are you carrying these days? Don't give up! Don't quit! God put this burden on you so that you can intercede for them according to his will for their good and his glory. He may even lead you to pray this way for your ENEMIES! As God answers these prayers, you will not only celebrate the goodness of God in their lives, you will grow closer to him than you have ever been! This is the unexpected beauty of prayer.

Let's pray.

PRAYER 2023
Hernando Facilitation Guide
Praying for Others
James 5:14-20

Start talking

How has God used the prayers of others to impact your life?

Start thinking.

What are you learning about prayer during this season of your life?

Start sharing.

[Read James 5:14-20](#). Why does God's Word consistently stress the importance of praying for one another? Why did James remind us that Elijah was a righteous man, and a "person just like us?"

[Read 1 Kings 18:36-45 and James 5:19-20](#). How did Elijah's prayer express God's purpose for all that he had led Elijah to pray and do? How can our intercessory prayers carry people into the presence of God (even if they do not want to be there!)? How have you seen God restore people to faith through the prayers of others?

[Read Romans 8:26-28 and Genesis 18:16-23](#). How does the Holy Spirit help us to pray? Where does the burden to pray for others come from? How have you experienced this?

[Read Romans 8:31-35 and Hebrews 7:23-25](#). How do these verses encourage you pray for others more? What do these verses tell you about the love and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus?

Start praying.

Ask God to place his burden for others into your heart. Then . . . Pray!

Start doing.

Commit out loud to your group that you will begin to practice praying WITH others right when they ask for prayer about anything.