

One Another *Confess and Pray for One Another*

Most of us know what it's like to answer, "I'm fine," when we're really not.

We can even start to believe that carrying things alone is normal.

Today, as we close the series, we're stepping into one of the most personal and powerful "one another" commands in the New Testament.

To confess your sins to each other and pray for each other.

James is the half-brother of Jesus.

He is an elder in the Church of Jerusalem.

He is one of the leaders in the Church who is grinding it out everyday shepherding a congregation of both Jews and Gentiles.

James has grown up spiritually in the trenches of serving God and leading the first church of Christ followers.

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 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. 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. 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."

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. Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins."
James
5:13-20 NIV

1) Bring Your _____ to God

James begins this section with a very simple question: ***"Is anyone among you in trouble?"***

James isn't only talking about one category of pain.

He's speaking to:

- the person who's overwhelmed
- the person who's under pressure
- the person who feels like life has become heavier than they expected.

He's teaching the church to bring the whole range of human experience into the presence of God.

When you're suffering, pray.

When you're joyful, worship.

When you're sick, call for spiritual care.

When you're weak, don't disappear.

When things are good, don't forget the Lord.

When things are hard, don't assume you have to be strong enough on your own.

- There are things we bring to God.
- There are things we try to manage ourselves.
- There are parts of our life we share with the church.
- There are parts we keep hidden because we don't want to feel needy, exposed, or inconvenient.

Whatever condition you're in, bring it to God.

The church James describes is very different from a group of people who gather once a week, smile politely, and then go back to carrying everything alone. This is a community where people actually know when someone is suffering.

James is not giving us a formula that says every sickness will immediately be healed if we pray the right way.

Paul prayed for his thorn in the flesh to be removed.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, the Lord said, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."*

We pray with confidence.

We trust God with the outcome.

Prayer is the first movement of a dependent heart.

For some of us, the most obedient step today may be surprisingly simple. Tell someone you're not okay. Ask for prayer.

James is inviting the church into a way of life where trouble leads to prayer, joy leads to praise, sickness leads to care, and weakness leads to community. Bring your whole life

to God.

Let God's people come near enough to pray with you.

2) Step Into the Light with People You _____

James continues in verse 16 with one of the most direct and vulnerable commands in the New Testament: *"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*

That verse can make us uncomfortable. Because confession means I stop managing my image. It means I allow someone to know the truth about an area of my life where I've sinned, struggled, failed, or wandered.

He says healing is connected, in some way, to confession and prayer within the community of faith.

This doesn't mean we confess our sins to another person instead of confessing them to God.

First John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

God alone forgives sin in the deepest and ultimate sense.

Our forgiveness is secured through Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection, through His mercy and grace.

At the same time, James tells us there is something spiritually healing about bringing sin into the light with trusted believers who will pray for us.

Many of us have experienced this. A thought becomes a pattern. A pattern becomes a habit. A habit becomes part of the way we cope. James offers a different path.

Confess - Pray - Be healed.

That doesn't mean you need to tell every person every detail of your life. Confession is not a public performance. Vulnerability should not be demanded from people in careless environments.

You need people who love Jesus, love you, can keep confidence appropriately, will pray, will tell you the truth, and won't use your weakness as a weapon.

Confession is not stepping into condemnation. In Christ, confession is stepping into mercy.

Romans 8:1 says, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

That means if you belong to Jesus, your sin is serious, but it is not stronger than His grace.

When the church is healthy, it becomes a place where people can tell the truth and be met with grace that helps them change.

What would it look like to practice James 5:16?

It may look like asking a trusted believer, "Can I be honest with you about something I've been hiding?"

Maybe it's saying to your spouse, "I need to stop minimizing this."

It could mean telling your small group leader, "I need accountability and prayer." For some, it may involve contacting an elder, a counselor, or a recovery ministry because the pattern has gone on long enough and you need help walking toward freedom. The goal is healing.

The purpose is to bring what has been hidden into the light of Christ, where prayer, truth, love, and accountability can begin to do their work.

If someone confesses sin or struggle to you, handle that moment with holy care.

- Don't gossip.
- Don't act shocked.
- Don't rush to fix everything in thirty seconds.

Listen, pray, and speak truth with gentleness.

Help them take the next faithful step.

The church should be one of the safest places to tell the truth about sin, weakness, and need, since we are a people gathered around a Savior who gives mercy to sinners.

3) Pray Like God Is _____

After James tells us to confess and pray, he says, "*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*"

Then he gives an example from the life of Elijah. James says, "*Elijah was a human being, even as we are.*" That little phrase matters.

Elijah was a prophet, and when we read about him in the Old Testament, his life can feel larger than ours.

Yet James pauses and reminds us that Elijah was human like us.

In 1 Kings 19, after a great spiritual victory, Elijah became afraid and ran for his life. He sat under a broom bush and prayed that he might die. He was exhausted, discouraged, and overwhelmed.

When James uses Elijah as an example of powerful prayer, he's not saying, "Prayer works for spiritual superheroes." He's saying God works through the prayers of ordinary, dependent people.
That should encourage us.

James presses us toward a more active faith.

- Pray right there.
- Pray simply.
- Pray sincerely.
- Pray because God is listening.

The power of prayer is not in impressive words. It's not in volume. It's not in sounding polished.

The power of prayer is in the God who hears His children.

A righteous person is not someone who has never sinned.

A righteous person is in right relationship with themselves, with others, and most of all to God. It's someone who belongs to God, walks with God, and comes to God in faith.

As we walk in His ways, our prayers become part of His work in the world.

God may use your ordinary, imperfect, heartfelt prayer as part of someone's healing, endurance, repentance, restoration, or hope.

James ends this passage by talking about someone who wanders from the truth and another person who brings them back.

That's a deeply relational picture. It means Christian community includes pursuit.

- If someone drifts, we don't just notice and move on.
- If someone disappears, we don't only wonder where they went.
- If someone gets tangled in sin, we don't write them off.

We help them come home. This is part of what it means to be a "one another" people.

Love one another.

Encourage one another.

Serve one another.

Confess to one another.

Pray for one another.

Over these four weeks, we haven't been talking about church as an event we attend.

We've been talking about a family formed by Jesus, filled by the Spirit, and sent into the world as a living display of God's love.

As we close this series, don't let this become four weeks of good ideas. Ask God for one concrete step.

This is the life Jesus invites us into.

- It's more vulnerable than pretending.
- It's more humbling than self-reliance.
- It's also where healing begins to take root.

Here's the lesson from this series. Don't live the Christian life alone. Love someone on purpose. Encourage someone this week.

Serve where there is a need. Confess what needs to come into the light. Pray with someone, and let someone pray for you.

Take one faithful step toward being known, and take one faithful step toward knowing and caring for someone else.

This whole faith thing becomes so much more powerful when we travel with one another.