

One Another: The Power of Praying Together
Growth Group Discussion
James 5:13-18

Opening Questions (get everyone involved in discussion):

- What does your current prayer life look like? Do you have space in your prayer life to intercede for others. Why/why not?
- *Note for Leaders:* Being that the main “one another” command here is to confess your sin and pray for one another, there are going to be less questions on this guide. The hope is that you could set aside 15 minutes or more in your group to have people praying for one another!

1. Read James 5:13-18

- James begins by telling us to pray in every circumstance. It is easy to know why we should pray in times of trouble and in sickness, but in verse 13b he says: “is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.”
 - Why does James command his church to pray in happy times?
 - Reflect for a second. Think of 5 things in your life that you can praise God for. List them. Of the 5, think of 2 blessings God has brought into your life in the last 3 months. List them.
 - It has been said that praise guards us against being overly cynical or down? Do you agree?
- Read James 4:2-3. Here, James encourages his church to pray, yet, to make sure that they’re praying according to God’s motives. There is a tension here. James seems to be saying that there are some blessings that his church does not have because of prayerlessness. (you do not have, because you do not ask). Yet, our asking needs to be balanced with the understanding that God is sovereign and his will prevail.
 - Prayerlessness results in failure to receive man of God’s blessings. Have you considered the fact that there may be some blessings that you are not experiencing because you have not asked God for them? How can you ask God more?
 - *Note to leaders: I am not implying a “prosperity” gospel or “name it and claim it” theology. Rather, James is making an invitation to his church and to us that we should ask God for what we seek. The Cross of Christ has made it so that we can approach God’s throne with boldness expecting to receive mercy and grace when we need. (Heb. 4:14-16)*
- Pastor Erik asked the question: Do you see prayer as the first step to change/improvement/embarking on something or as a last resort when all else fails?
 - If you see it as a first step, praise God. If you find yourself coming to prayer once everything fails, how can you make prayer more regular and something that you start with instead of something that you do when all else fails?
- The command to confess your sins and pray for one another is the central command in James. By confession, James has two things in mind. One, is that if you have wronged someone and haven’t confessed, James is calling you to go and confess

your sins. Further, if someone has confessed and you haven't forgiven, forgiveness is also something you must give.

- Take some time to inventory your relationships with others. Is there anyone that you have wronged that you need to go confess and ask forgiveness of? Also, are you holding a grudge or unwilling to forgive someone that you know you need to?
 - *Note to Leaders: Depending on what comes up here, you are going to want to remind either the one who needs to confess and ask forgiveness or the one who needs to forgive of the grace and power of Christ. To the one who has wronged someone--remind them that the Holy Spirit will give them the grace to confess their sin. Remind them that even though they have wronged someone, Christ has forgiven them and will not hold this against them. To the one who is having a hard time forgiving someone, they need to be reminded that we have ultimately been forgiven by God because of Christ. We are recipients of a forgiveness that we did not deserve and even though we are hurt, Christ's grace is able to heal our hurts and help us forgive. Both the one who has wronged another and the one who is holding a grudge need to be reminded that God in Christ loves them, forgives them and the Holy Spirit will give them the power to confess the wrong and forgive, as hard as it may be.*
- The second thing James has in mind regarding confessing your sins to one another is confession as burden-bearing. When we confess our sins or issues we are dealing with to another in the church, two things happen: 1. We experience the freedom of bringing things out into light. The Enemy loves to keep things hidden. Keeping things hidden results in despair and isolation. When we share our struggles, we experience the freedom of exposing things to the light of Christ. 2. We also experience help as we invite either our growth group, individual or accountability partner in to help pray for us. In praying for us, they also help bear our burden and carry our load.
 - Take a moment to reflect for a second. Is there any burden that you are currently carrying alone? Is this something that this growth group can help you carry?

PRAYER:

- Note to Leaders: At this point, I encourage you to spend some time praying for one another. The big idea behind James 5:13-18 is that our prayers are powerful and effective. I can't think of a better thing than to spend the rest of the time interceding for one another. Let this time be a time of intercession and support through prayer.
 - Suggestion: Break out into smaller groups of 2-3 and encourage one another to pray for each other.