

Bible Experience

James 5:13-18

Are any among you suffering? They should keep on praying about it. And those who have reason to be thankful should continually sing praises to the Lord.

14 Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And their prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make them well. And anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results. 17 Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for the next three and a half years! 18 Then he prayed for rain, and down it poured. The grass turned green, and the crops began to grow again. NLT

What you will need:

Your Journal

1) Read it

Read it to yourself 3 times.

2) Write about it

What are the main themes of this passage? What is it saying? What are your initial reactions to this? Write all your thoughts down in your journal.

3) Memorize it

Let's just focus on the second half of verse 16. "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results." (NLT)

4) Personalize it

As I see it, there are three separate topics being dealt with in this passage:

- The role of prayer in healing
- Confessing your sins to others
- The power of an individual Christian's prayers

Let's take a look at how we can personalize each one of these topics

1) Prayer and Healing – Without getting too controversial, these verses clearly seem to indicate that God chooses to heal when His people pray. Sometimes God heals instantly. Sometimes He uses doctors and medicine. And sometimes for reasons that we don't always understand, God chooses not to heal.

One of the best ways to personalize the topic of prayer and healing is to simply begin praying for God to heal people that are sick. Make a list of people you know that are sick and begin praying for them. Let them know you are praying for them.

When they recover, whether miraculously or through medicine and doctors, give God glory by thanking Him for the healing. It's okay to be honest with God and talk to Him about your frustration or anger when he decides not to heal. Talking to your pastor about this may also be helpful.

Methodology is really not all that important. Some people get caught up with the anointing of oil in this passage. God is not trying to make a cookie cutter approach to healing here.

Some people feel that the oil was part of a medical treatment used at that time. Whether that's true or not, it's good to allow God to be sovereign and not put Him in a box.

The Bible never records that Jesus or the apostles anointed anyone with oil when they prayed for healing. In fact, Jesus used many different methods to heal people.

In conclusion, don't feel like you have to anoint someone with oil to pray for healing. Just believe that our God is a healing God and will answer our prayers.

2) Confessing your sins to others – This can be a very sensitive subject and should be handled with wisdom and discretion. Let me assure you, involving another person in your battle with sin can be a powerful weapon to help you achieve victory.

Again, the best way to personalize this topic is to jump right in with both feet. Think of a mature, Christian person that you know and trust. (It's always better to select a person of the same sex.)

Pick a person that will encourage and support you. If the person is more on the glass is half-empty side of life, he/she will likely not be a good candidate for this. In general, positive people make better encouragers.

Once you have selected someone, contact them and ask them if they would be willing to meet with you on a regular basis to pray with you about areas you are struggling with. You can meet with them as often as you like but usually once a week or twice a month is sufficient.

Establish ground rules with the person. Confidentiality is the biggest one. What is said during your meeting must stay there.

Another important rule is to have the person refrain from giving advice unless it is asked for. The main purpose of the meeting is to encourage you and pray with you, not to offer plans of how to fix you.

I believe that involving another person in your struggles can bring tremendous healing to your life, both physically and spiritually.

3) The power of an individual Christian's prayer – Let's face it. Prayer is a powerful force. This passage tells us that Elijah, one of the greatest Old Testament prophets was a man just like us. Our prayers can be just as powerful as his.

The question that I have for you is this. Do you believe that your prayers can make a difference? Most Christians will dutifully answer "yes" at this point. But the proof lies in your actions.

If you really believe that your prayers have great power and wonderful results, then you will spend time praying. If you don't, then you won't pray very much. I'm not here to condemn you. I just want you to be honest with yourself. Do you really believe in prayer? (Remember, true belief allows is backed up by action)

Don't feel bad, Even if you don't believe in prayer as much as you would like to, the good news is that you can change.

It doesn't matter if you didn't pray as much as you should have in the past. You can't do anything about that. It also doesn't matter a whole lot about the good intentions you have to pray more in the future. The only thing that matters is right now.

What are you going to do right now? Believe in the power of prayer. Start praying for things and believe that God will make a difference. Well, what are you waiting for? Start praying.