



LEADER'S GUIDE – March 31

LEADER NOTE: This passage is very straightforward. James tells us when and how we should pray. Due to this straightforward passage, this discussion guide focuses more on applying these statements than trying to understand them deeper. As you lead this discussion, we would recommend that you consider it a mix between Bible discussion and prayer requests.

Depending where the people in your group are spiritually, use your discernment on how personal and deep you want to get. If your group has non-believers and new believers who are still unfamiliar with prayer, consider focusing on questions 2 - 4. These are appropriate for a bigger co-ed group. If your group has mature believers, you may consider breaking up for part of the meeting into men and women and discussing more of verse 16 and how you can confess sins to one another and hold each other accountable. The personal response questions can help with this.

PRIMARY PASSAGE

James 5:13-20: ¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. 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.

1.) Read the whole passage. In v. 13, When does James tell us to pray? In times of trouble and in times of happiness. **Why do you think that it is important to pray in each of these moments?** Consider the other meaningful relationships in your life. These people walk through all seasons of life together and God desires the same in our life. If all we do is talk to God in the difficult times, then we never rejoice in the good things that he provides. Also, we can easily fall into the “genie trap” where we use God as a means to relief from our struggles opposed to having a meaningful relationship with him.

2.) Read Psalms 150:2, Psalms 95:2-3, Psalms 107:8-9. Psalms 28:7. Think of a “song of praise” as just celebrating why and how God is so good! Let’s take a few moments and share some of the ways that we are thankful for who God is and what he has done in our life. Let most or all the group celebrate. You may have to get it started by celebrating something small (e.g. beautiful weather). At the end, have someone give a prayer of thanksgiving for all that was mentioned.

3.) Let’s take a moment and discuss when we feel troubled. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 and Galatians 6:2. What do these verses tell us about how we should respond in times of trouble? 2 Corinthians 1 is a great passage about how God comforts us when we are troubled. It also talks about how God calls us to help comfort others. Galatians 6:2, shows us how God did not intend for us to go through life alone, but for our brothers and sisters to come alongside us and help carry the burdens we have.

4.) Let’s take a few moments and put this into action. Who would want to share how they are currently feeling troubled or burdened in life? Our group would love to help you carry that burden. Use your discernment on how to facilitate. You may pause after each person shares and pray for that person specifically or you may have multiple people share and have one person pray collectively over the requests. However you do this, make sure someone writes down the requests and consider how you can remind the group of those prayers throughout the week and in future meetings (e.g. group text, ask for an update next week, etc.)

5.) Read vv.14-20. When are some of the times that should we pray for one another? When people are sick and when people are in sin. **LEADER NOTE:** One common misconception in v15 is that if we pray, we will be healed when and how we expect. God will always respond, but not in the way that we expect. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 is a great example about how Paul prayed for relief and was never given it the way that he asked because the Lord was using that “thorn” for a bigger purpose. **What else should we do along with praying?** In vv.19-20, we see that we should not just pray, but act. We should look to love and serve those who are wandering from the truth.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

James gives us four principles for prayer: Pray in times of trouble, pray in times of happiness, pray for those who are sick, and pray for those who are in sin.

- **How can you prioritize prayer in your life starting this week?**
- **What sins in your life do you need to confess to God and ask for someone to carry that burden?**