

# JAMES – PRACTICAL LESSONS IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY

## THE POWER OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER – JAMES 5:16-18

### 1. REVIEW

A. THE **PURPOSE** OF ANY STUDY ON **PRAYER** SHOULD **NOT** BE TO **GUILT** US INTO **PRAYING**... IT SHOULD **GUIDE** US INTO **PRAYING SO MUCH THAT PRAYER BECOMES THE NATURAL INSTINCTIVE RESPONSE TO EVERYTHING IN OUR LIFE.**

1. THAT'S WHAT **PAUL** MEANT WHEN HE WROTE... **1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NASB) pray without ceasing; ... 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NLT) Never stop praying... 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (MSG) pray all the time;**

B. **JAMES 5:16-18: "THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON IN OUR LIFE" ANSWERS THREE QUESTIONS:**

1. **WHAT IS OUR MOST POWERFUL WEAPON?**

2. **WHO CAN USE THAT WEAPON?**

3. **WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF USING THAT WEAPON?**

### 2. THE FIRST QUESTION: **WHAT IS OUR MOST POWERFUL WEAPON?**

A. THE **ANSWER** IS THAT OUR **MOST POWERFUL WEAPON** IS THE **"EFFECTIVE"** PRAYER OF A **RIGHTEOUS PERSON!**

B. **James 5:16-18 (NLT)** "and **pray for one another**, that you may be healed. The **effective prayer** of a **righteous person** has **great power** and **produces wonderful results.**"

C. OUR **STUDY OF JAMES 5:16-18** WILL **FOCUS ON HELPS AND HINDERENCES TO "EFFECTIVE" PRAYER:**

D. **HELP FOR "EFFECTIVE" PRAYER:** IS FOR THE PERSON DOING THE PRAYING TO **TAKE THE TIME TO LISTEN TO GOD.**

1. **NOTE: PRAYER** IS MEANT TO BE A **TWO-WAY CONVERSATION.**

a. **IF WE** ARE DOING **ALL THE TALKING**... WE **CAN'T HEAR FROM GOD.**

b. **THEREFORE... ONE REASON WE DO NOT HEAR GOD'S VOICE** IS BECAUSE WE ARE **NOT LISTENING**... WE ARE **ONLY TALKING!**

2. WE WANT **GOD TO TALK TO US** IN A **LOUD VOICE** AND **WRITE** IT IN **NEON**... **HOWEVER GOD** MOST OFTEN **SPEAKS** IN A **"GENTLE WHISPER"** (NLT)... A **"STILL SMALL VOICE"** (NKJ)... **1 Kings 19:13b (NLT)**

3. WE THINK **PRAYER** IS ABOUT **US TALKING TO GOD**... **BUT "EFFECTIVE" PRAYER** INCLUDES **GOD TALKING TO US.**

a. **SO... FOR PRAYER** TO BE **"EFFECTIVE"** WE NEED TO GET IN A **QUIET PLACE** SO WE CAN **HEAR GOD'S VOICE!**

E. **HINDERANCE TO "EFFECTIVE" PRAYER:** IS THAT WE **CAN'T HEAR GOD'S VOICE** BECAUSE THERE'S TOO MUCH **NOISE** IN OUR **CULTURE** THAT **DISTRACT US FROM HEARING HIS "SMALL QUIET VOICE".**

a. **EXAMPLES:** CELL PHONES, TELEVISION, CAR RADIO

F. **HELP FOR "EFFECTIVE" PRAYER:** IS TO **UNDERSTAND** THAT GOD **SPEAKS** TO US WHEN WE **TAKE TIME TO STUDY HIS WORD.**

1. **SO, TO HEAR FROM GOD**... TAKE THE **TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE!**

2. **HINDERANCE TO "EFFECTIVE" PRAYER:** IS THAT OUR **PRAYERS** ARE **OFTEN PRAYERS OF PETITION** RATHER THAN PRAYERS OF **THANKSGIVING, INTERCESSION, OR SEEKING FORGIVENESS.**

3. **SOMETIMES WE VIEW** GOD AS A **DIVINE SANTA CLAUS.**

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a. WE ARE SO **BUSY INSTRUCTING GOD** WE CAN'T **HEAR HIM INSTRUCTING US!!**

G. **HELP FOR “EFFECTIVE” PRAYER: IS TO CHANGE OUR PERSPECTIVE ON OUR CIRCUMSTANCES TO GOD’S PERSPECTIVE.**

1. **REMEMBER: “WHEN WE CHANGE THE WAY WE LOOK AT THINGS, THE THINGS WE LOOK AT CHANGE”.**

a. **INTERPRETATION: IF WE CHOOSE TO LOOK AT OUR CIRCUMSTANCES (AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OTHERS WE ARE PRAYING FOR) TO GOD’S PERSPECTIVE WE GAIN HIS INSIGHT... AND HIS PERSPECTIVE CHANGES OUR PERSPECTIVE OF OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.**

1) **AND... HAVING GOD’S PERSPECTIVE CHANGES THE WAY WE PRAY!**

2) **REMEMBER: THE PRAYER THAT NEVER FAILS IS “YOUR WILL BE DONE!”**

H. **HELP FOR “EFFECTIVE” PRAYER: IS TO UNDERSTAND THAT ONE OF THE SECRETS OF PRAYER IS IN OUR POSITION... NOT OUR PETITION!**

1. **IN OTHER WORDS... “EFFECTIVE” PRAYER IS WHERE WE STAY ... NOT WHAT WE SAY!**

2. **John 15:4-7 "Abide in Me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it **abides** in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you **abide** in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. **"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."**

a. **IF WE ARE “ABIDING” OUR PRAYER WILL BE JESUS’ PRAYER...**

1) **Luke 22:41-42 (NASB)** And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, "Father, **if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.**"

3. **TO “ABIDE” MEANS THAT WE ARE MAINTAINING A CONTINUAL AND A GROWING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.**

a. **THE FUNDAMENTAL WAYS WE “ABIDE” ARE:**

1) **THROUGH CONSISTENT “EFFECTIVE” PRAYER, THE STUDY OF GOD’S WORD, AND CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.**

b. **“ABIDING” TAKES TIME AND TIME IS OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE IN ALL RELATIONSHIPS.**

4. **WHEN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD GROWS, OUR TRUST IN HIM GROWS... AND WE BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT THE THINGS GOD WANTS FOR ME ARE BETTER THAN THE THINGS I WANT FOR MYSELF.**

I. **HINDERANCE TO “EFFECTIVE” PRAYER: IS UNCONFESED SIN BECAUSE IT SEPARATES US FROM OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.**

1. **Matthew 6:7-13 (NASB)** "And when you are praying, **do not use meaningless repetition** as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. **"Pray, then, in this way:** (a) 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. (b) 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. (c) 'Give us this day our daily bread. (d) **'And forgive us our debts (sins), as we also have**

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forgiven our debtors (those who sin against us). (e) 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'

2. **NOTE: THE "LORD'S PRAYER" IS A MODEL FOR PRAYER... "Pray, then, in this way:"... NOT "Pray then, these exact words:"**
  - a. **ADORATION (PRAISE/WORSHIP)**
  - b. **CONSECRATION (SET APART)**
  - c. **SUPPLICATION (NEEDS)**
  - d. **INTERCESSION (FORGIVENESS OF SIN)**
  - e. **PROTECTION (SATAN)**
3. **INTERCESSION INCLUDES:**
  - a. **CONFESSION (NAME OUR SIN)**
  - b. **REPENTANCE (OF OUR SINS)**
  - c. **ASKING GOD FOR FORGIVENESS (OF OUR SINS)**
4. **SO... FOR OUR PRAYERS TO BE "EFFECTIVE", IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE REPENT, CONFESS, AND ASK GOD FOR FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS IN ORDER TO RESTORE OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.**
  - a. **REPENTANCE, CONFESSION AND ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS IS LIKE CORRECTING A RIFT IN OUR MARRIAGE (OR ANY OTHER) RELATIONSHIP... IT RESTORES THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP.**
    - 1) **THE PROCESS: "WILL YOU PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR (NAME THE OFFENSE)?"... NOT, "I'M SORRY!"**
3. **THE SECOND QUESTION: WHO CAN USE THE WEAPON OF "EFFECTIVE" PRAYER?**
  - A. **James 5:17 (NLT) Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years!**
  - B. **JAMES WRITES THAT IMPERFECT PEOPLE CAN USE THE WEAPON OF "EFFECTIVE" PRAYER?**
    1. **HE RECORDS ELIJAH'S STORY TO REMIND US THAT GOD CAN AND DOES CHOOSE TO USE IMPERFECT PEOPLE... "Elijah was as human as we are".**
  - C. **THE SECRET OF ELIJAH'S COURAGE, THE SECRET OF HIS FAITH, THE SECRET OF HIS STRENGTH WASN'T HIM... IT WAS GOD!**
    1. **SOMETIMES THE WORLD, OUR FLESH, AND SATAN TELL US, THAT WE HAVE TO BE PERFECT FOR GOD TO USE US.**
      - a. **WE CONSIDER THE SIN IN OUR LIFE AND THINK WE CAN'T POSSIBLY BE USED BY GOD.**
      - b. **JAMES MUST HAVE BEEN THINKING OF HIS OWN FAILURES WHEN HE WROTE JAMES 5:17.**
        - 1) **John 7:2-5 (NASB) "Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that**

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Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." **For not even His brothers were believing in Him.**"

D. THE BIBLE IS FILLED WITH IMPERFECT PEOPLE WHO GOD USED WHEN THEY PRAYED "EFFECTIVE" PRAYERS.

1. DISCUSS: WHO SOME OF THEM WERE.

E. "Elijah was as human as we are" ... AN IMPERFECT TOOL IN THE HANDS OF A PERFECT GOD!

1. JAMES' POINT IS THAT OUR SIN IS NOT PROOF THAT GOD CAN'T USE US FOR HIS PURPOSES!

F. GOD DOESN'T LOOK WITH HUMAN EYES... HE'S NOT LOOKING FOR THE STRONGEST OR THE BIGGEST OR THE WISEST.

1. HE'S JUST LOOKING FOR AN IMPERFECT TOOL WHO'S WILLING TO SUBMIT THEMSELVES TO A PERFECT GOD!

2. 1 Corinthians 1:26-27 (NASB) "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; **BUT GOD** has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,"

3. PAUL WROTE IN 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NLT2) "Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me."

4. THIRD QUESTION: WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF USING THE WEAPON OF "EFFECTIVE PRAYER?"

A. James 5:17-18 (NLT) "Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly (EFFECTIVELY) that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! Then, when he prayed again (EFFECTIVELY), the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops."

B. "EFFECTIVE" PRAYER ALWAYS CHANGES SOMETHING.

1. SOMETIMES IT'S VISIBLE...SOMETIMES IT'S NOT.

2. SOMETIMES IT'S SPIRITUAL,

3. SOMETIMES IT'S PHYSICAL.

4. SOMETIMES IT CHANGES OUR CIRCUMSTANCES,

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5. SOMETIMES IT **CHANGES US**,
  6. **BUT, IT ALWAYS CHANGES SOMETHING!**
- C. **NOTE: PRAYER DOES NOT ALWAYS CHANGE OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.... SOMETIMES IT JUST SHOWS US HOW SMALL THEY ARE.**
1. **PRAYER DOES NOT ALWAYS MOVE OUR MOUNTAINS. SOMETIMES IT JUST GIVES US THE STRENGTH TO CLIMB THEM.**
  2. **WE DO NOT ALWAYS KNOW WHAT PRAYER WILL CHANGE... BUT WE CAN KNOW IT ALWAYS CHANGES SOMETHING.**
- D. **WE DO NOT KNOW WHEN PRAYER WILL CHANGE THINGS.**
1. **SOMETIMES IT IS INSTANT, SOMETIMES IT WILL BE TOMORROW, AND SOMETIMES YEARS MAY PASS.**
  2. **THE PROBLEM: WITH PRAYER OFTEN IS US... BECAUSE WE WANT WHAT WE WANT WHEN WE WANT IT!**
    - a. **WE VIEW GOD AS THE DEVINE SANTA CLAUS... BUT WE DO NOT WANT TO WAIT UNTIL CHRISTMAS!**
- E. **James 5:17-18 (NLT)** “Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that **no rain would fall**, **none fell for three and a half years!** Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.”
1. **DURING THOSE THREE AND A HALF YEARS ELIJAH WAS HATED BY THE PEOPLE WHO WERE AFFECTED BY THE DROUGHT AND HE WAS RUNNING FROM THE THREATS OF KING AHAB AND QUEEN JEZEBEL.**
  2. **NOTE: ELIJAH'S PRAYER WAS PREDICATED ON HIM LISTENING TO GOD TO TELL HIM WHEN AND WHAT TO PRAY.**
    - a. **HE HAD TO WAIT THREE AND A HALF YEARS ON GOD'S PROMISE TO BE FULFILLED... KEEPING HIS EYES NOT ON HIS CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT ON GOD'S PROMISE.**
      - 1) **ELIJAH HAD TO HAVE FAITH AND TRUST, AND HE HAD TO LISTEN.**
        - i. **THAT REMINDS US OF NOAH WHO WAITED OVER 100 YEARS!**
- F. **APPLICATION: WHEN WE PRAY WE SHOULD PRAY IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD'S WILL AND HIS TIMING.**
1. **THAT IS DIFFICULT FOR MOST OF US... BECAUSE WE WANT WHAT WE WANT WHEN WE WANT IT!**

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2. **BUT... FOR OUR PRAYERS TO BE “EFFECTIVE” WE MUST TRUST GOD’S PLAN AND HIS PURPOSE.**

a. **SO WE PRAY... “YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOUR WILL BE DONE”.**

G. **NOTE: GOD’S DELAYS ARE NOT NECESSARILY HIS DENIALS.**

1. **SOMETIMES HE DOESN'T GIVE US WHAT WE ASK FOR BECAUSE HE WANTS TO GIVE US SOMETHING MUCH BETTER AT A LATER TIME!**

2. **Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)** “For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

3. **SOMETIMES GOD DOES NOT WANT THE THINGS WE ARE PRAYING FOR NOW TO DERAIL THE BETTER THINGS HE HAS FOR US IN THE FUTURE.**

H. **QUESTION: DO YOU TRUST GOD MORE THAN YOU TRUST YOURSELF FOR THE THINGS THAT YOU NEED... NOT THE THINGS THAT YOU WANT?**

1. **Proverbs 16:9 (NLT)** “We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.”

2. **DO YOU TRUST GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU MORE THAN THE PLANS THAT YOU HAVE FOR YOURSELF?**

a. **DO YOU WANT WHAT GOD HAS FOR YOU... MORE THAN YOU WANT WHAT YOU WANT FOR YOU?**

1) **MARY AND MARTHA WANTED LAZARUS HEALED... BUT GOD!**

2) **MOSES WANTED A WAY AROUND THE RED SEA... BUT GOD!**

3) **JOSEPH'S BROTHERS SOLD HIM INTO SLAVERY... BUT GOD!**

4) **GIDEON WANTED A HUGE ARMY... BUT GOD!**

5) **DO YOU HAVE A “BUT GOD” STORY?**

I. **SOMETIMES OUR PRAYERS ARE TOO SMALL.**

1. **PERHAPS WE WANT HEALING, “BUT GOD” WANTS RESURRECTION.**

2. **MAYBE WE WANT SOMETHING GOOD, “BUT GOD” WANTS SOMETHING GREAT.**

3. **TRUTH: IT MAY BE TIME FOR SOME OF US TO REALIZE THAT OUR EXPECTATION IS OUR LIMITATION.**

4. **REMEMBER: TO ADD THE WORDS JESUS USED IN GETHSEMANE TO OUR PRAYERS, “YET NOT MY WILL, BUT YOUR WILL BE DONE”.**

a. **Matthew 6:10 (NASB)** “Your kingdom come. **Your will be done**, On earth as it is in heaven”.

b. **THAT IS THE PRAYER THAT NEVER FAILS!!**

5. **AND...REMEMBER TO TRUST THAT IN THE WAITING, GOD IS PREPARING US FOR HIS BLESSING.**

5. **CLOSING:**

A. **REMEMBER:**

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1. WHEN (NOT IF) YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU LOVE, IS SUFFERING THAT YOUR MOST POWERFUL WEAPON IS “EFFECTIVE” PRAYER.
2. WE DO NOT PRAY FOR VICTORY... WE PRAY FROM VICTORY.
3. THE CROSS NOT ONLY CARRIES THE PENALTY FOR OUR SIN... IT CARRIES THE WEIGHT OF OUR BURDENS.
4. GOD’S PLAN FOR US IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN OUR PLAN FOR OURSELVES.
5. THE “EFFECTIVE” PRAYER THAT NEVER FAILS IS “NOT MY WILL, BUT YOUR WILL BE DONE.”