



August 10, 2025

Real Wisdom for a Messy World

PRAY, PRAISE, AND PURSUE

James 5:13-20



1. **Opening Discussion:** (You will probably want to use only one of these openers)

- a. It has been said that Christians live in one of three stages: we are about to experience some kind of a trial, we are currently experiencing a trial, or we have just experienced a trial. Do you agree? If so, in which stage are you currently?
- b. Sometimes in a movie, TV program, or real life, you hear it said that “In a small town, there are no secrets.” Why do you think this is? Why is life different in Northern Virginia?
- c. Periodically, we’re told that Northern Virginia is in a drought condition. Have you ever been in one that was so severe that water use was restricted or even rationed? How did it change your views about water?
- d. Have you ever had the experience of being able to intervene to keep someone from making a grave mistake? Without revealing personal details, describe the event. How did you feel? Was your intervention appreciated?

2. **Prayer:**

- a. Adoration – Pray a Psalm or other Scripture to focus on praising God.
- b. Confession – Spend time confessing any known sins. 1 John 1:9
- c. Thanksgiving – Thank God for answered prayers, blessings, gifts, and opportunities to serve.
- d. Supplications
 - i. Pray for the activities of His Church locally and around the world.
 - ii. Pray for the spiritual and physical needs of others and yourself.
- e. Least Reached People Group: **Pingdi Yao of China** (*from the IMB “Loving the Lost Through Prayer” guide*)

“Outsiders don’t often visit the flatlands in southern China where the Pingdi Yao (PING-dee YOW) live. Generations ago, they were forced by the Han Chinese to these remote places where they are now rice farmers. The Pingdi Yao believe in a god of creation named Tin Zay, but they do not know the Creator God. They even have stories of a great flood, but they don’t know the God who caused and calmed the flood. Of the 1.7 million Pingdi Yao, less than 500 are Christian [in percentage terms, that would be like having only 140 Christians in Prince William County – but in reality, there are almost twice that many churches in our county!]. Gospel materials are available in their language, but for years they have lived in darkness with no local church or missionary to preach the good news about Jesus — the Light of the world. Pray the Pingdi Yao will cry out to God today, hear the gospel, trust in Jesus, and be saved.”

3. **Sermon Key Points**

- a. Prayer Is Powerful and Proper for Every Situation
 - i. Prayer and praise are proper across the full range of human experience

- ii. Prayer is powerful because it calls on the unlimited power of God
- iii. Prayer is powerful because it aligns our hearts and minds to God's
- b. Prayerfully Pursue Those Walking Away from Truth
 - i. There are many kinds of people in a typical church, not all of them truly saved
 - ii. Every believer is encouraged to prayerfully pursue friends and relatives who wander from the truth
- c. Deepen Your Practice of Prayer and Praise
 - i. James the Just lived what he wrote here
 - ii. Intentionally grow your practice of prayer and praise

4. Bible Study:

- a. **Sunday Afternoon** – As soon as possible after the sermon, make time to consider:
 - i. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?
 - ii. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
 - iii. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
 - iv. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
 - v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?
- b. **Monday:**
 - i. Read the focal passage, James 5:13-20.
 - 1. What would you say was the main theme/topic James is making in these concluding verses of his letter?
 - 2. What does James tell us to do in the following situations? Why is it the best course of action?
 - a. When we are in trouble or suffering?
 - b. When we are happy or cheerful?
 - c. When we are sick?
 - ii. James points out that our response to either hardships or to blessings should be focused on God.
 - 1. Do you see most Christians responding in this way? Do you?
 - 2. What could we do to establish a more meaningful attitude of admiration and thankfulness?
- c. **Tuesday:**
 - i. Read and meditate on James 5:13a.
 - ii. How did the Psalmist provide the same message as James in Psalms 30, 50:15, and 91:15?
 - iii. When we think of suffering in the Bible, Job often comes to mind. How did he respond to his suffering (see Job 1:20-21, 2:10, & 13:15)?

- iv. What response did Paul and Silas have to being beaten and thrown in prison (see Acts 16:22-25)?
- v. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. How does this passage amplify what James tells us in 5:13a?
 - 1. When we pray during suffering, should we expect that the suffering will be removed? What might God say in response to our prayers?
 - 2. What allows/enables Paul to boast in his weakness? How different would our lives be if we boasted about our suffering rather than complained?

d. Wednesday:

- i. Read and meditate on James 5:13b. Then read 1 Corinthians 14:15, Ephesians 5:18-19, and Colossians 3:16.
- ii. According to these passages, what should be the nature of the praises we sing? The source? The motivation?
- iii. In what way is being cheerful/happy different from the outward circumstances associated with suffering?
 - 1. How does this account for the fact that Paul and Silas could be singing praises despite having been beaten and imprisoned (Acts 16:22-25)?
 - 2. How do 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Ephesians 5:18-21 show that the two conditions (suffering and cheerfulness) James addresses in verse 13 should not be considered mutually exclusive?
- iv. If you have access to a hymnal (or want to do an internet search), read the words to some of the older praise hymns. Then close by reading Psalm 145.

e. Thursday:

- i. Read and meditate on James 5:14-17 and 1 John 5:14-15.
- ii. Verses 13 and 14-15 both talk about prayer. What is the significant difference between the verses?
 - 1. Who is doing the praying in verses 14 & 15?
 - 2. Who are the elders (see Acts 14:23, 1 Timothy 3:2-4, 5:13, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4)?
 - 3. Who has to have faith?
 - a. Does James mean that if we simply have enough faith, it will guarantee that God will heal? Conversely, if someone the elders pray for is not healed, does it mean they lacked sufficient faith?
 - b. What is the determining factor in who is healed and who is not (see 1 John 5:14-15)?
- iii. In verse 16, James connects sickness and sin. Can each and every sickness be traced back to a particular sin (see John 9:2-3)?
 - 1. Can sickness sometimes be traced back to a particular sin (see John 5:14 and 1 Corinthians 11:29-30)?

2. Given that, what do you think James is saying in verse 16?

iv. How does James 5:13-16 reinforce the theme James introduced in 1:6-8?

f. **Friday:**

i. Read and meditate on James 5:17-18, then read the account of Elijah's prayers in 1 Kings 17:1-5 and 18:1-46.

ii. What point is James making in verses 17-18?

iii. How was Elijah's faith best demonstrated (see 1 Kings 17:5 and 18:1-2)?

iv. What was the key aspect of Elijah's prayer in 1 Kings 18:36-37? Whose glory and honor were to be served by answering this prayer? What lessons can we learn from it?

v. What was Elijah doing in verse 42? How was God's response different this time, Elijah prayed, from the response in verse 38? What did Elijah demonstrate by continuing to pray? What lesson can we learn from this?

vi. Immediately after the events of 1 Kings 18, Elijah demonstrates his weakness by fleeing in fear from Jezebel. How does James use this fact to let us know that the power of prayer is not limited to just a few great Biblical characters (see James 5:17a)?

g. **Saturday:**

i. Read and meditate on James 5:19-20, then read these verses about "truth": John 3:21, 8:31-32, 16:13, 17:17, 18:37, Galatians 5:7, Ephesians 4:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:10, and 1 John 3:18-19.

1. Based on these verses, what can you say about the "truth"?

2. What would it mean to "wander from the truth"?

ii. What does James exhort us as Christians to do for each other? What is the benefit of our caring for one another in that way?

iii. There is debate about whether James is writing about Christians who "wander" or about unbelievers who have associated with the church but never been saved (see Matthew 13:24-29 and 25:31-46). Regardless of which view you hold, who is responsible for responding to and helping the wanderer back (see Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1, and 1 John 5:16)?

5. **Application:**

- a. Clearly, James' main application in these verses is the importance and power of prayer. But his emphasis is not on prayers where we seek benefits for ourselves individually, or even on prayers that benefit the church. Our prayers should seek the will of God and serve to promote His honor and glory. When we grow in spiritual maturity to the point that we can truly pray "Thy will be done, on earth as in heaven," we will be praying the "prayer of a righteous person," and we will see the incredible power of prayer that James promises.
- b. Secondly, James emphasizes the importance of community. Not only should we pray for each other, for the sick, and for the "wanderers," we should be so close in community that we feel free to confess our sins to one another. This kind of community was common when James wrote. In America today, it is uncommon but can still be experienced in the Church, particularly in small (Thrive) group settings.