

Practical Christianity
How to Pray For Friends
James 5.16-20

*["In relation to His people God works only in answer to their prayers. It is in prayer that we exchange our natural strength for the supernatural strength of God." **Andrew Murray**]*

*["Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that that lies beyond the will of God." **Dr. R.A. Torrey**]*

*["You don't have a failure in your life but what is somehow a prayer failure. You don't have a need in your life But what earnest persistent prayer could supply that need in your life. You don't have a sin in your life But what proper prayer would have prevented." **Adrian Rodgers**]*

[James now focuses us upon intercessory prayer. Which is prayer for one another.]

Notice what James teaches us about intercessory prayer:

A. The Confession We Must Make (vs 16) [- **Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. – James tells us in this text that we are to Confess our faults one to another and pray for one another.]**

[Word Study - Confess - ἐξομολογεῖσθε (Gk) - **to assent. To confess, admit, profess or express agreement with. Confession to God involves concurring with Him in His verdict. (I) To promise, assent fully, agree (Luke 22:6). In the mid. voice, *exomologéomai*, to confess one's own sin (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; James 5:16; Sept. : Dan. 9:4). (II) To profess, confess, as the truth (Phil. 2:11); to confess, acknowledge as belonging to one (Rev. 3:5). With a dat. following, to give praise or glory to, glorify (Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21; Rom. 14:11; 15:9 quoted from Ps. 18:49, 50; Sept.: 1 Chr. 16:4; 2 Chr. 30:22; Ps. 57:9, 10).¹]**

¹ Zodhiates, Spiros: *The Complete Word Study Dictionary : New Testament*. electronic ed. Chattanooga, TN : AMG Publishers, 2000, c1992, c1993, S. G1843

[Confession takes on two senses in our text,]

1. [When we confess our sins to God we are agreeing with God about our sin.]
2. [When we confess our sins to our fellowman we are expressing our apology for wronging them.]

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James 5.16-20

A. The Confession We Must Make

[We are not good at confessing our sins. We are good at:]

- [Criticizing our friends]
- [Castigating our foes.]
- [Concealing our faults.]

["To err is human, and to cover it up is too."]

[Someone has said, **“Great revivals are not marked by great singing or great preaching, but by great confession of sin.”**²]

["Where God's people are broken, God seems to move."]

What takes place when we confess our faults?

1. There is **Restoration** (vs 16; Psalm 51.17) [- As we discovered in our last study in James this word Healed means just that, it means to be healed. If you are physically afflicted pray for a physical healing. If you are psychologically or spiritually afflicted pray for that kind of healing.]

[In this context, connecting the prayer for healing with confession, **if you are relationally afflicted**, if you have a broken relationship, pray for that kind of healing. Don't ever forget that God does not like nor endorse broken relationships or unforgiving hearts. If your relationship with someone requires some work, go work on it and if necessary lend it some heartfelt confession.]

[If your relationship with God is broken, then come to God confessing, or agreeing with God about your sin and its incredible penalty and God will respond. Don't ever forget what your sin cost God. It cost our Heavenly

² Author Unknown

Father His only Begotten son. It cost the Lord Jesus Christ much suffering and His life. Your sin, all sin, is costly to God and we must recognize and acknowledge what our sin did to our merciful and gracious Savior. The Bible says,]

[Psalm 51:17 ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.]

[The Lord Jesus Christ was literally broken for our every sin, will you be broken for your sins too?]

[1 John 1:9 ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.]

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James 5.16-20

A. The Confession We Must Make

1. There is Restoration

2. There is **Reconciliation** (Matt 5.23-24) [- **Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another** . . . - There can be no reconciliation, when a wrong is done, until there is confession.]

[**Outward Confession** – But not only do we need to confess our sins to our Heavenly Father, we may also need to confess our sins to our neighbor. If there is **ANY** broken relationship in your life, then God wants you to do what it takes to get that right. The Bible says,]

[Matthew 5:23-24 ²³ Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; ²⁴ Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.]

[**The Circle of Confession** - Be careful of the wiles of the devil. **James doesn't say display your faults or broadcast your faults.** Don't throw your pearls before swine (Matt 7.6). The circle of confession needs to follow the circle of sin.]

- [**Private Sin, Private Confession** - Between you and the lord, or a trusted prayer warrior.]
- [**Personal Sin, Personal Confession** - Talk about it between each other.]

- **[Public Sin, Public Confession** - If you have publicly dishonored the Lord, then you need to publicly make it right.]

3. **There is Revival (2 Chron 7.14)** [- When people get themselves right with God and right with each other there will be a great revival in our land and our world. The Bible states,]

[2 Chronicles 7:14 ¹⁴ If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.]

[It will be a great day in the Churches of America when confession replaces criticism and compassion replaces condemnation.]

B. The Command We Should Mind (vs 16) [- Confess your faults one to another, **and pray one for another**, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. - [Pray one for another.]

[Luke 18:1 ¹ . . . men ought always to pray, and not to faint;]

[1 Thessalonians 5:17 ¹⁷ Pray without ceasing.]

*[1 Samuel 12:23 ²³ Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should **sin** against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:]*

[Without any doubt we are commanded to pray for and with one another. This is speaking expressly about the need for us to be engaged in intercessory prayer.]

[Concerning intercessory prayer, experienced Christians have learned that,]

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A. The Confession We Must Make

1. There is Restoration
2. There is Reconciliation

1. Prayer Is The Greatest Christian Privilege (Heb 4.16) [- Almighty God has asked you, commanded you, to come into His presence with your intercessions and petitions.]

[Hebrews 4:16 ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.]

[Your Heavenly Father longs to hear your prayers.]

["That the one that scooped out the seas, heaped up the mountains, and flung out the stars the omnipotent God has invited us to talk with Him."]

**Practical Christianity
How to Pray For Friends
James 5.16-20**

A. The Confession We Must Make

1. There is Restoration
2. There is Reconciliation
3. There is Revival

B. The Command We Should Mind

2. Prayer Is The Greatest Christian Power (Matt 18.19; 1 John 5.14-15) [- There is remarkable, supernatural power in the prayers of godly people. The Bible says,]

[Matthew 18:19 ¹⁹ Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.]

[Now, not just any prayer will yield such powerful persuasion. But for those who have sought out with diligence the will of their Heavenly Father, there is a powerful response from almighty God.]

[1 John 5:14-15 ¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: ¹⁵ And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.]

[We must always remember that prayer is not just us asking for anything we want, it is God's people getting in touch with heaven, and then praying heavens will onto this earth.]

3. Prayer Is The Greatest Christian Problem (James 4.2) [- The problem that Christians have with prayer is at least two fold. James expresses them both for us,]

*[James 4:2-3 ² Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, **because ye ask not.** ³ Ye ask, and receive not, **because ye ask amiss,** that ye may consume it upon your lusts.]*

[Many Christians do not pray because they feel that they can handle things themselves. Others pray but pray the wrong way. They pray for what they want, or they demand that God do things their way. They have no real desire to be instructed by their Heavenly Father when they pray.]

**Practical Christianity
How to Pray For Friends
James 5.16-20**

- A. The Confession We Must Make**
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 - 3. There is Revival
- B. The Command We Should Mind**
 - 1. Prayer is the greatest Christian Privilege
 - 2. Prayer is the greatest Christian Power

*[When we depend upon **organization,**
we get what organization can do, and that is something.*

*When we depend upon **education,**
we get what education can do, and that is something.*

*When we depend upon **money,**
We get what money can do, and that is something.*

*When we depend upon **singing and preaching,**
We get what singing and preaching can do, and that is something.*

*When we depend upon **prayer,** we get what God can do.*

Dr. A.C. Dickson]

["Prayer is not just getting ready for Christian service, prayer is Christian service."]

[You can do more than you can after you've prayed, but you can do no more than you can before you've prayed."]

[The sick need more than our pity, they need our prayers.]

[Those with faults need more than our condemnation; they need our intercession (Gal 6.1).]

C. The Conditions We Should Meet. Notice:

1. The Intensity Of The Asking (vs 16) [- . . .
The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.]

[**Effectual fervent** - Means to be stretched out as an athlete bursting through the tape at the end of a race.]

[We ought to be eager, fervent, impassioned in our asking. This is intense prayer.]

[This is to labor or work at prayer. **Examples include,**

- [Elijah labored in prayer for the child of the woman of Zarepah (1 Kings 17.21)]
- [Elijah also labored in prayer for the child of the Shunamite woman (2 Kings 4.33-37)]

[Jesus told the disciples that some only go out by fasting and prayer (Matt 17.21). This implies working and laboring in prayer. Perhaps not so much laboring to achieve a miracle but laboring to be in a right relationship with God personally.]

[**Christian must labor in prayer.**]

2. The Integrity Of The Asker (vs 16; Prov 15.29; Psalm 66.18; Isaiah 59.1-2) [- . . . *The effectual fervent prayer of **a righteous man** availeth much.*]

[We ought to be like Elijah - The episode in (1 Kings 18.42-46).]

[**God heard Elijah because he was a righteous man** (Prov 15.29; Psalm 66.18; Isaiah 59.1-2). Righteousness is important to your prayer life. The opposite of righteousness is sinfulness. **The Bible says,**]

Practical Christianity
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[Proverbs 15:29 The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.]

[Psalm 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:]

[Isaiah 59:1-2 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.]

[There are two types of righteousness in the Bible,]

- [There is positional righteousness - Salvation.]
- [There is practical righteousness - Lifestyle.]

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C. The Conditions We Should Meet

1. The Intensity of the Asking
2. The Integrity of the Asker

D. The Character We Should Manifest (vs 17-18; 1 Kings 18.42) [- Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. – Character means a lot when it comes to prayer or our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Verse 16 stated that righteousness ought to mark who and what we are. But what does the character of the righteous look like. James provides an example of a man with the kind of godly character that gave him power in prayer. Elijah is our example.]

[From Elijah we discover,]

- 1. The Person Of Prayer (1 Kings 18.42) [- So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. **And Elijah** went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, - The person of prayer was Elijah who we know was a man of God that prayed and prayed**

powerfully. Elijah's prayers were powerful because Elijah was a man faithfully given over to God. From the revealing stories of Elijah in the Bible we discover that Elijah was obedient to God and His Word. He relied upon God for His protection and provision. Elijah was truly a Man of God.]

[God's people must learn to be fully given to God and fully men and women of God just as Elijah was.]

[Elijah was a person of prayer because he was a man of God. **Elijah was a man of God because he was,**

- [Distinct for God]
- [Directed by God]
- [Dependent upon God]

2. Notice The Place Of Prayer (1 Kings 18.42; Matt 6.5-6) [- So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah **went up to the top of Carmel;**

and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,
 - The top of Mount Carmel. This was a secret place of prayer. It emphasizes our need to truly communicate with our Heavenly Father in prayer. God sees, hears, and answers secret prayer. Jesus said,]

*[Matthew 6:5-6 ⁵ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ⁶ But thou, **when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.]***

[Secret prayer emphasizes and fosters an intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father. It is important that God's people truly get in touch with God when they pray.]

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 - 2. There is Reconciliation
 - 3. There is Revival
- B. The Command We Should Mind**
 - 1. Prayer is the greatest Christian Privilege
 - 2. Prayer is the greatest Christian Power
 - 3. Prayer is the greatest Christian Problem
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 - 2. The Integrity of the Asker
- D. The Character We Should Manifest**
 - 1. The Person of Prayer

3. Notice The Posture Of Prayer (1 Kings 18.42) [- *So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; **and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, His face between his knees**.* – It is true that a person can pray anywhere and at anytime, but there is something special and powerful that occurs when a godly person gets alone, kneels and bows before their God. **Our posture in prayer expresses our,**

- [Recognition of where we are when we pray; the very throne room of God.]
- [Reverence for who we are approaching; the King of kings, Almighty God.]

[We are just too proud as Americans today. We will not bow before any, not even Almighty God. Humility before God rests in a heart that needs God. Perhaps we won't bow because we don't really need God anymore?]

["No man needs fear any earthly king when he has just had an audience with the King of kings."]

["The man that can kneel before God can stand before men."]

4. Notice the Passion of the prayer (1 Kings 18.42) [-*So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; **and he cast himself down** upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, His face between his knees.* He worked at his prayers. This refers us back to the idea of **"Effectual Fervent"** prayers. Perhaps another problem with our prayers today is that they are far too few and far too easy and simple. Do we even feel the need to cast ourselves down before God anymore?]

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 - 2. The Place of Prayer

5. Notice The Persistence Of Prayer (1 Kings 18.43-44; Luke 18.1; Isa 30.18) [- And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. ⁴⁴ And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. – Here is another clear indication of how hard Elijah worked at prayer. He did not quit praying. I do not believe that Elijah was just praying in vain repetitions when he prayed, then prayed some more, and then prayed seven times. He was likely praying for different things and aspects of what might influence and be influenced by his prayers. But he was importunate in his prayers. He was knocking and he kept on knocking. The Bible says, Jesus said,]

[*Luke 18:1* ¹ And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;]

Practical Christianity
How to Pray For Friends
James 5.16-20

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 - 1. There is Restoration
 - 2. There is Reconciliation
 - 3. There is Revival
- F. The Command We Should Mind**
 - 1. Prayer is the greatest Christian Privilege
 - 2. Prayer is the greatest Christian Power
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- G. The Conditions We Should Meet**
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 - 2. The Place of Prayer
 - 3. The Posture of Prayer
 - 4. The Passion of Prayer

[**Why do we need to keep on praying? Why isn't once enough?** I suppose there could be many answers to this question. Perhaps there are things in us the we need to discover, confess, and pray about. Perhaps there are things God is doing in us or around us that are building toward the answer to our prayers. We may not always know why God tarries when he does, but He gives us this hope and confidence. The Bible says,]

[*Isaiah 30:18* ¹⁸ And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.]

[Rest assured, if God waits, there is a reason.]

["God's delay's are not God's denial's"]

6. Notice The **Power** Of Prayer (1 Kings 18.45) [- *And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a **great rain**. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.* – Powerful, persistent prayer will yield powerful and glorious answers. There is an undeniable power that accompanies the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous Christian.]

[The Power of the Bended Knee]

[Birds go to sleep on their perches, but they never fall off. This is because of the tendons in the bird's legs. They are so constructed that when the leg is bent at the knee, the claws contract and grip like a steel trap. The claws refuse to let go until the knees are unbent again. The bended knee gives the bird the ability to hold on to his perch so tightly.]

[Isn't this also the secret of the holding power of the Christian? Daniel found this to be true. Surrounded by a pagan environment, tempted to compromise with evil, urged to weaken his grip on God, he refused to let go. He held firm when others faltered because he was a man of prayer. He knew the power of the bended knee.]

[From sleeping birds we can learn the secret of holding things which are most precious to us—honesty, purity, thoughtfulness, honor, character. That secret is the knee bent in prayer, seeking to get a firmer grip on those values

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 - 3. There is Revival
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 - 3. Prayer is the greatest Christian Problem
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 - 2. The Integrity of the Asker
- D. The Character We Should Manifest
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 - 2. The Place of Prayer
 - 3. The Posture of Prayer
 - 4. The Passion of Prayer
 - 5. The Persistence of Prayer
 - 6. The Power of Prayer

which make life worth living. When we hold firmly to God in prayer, we can rest assured he will hold tightly to us.^{3]}

CrossRoads Baptist, Nov 20, 2022, Sunday
CrossRoads Baptist, Oct 5, 2014, Sunday Evening
CrossRoads Baptist Church, May 24, 2009, Sunday Evening

Practical Christianity
How to Pray For Friends
James 5.16-20

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1. There is Restoration
2. There is Reconciliation
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F. The Command We Should Mind

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2. Prayer is the greatest Christian Power
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2. The Place of Prayer
3. The Posture of Prayer
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³ Richard A. Steele and Evelyn Stoner, comp., *Bible Illustrations – Practical Bible Illustrations From Yesterday and Today*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "682. The Power of the Bended Knee".