

# One Another

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

James 5 | November 5, 2017

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## Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series engaging the “one anothers” found throughout the Christian Scriptures. This week we engage Confessing to One Another.

### I. Connecting with One Another

What do you think of when you hear the word “confess”?

### II. Study the Text

#### a. Read James 5.13-14.

One commentator refers to these verses as indicative of James’ “lively discourse of oral style.” In essence, he writes like he’s preaching! “It reflects James’ desire to engage his readers personally, because he wants so much for them to put prayer into practice.”

Is prayer a common practice for you? How do you pray? When do you pray? What drives you to pray? What do you pray for? Have there been times in your spiritual journey that you have prayed differently in any way?

#### b. Like any good Presbyterian sermon, James uses three key points to communicate one message: Pray in all circumstances.

Are there any circumstances or situations in which it is difficult for you to pray?

#### c. Since James wants his readers to pray in all circumstances, he gives three examples of when and how to pray. First he questions, “Is anyone among you in trouble?” answering, “Let them pray.”

The term James uses does not clarify a particular kind of trouble, but is general. Why might difficulty in our lives lead us away from prayer instead of toward it? (take some time discussing this before going on)

It’s been written that, “Like James’ original readers, we might allow the fact of trouble to suggest that God is uncaring or unknowing or unable to help, and so we would pray less.” Have you ever felt that way? If so, how did it affect your prayer life?

#### d. In addition to praying in times of trouble, James instructs us to “sing songs of praise” when we’re cheerful. How could times of happiness draw us away from praise instead of toward it?

Have times of happiness, contentment, and fulfillment ever caused you to be spiritually complacent, as if you needed God less?

- e. In addition, James instructs us to pray in times of sickness, when we might feel most overwhelmed. "Like James' original readers, we easily feel defeated in times of sickness. Weakness makes us feel hopeless, as if there were nothing to do. The biblical outlook is the opposite: there is something very significant to do, namely, to pray." Indeed, as has been written, "Your helplessness is your best prayer."

Which of these three (suffering, happiness, or weakness) can most tempt you to neglect your prayer life?

- f. James continues, instructing Christians to "call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord."

How many specific instructions do you count in these words? What is the rationale behind each? (In other words, why does James encourage each of the specific instructions you see?) Make notes here:

Instruction	Rationale
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- g. Read James 5.15.

James writes, "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."

Why do you think James connects healing with forgiveness?

Time permitting, turn to Luke 5.17-26. Why does Jesus connect the two?

- h. Read James 5.16.

Why do you think James is prompted to discuss confession of sin in this section on prayer? What do the two have in common?

- i. N.T. Wright explains, "Forgiveness is there, to this day, as the great open door, the fresh possibility, the chance of a new start, for all who will confess the sin which is dragging them down, and will join in prayer for healing."

Have you ever confessed sin to someone before? What was that experience like?

- j. What 3 steps does James outline in 5.16 for confession? Write them in here:

Therefore \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ so that \_\_\_\_\_.

Some obvious (but thought provoking) questions:

- 1) Who is called to confess their sins?
- 2) Who do they confess them to?
- 3) Is anyone excused from doing so?
- 4) What should be the response to someone's confession?
- 5) What is the hoped for outcome to that response!?
- 6) Why are each of these steps important? What would happen if any of them were left out?

k. Read James 5.17-20.

James alludes to a remarkable story to emphasize his point that we should pray in all circumstances. If you have time, read it in 1st Kings 17-18.

What grabs your attention in these final verses of James' letter?

### III. Pray

- a. Ask God to beckon Good Shepherd into being a community of not just rows, but circles, where we gather together in community to confess our sins to one another, to pray for one another and be healed,
- b. Lift up those you know who are carrying a heavy burden,
- c. Pray for the women and high schoolers of Good Shepherd that are away on retreat this weekend, that they would be refreshed by the wind of God's Holy Spirit.