

September 3, 2017

(Unwavering Series: Living Out a Single-Minded Faith)

“The 1-2-3’s of a Powerful Praying Church”, James 5:13-20

James closes his epistle by teaching followers of Jesus, one factor about how to make our prayer as a church more powerful. **James 5:13-20** gives examples, instructions, and benefits of powerful prayer life in the early church which serves as a model for us Christians today.

I. One example of personal powerful prayer

As a result of the elders anointing a sick person with oil (**James 5:13-15**) and forgiving the person if sin was involved, the person was healed. God does, at times, answer faithful prayer with a “yes”, especially when we are out of our comfort zone. Yet God can also answer with a “no” or “later”. A prayer of faith is based on faith (informed by our understanding of Scripture, our walk with God, and our spiritual understanding of the situation); prayer also simply has our faith in God in it.

II. Two things we can do to become a powerful praying church

James instructs the entire congregation to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (**James 5:16**). The suggestion is to continue following the example of the elders by dealing with sin (spiritual condition) & actually praying for one another.

A. Confess our faults to one another. It is a lifestyle of confessing our sins, wherever we fall short or miss the target with our deeds, attitudes, shortcomings, struggles, temptations, spiritual confusion, etc.) We do not beg forgiveness just by listing our sins, but on a daily basis, it is agreeing with God as we name our brokenness (whether we did it or someone else), and then sharing it with another person as we ask forgiveness. We are called as a church to be humble, loving people who unapologetically need God’s grace through the gospel...and confess our sins, our faults, and our struggles to one another.

B. Pray for one another. When we confess, we admit our vulnerability, showing us the real issues for prayer. The elders pray especially in times of crisis and we continue to pray on a daily basis...most effectively right when the prayer is seen as needed.

III. Three benefits of being a confessing church

A. Healing (James 5:16) A church where people are authentic about their needs (physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological, etc.), and fervent in prayer for one another, is a church where people can find the healing power of God.

B. Powerful prayer. “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (**James 5:16-18**). As with Elijah and the beginnings of the church in Acts, we want to be righteous believers who connect confession of sin (to God and to others) with prayer for forgiveness from God and from others around us. Being a loving, confessing community is essential to powerful prayer.

C. The return of the wandering (James 5:19-20). James is inviting us as believers, to go out and get those who have wandered away, straying from the path of truth. There is no community that is equipped to do that, like a confessing, praying community which has learned love and humility through receiving forgiveness in confessing their own shortcomings & vulnerabilities. James encourages all of us at Perry Creek Church to be a confessing, praying community, where broken people are welcomed with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you feel free & safe enough to confess your sin to another believer? to your small group?
2. What would a church look like where the people confess and pray regularly? Is it possible?
3. What keeps us from powerful prayer?

4. What does it mean to “be righteous”, to have “short comings”, to have “vulnerabilities”?
5. If we are called to help our sisters/brothers to come back to the truth, how should we do that? (See Matthew 7:3-5, I Peter 3:15, and Colossians 3:12-17)