

Read James 5:13-20

1. In verse 13, James teaches us to pray in every circumstance - through the bad and good. What does praying in all circumstances look like in our everyday life in the city?

We pray deliberately and informally. We can set a time specifically to just pray. And we can also pray "on the go". We don't have to be eloquent or long winded in our prayers. Sometimes, we don't even have words to pray but we can direct our feelings to God. As long as our inward feelings are directed to God, and are not wallowing and sinking in anxiety, fear, doubt, regret, misery, etc., we are indeed praying to God. Praying can be anytime, anywhere, with or without words - as long as we're directing ourselves to God in Jesus' Name.

2. In verses 14-15, James does not necessarily guarantee physical healing from prayer. How should we go about praying for healing given the tension between our asking God for healing and His mysterious will in our suffering?

We must keep praying still. We don't know why God doesn't heal immediately or intervene in ways we would like for Him to intervene. We must keep praying because of the hope of resurrection and forgiveness. God answers all our prayers and it is always "YES" in Jesus - the answers are not always the kind of YES we want at the moment. God's YES is ultimately resurrection, forgiveness, final restoration, reconciliation, and immortality.

3. In verse 16, confession of sin can lead to healing. Illness and suffering can result from sin, but not all illness and suffering are because of sin. How does confessing sins lead to healing and restoration?

Confessing sins ultimately heals our inward being and our relationships with ourselves, with others, and with God. Inward and relational healing can then impact our outward form. The release of guilt, the freedom from shame, being forgiven, forgiving someone, being unshackled from bitterness and rage - these positively impact the mind, the brain, and the body. What causes the body stress can lead to illness. Being rid of these inward stressors can lead to wholeness and longevity.

4. In verses 17-18, James encourages us to pray like Elijah. The prophet was just like us - prone to despair, doubt, and fear. But his prayers were heard. How are we to pray in the midst of our despair, our doubts, and our fears?

We pray remembering that God is trustworthy. We pray to remember that God is good, powerful, and dependable, from our own stories, the stories of others, and the stories of the Bible. We pray as Jesus prayed - when He gave thanks to feed thousands, when He praised His Father for revealing the secrets of the kingdom to His disciples, when He despaired in the Garden as He sweat drops of blood. We pray always and in all circumstances. We are especially to pray when we are despairing, when we are doubting, when we are afraid. Those times are when we especially feel our deep need, our

desperation, our sorrow, our loneliness, our creatureliness, our mortality, our fragility - we turn to God when we especially feel those things.

5. In verses 19-20, James encourages us to be one another's shepherd in the truth - to bring one another back when we wander off. In regards to prayer, how do we look out for each other and encourage one another in our relationship with Jesus?

We need to keep each other accountable in our faith. It's not about keeping records, or about competition, or being each other's drill sergeants. It's gently and lovingly being mindful and concerned of each other, knowing about each other's life circumstances, being honest when things get rough and difficult, being honest with our doubts and fears, being open to hear each other out, being open to be prayed for and to pray for each other. We are, after all, family in Jesus. And we ought to love each other deeply in our Christian concern for each other's welfare and health in our bodies, our families, our souls, our faith, and our relationships.