

Practical Points on Prayer

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The Lord wants us to be a people of prayer (Luke 19:46), but too often we are like the apostles in Gethsemane, sleeping when we should be praying (Mark 14:37-38). That the Lord intended for His followers to use prayer as an essential strand in the fabric of life, rather than merely as a storm shelter, is unarguable. Although the context obviously involves references to miraculous activity to which we have no access, still one of the most practical passages on prayer is James 5:13-18. James urges:

- **Personal prayer** ("let him pray," v. 13). We need to spend time with the Father "in secret" (Mat. 6:6). Perhaps no other daily habit will do so much to make God a real, constant companion to us.
- **United prayer** ("let them pray...," v. 14). While Jesus emphasized praying personally (Mat. 6:6), He also emphasized praying in the presence of others (Mat. 6:9-13; 18:19-20). One of the earliest descriptions of the church has them "continuing steadfastly in prayer" (Acts 2:42; cf. 4:24-30; 6:4-6; etc.).
- **Believing prayer** ("prayer of faith," v. 15). Faithless prayer is wasted words but believing prayer God hears and answers according to His will (Mark 11:24, Jam. 1:6-7).
- **Intercessory prayer** ("pray one for another," v. 16). Jesus prayed for His apostles and for us (John 17:9-23). We need to pray for one another and for all men (1 Tim. 2:1-2).
- **Fervent prayer** ("prayed fervently," v. 17). There ought to be a fire in our hearts as we pray. Lack of fervency would seem to indicate lack of faith or of sincerity.
- **Specific prayer** ("that it might not rain," v. 17). To the general request of James and John, Jesus said, "What would ye that I should do for you?" (Mark 10:36). Many of the prayers in the Bible involve specific requests.
- **Continued prayer** ("and he prayed again," v. 18). Christ urged men "always to pray and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). Constant prayer is a theme in Paul's letters, summed up simply: "Pray without ceasing" (1 The. 5:17).

The great key to a faithful Christian life is to pray the way we ought to and then live the way we pray.

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