

Week 8

8 weeks
TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE >>

'The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.'

James 5:7-20

&

Luke 11:1-12

>> SERMON OUTLINE



How waiting makes a difference - JAMES 5:7-20

No one likes waiting! But, as James concludes his letter, he give some clear teaching on how Christians are called to live whilst waiting for Jesus to come back.

Christians are called to wait...

> ...WITH PATIENCE (v7-12)

> ...IN PRAYER (v13-18)

> ...ALONGSIDE PRODIGALS (v19-20)

>> A CLOSER LOOK

(James 5:7-20)



NOTE: Throughout the rest of the study, there are several questions for discussion. One or two of the questions allow a more creative approach. Feel free to adapt them as you see fit, but they are some ideas to prompt some more creative thinking! **These are marked by an asterisk ***.

>>THINK ABOUT THE LAST 8 WEEKS

You may like to spend a few minutes reflecting on the last 8 weeks. Have you been challenged about any specific areas in your life? In what areas have you been encouraged? Have you made any changes in your life as a result? Are there any changes that you wish to make in your life over the next few months? How can friends pray for you?

Christians are called to wait...

* Waiting - no one likes waiting! If you are in a group, give everyone a piece of paper to write down a common time in which people have to wait. Pool all of the answers. Then, take it in turns to act it out one of those to see if others can guess what it is!

(If you are not in a group, take a piece of paper, and write down all of the times this past week in which you had to wait, and how common they are!)

>... WITH PATIENCE (v7-12)

- Think about and discuss together some key times in your life in which you really couldn't wait for something, but wish you had! What things made it hard to be patient?
- Being patient is hard, particularly when you are waiting for something that is exciting. James talks about waiting patiently for Jesus' return (v7). Is this something you are excited about? Why/ why not?

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- However we react to it, James reminds us that Jesus is coming back - in the same way that the 'autumn and spring rains' will come (v7). With this in mind, he describes several things that waiting patiently involves (v8-12). What are they? Do we find these easy or hard? Why?
- In what way is our speech important whilst we patiently wait for Jesus to come back? (v10-12)

> ...IN PRAYER (v13-18)

- What different types of prayer does James commend to us? (v13-16) Do we find these easy to do? Are there any ways in which we can change our prayer life to incorporate these more?
- 'The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.' (v16) Has this been your experience? **You may like to think about, and share together if you are in a group, any ways in your life in which you have witnessed for yourself 'powerful and effective' prayer, in which God has been clearly at work?*
- James particularly mentions praying with each other (v16). What is it about praying together that is particularly helpful?

> ...ALONGSIDE PRODIGALS (v19-20)

- James mentions one final thing that is important to do whilst we wait for Jesus - help those who have wandered away from Jesus back to him. What does this look like in practice?
- Why is it such an important thing to do, and why is it really good news when people do it to us? (v20)

>> ALTERNATIVE PASSAGE**Pray for a Change - LUKE 11:1-12**

Prayer is the natural outcome of our relationship with God. Yet sometimes it seems so hard to pray. As Jesus teaches his disciples, he shows us a way through some of the common challenges many of us face as we pray.

> HOW IMPORTANT IS PRAYER?**>WHAT CAN WE PRAY ABOUT?****> WHAT ATTITUDE SHOULD WE HAVE WHEN WE PRAY?****> WHY DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER?**

>> A CLOSER LOOK pt 2. *(Luke 11:1-12)*



>>THINK ABOUT THE LAST 8 WEEKS

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> HOW IMPORTANT IS IT? (v1)

The gospels show Jesus as a man who prayed. Have a look at some of these occasions: Mark 1:35; Luke 5:15-16; Luke 6:12-16; Luke 9:18; Luke 11:1; Luke 22:39-46;

- How would you describe Jesus' attitude to prayer?

> WHAT CAN WE PRAY ABOUT? (v2-4)

This prayer and the fuller version in Matthew 6:9-13 have been developed into a formal prayer that many of us have learned by heart. It is most helpful to understand Jesus' prayer here as a model to guide our praying rather than set words that we must repeat.

- Look at the prayer line by line and work out what each phrase prompts you to pray for.
- What is the significance of the order here? Does it reflect your prayers? If not, how could your prayers change to become more like Jesus' model here?

- Why do you think our prayers often focus on our own concerns rather than the concerns of God?

> **WHAT ATTITUDE SHOULD WE HAVE WHEN WE PRAY? (v5-10)**

In Jesus' time the culture had a high view of hospitality. In the story Jesus tells the man in need of bread would have known that although it was the worst time to wake up his neighbour, his neighbour would be bound by custom to be generous. So his boldness pays off.

- In what way does this story teach us about prayer?
- What is there to show us that God is not unwilling to answer prayer?
- To what extent are you persistent and bold in the way that you pray?

> **WHY DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYER? (v11-13)**

Jesus has taught that God is not reluctant to answer prayer, but we may doubt whether he will answer in a way that is good for us.

- How does Jesus persuade us that we CAN trust in the goodness of God when we pray?
- How do we cope when God does not answer our prayers in the way that we expect or in the timescale that we hope for?
- Why is the gift of the Holy Spirit (given to all believers) the ultimate proof of the goodness of God?

>> MAKING A CHANGE *(James 5:7-20)*



WHAT CHANGES CAN YOU MAKE THIS WEEK?

It's important to act on what you have studied. Can you think of some specific changes that you can make during this week, as a response to what you have been looking at?

- Think of several specific ways in which you can 'be patient and stand firm' this week. Ask people to help you by praying for you and asking you how it has gone.
- Are there specific things that you want to pray with someone else about, in the light of James' encouragement? Eg. Sickness, struggles, or something to praise God for. Why not ask 2 or 3 people that you trust to pray with you about these things.

>> MAKING A CHANGE *(Luke 11:1-12)*



> MAKING A CHANGE

- When you pray this week, take the Lord's prayer as a model and use each phrase in turn to guide your prayers.
- Think back over the issues that you have prayed about over the last few weeks. Do the verses from Luke prompt you to be more persistent as you pray – or to change what you are praying for?
- If God is 'our perfect heavenly Father' and is more than ready to answer our prayers, do we need to change our attitude to prayer? Will we pray more often? Or with more confidence?