

Be a Light: Pray without Ceasing

02.20.2022

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To get us started this morning

**Turn to James 5 (page 827)**

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You'll notice there are cards in your seats

You can take one per family

Or more – if you'll do something with it

So if your family wants to pray for four people each day

Great – take one card

If a couple says

You know – 4's not enough

We each have a separate 4

That's fantastic – you can each have a card

The students are going through this on Wednesdays

Student – if you want to share a card with your family, great

If you want your own card

Because you have four of your friends

That's fantastic as well

Read James 5:13-15

## **Prayer changes stuff**

You & I should pray about all kinds of things:

When we're in trouble

When we're happy

When we're sick

We should pray

Because prayer changes stuff

Read James 5:16a

A moment ago, we said prayer changes stuff

Now James is adding another layer

## **Prayer with others brings healing**

It's great to pray by yourself

You should do that

I know

I know – that's the shocking statement of the morning

You're in a church building

At a church service

And the pastor says you should pray

I know – out of the box, right?

But you should pray by yourself

Most of us pray less often

Than we know we should

So pray by yourself more

But James said something unique happens

When we pray with someone else

You get healing

Not forgiveness

That comes straight from God

But healing

So you pray by yourself that God helps you with your anger

That's good

But praying with someone else is even better

Tell *them* about your anger

Confess that to another person

And then pray with that person about it

It'll lead you to healing

Maybe you struggle with lust

You're tempted online

You're tempted with all of the streaming options on TV

Pornography feels like a habit you just can't shake

So you pray about it

Alone

That's good

But if you want healing

James said there's something powerful that happens

When you're confessing your sins

And praying, *with someone else*, for healing

So do that too

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Read James 5:16
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Have you ever fallen in a rabbit hole online?

Do you know what I'm talking about?

Like you'll be going along

Minding your own business

When something will catch your attention

And the next thing you know

You've spent 15 minutes of your life

Or 45

That you'll never get back

Well, I fell in a rabbit hole this week

A theological rabbit hole, mind you

But a rabbit hole none the less

Over this verse

So as I'm reading through a text

    This is a good habit for you as you're studying

As I'm reading through

    I'll look for things that jump out at me

        Something interesting

        Something I've not noticed before

        Something that raises a question

So when I read the last part of verse 16

    Where it says, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

I thought, I wonder if the original Greek words

    For powerful and effective

Give any extra insight?

And I expected the sentence to be pretty straight forward

    Like prayer is powerful

    Prayer is effective

I could look at the two words

    And bam – insight – move along

Not so much

But what I found was pretty cool

At least for me  
You may be bored to tears

We'll all find out in a few minutes  
And – lucky for me – we'll all find out  
If you're bored to tears  
At the very same time

So I'm gonna take you down the rabbit hole with me, ok?

But let me give you a roadmap

**So you don't get lost**

**There's one key word in this passage**

I'll show it to you in a second

**But the grammar of that word is really important**

So we've got to set it up with a short discussion of Greek participles  
But don't worry

I can tell that some of you are worried

Don't worry

Because you've got me as your Theological rabbit hole guide

And you've got a Theological rabbit hole GPS

So you're in good hands

So then we'll take the grammar

**And look at that key word**

And we'll see how it fits

**In the overall sentence**

And then (hopefully)

**You're never going to see prayer the same way again**

OK – you ready?

**So here's the key Greek word {ἐνεργουμένη}**

Any questions?

I'm just kidding

Let me show you one grammar fact here

**This word is a present middle participle**

Stay with me

I got ya

Present just means ongoing action

Like this thing is happening

And continuing to happen

Right now

In the present

And ongoing

Into the future

Middle refers to whose doing what

So an active participle would be like I am hitting a golf ball

A passive participle would be like I am being hit by a golf ball

Very different, right?

Middle is a combination

It's in the middle

So a middle participle of hit

Would be like I'm hitting myself

I'm both doing and receiving the hitting

Got it?

And because it's present

That means its happening right now

And continuing to happen

**OK – so how does that affect this word?**



Well, let me pronounce it for you

And see if that helps

This word

I believe the key word in the whole verse

Is energéō

Any guesses on what energéō means?

The literal definition is to energize

Sounds like energy, doesn't it?

energéō

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective

Literally, powerful and energizing

And, the Greek dictionary I was looking at

I love this – based on this series

You know, Be a light series

The Greek dictionary I was looking at

Gave this as the example:

**“Like an electrical current energizing a wire, bringing it to a shining light bulb.”**

I got goosebumps on that one

I've never been so excited about a Greek participle before

Be honest

You never have either

And remember

It's a present middle participle

Meaning I'm both doing

And receiving the action

I'm energizing and *being* energized

And it's happening now

And continuing to happen going forward

So the literal translation of verse 16

Would be this:

**There is much power when a righteous person is energizing himself or herself through prayer.**

**This can change the way you pray, friends**

When Jesus says, you can't do anything without staying connected to me

This makes that make more sense

Lots of people

Burn through life on their own strength

Without the energizing that comes from staying connected to God

It doesn't work

Not long term

Then James gives us an example with Elijah

You can read that story in 1 Kings 17-18

But the bottom line is right back where we started

Prayer changes stuff

Then look at verse 19

Read James 5:19-20

At first glance

Those two verses seem out of place

Don't they?

James is giving a powerful teaching on prayer

He refers back to one of the great Jewish prophets – Elijah

And how *he* prayed

And then he says:

Re-read James 5:19-20

And then that's the end of the book

The end of his letter

Seems out of place, doesn't it?

I actually don't think it is at all

The entirety of James' letter

Is about not just saying we believe

But putting it into action

At the very beginning of the letter

He writes,

**Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. –  
James 1:22**

So if you're coming to church

Reading the Bible

Listening to sermons and podcasts

But not doing anything differently

You're deceiving yourself

That's another present middle participle, by the way

You're doing the deceiving

And you're the one being deceived

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So he ends the letter

James – the brother of Jesus

He ends his letter

Saying my brother said you are the light of the world

And if you're going to be more than an empty bulb

You've got to be energized thru prayer

So let's talk about three ways that you & I need to be energized:

**First of all, we must be energized for confidence**

We talked last week

And by the way, if you weren't with us last week

Man you missed out

You need to watch that

Especially to see my "special guest" in the middle of the message

The people beside you know what I'm talking about

But we talked last week

About how people are often far more insecure

Talking about faith

Then what is really warranted

I think that's intentional

From the very beginning

Satan has attacked our confidence

As one of his chief weapons

Think about it

God gives Adam & Eve everything

And He tells them to only *not do* one thing  
Now if you're in sales  
That's a tough sales pitch  
If you're the devil  
And you have to convince people who have been given everything  
Who only have one rule  
To *break* that one rule  
He must be quite a salesman

So what's his tactic?

Confidence.

"Did God really say that?"

"Oh, you won't die"

"He knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like Him"

Now he was lying to them

Just like he lies to us

But what was his tactic?

Zap their confidence

I even wonder if some of that is in play

When he tempts Jesus

He takes Jesus up to and has Him stand on the highest point of the temple

And says, "Go ahead and jump off... You won't"

Confidence

I mean think of it

The Bible says that Satan is massively outmatched

He's not nearly as strong as God

We read in Job him about him coming to report to God

To get permission

This is not even

Jesus said He saw Satan fall like lightning

Satan rebels and bam he's out

This is not some epic power struggle

And the Bible says that Heaven's army is twice as big as his is

So he's almost got as tough a job now

As he did in the garden

But he beats us in the very same way

"Did God really say that?"

"I don't think that'll work"

"I wouldn't trust Him if I were you"

And we fall for it just like Adam & Eve did

James' words about prayer here are important

And you can pray by yourself for courage

That helps

Do that

But how much more powerful is it

To pray with other people

That you would be en-couraged

That you would have courage placed in you

I don't think it's a biblical stretch to say

**Confess your fear to each other and pray for each other that you may be en-couraged. – James 1:16a (Andy Hudelson Translation)**

I know some of our life groups go along with the sermon

Some don't

Either way is fine

But I'd love it if all our life groups

Took just a moment this week

Or regularly

And prayed for each other

To en-courage each other

To be a light in their workplace

To be a light in their neighborhood

To be a light in our world



If you & I want to be more than an empty bulb

We've got to be energized for confidence through prayer

**We must be energized for clarity**

We've been reading at the end of James' letter

But at the beginning

He's describing people who are deceived

And their religion

Is trying to deceive others

Somethings never change

And then James writes:

**Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. – James 1:27**

Can I summarize that?

Take care of people in need because of your faith

And live differently because of your faith

And today

What does the world criticize the church for?

That we don't care about people

And that we're hypocrites

So if we're going to beat that rap

And live our faith like God desires

We're going to have to have His help

We've got to be energized

For clear thinking – for clarity

Through prayer

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How does that relate to the series?

Well, I think we've misunderstood

How evangelism works

Studies show that the average person

Who commits to Christ

Has had positive interactions

With 7 different people

About the Gospel

So when you tell someone what God's done in your life

Or what Jesus means to you

And they don't respond how you've been praying they will

Don't get discouraged

Maybe you were the first person for them

And you've started the process  
And one day they will come to Christ  
And you started it for them

Or maybe you're number 4  
And now they're over the hump

Or maybe you're number 6  
And the next time someone presents the Gospel to them  
They're in

Paul says sometimes you plant the seed  
Sometimes the water the seed  
Sometimes you collect the harvest  
And we've got to have much more clarity about our influence

If you & I want to be more than just an empty bulb

We've got to be energized for clarity through prayer

**Finally, we must be energized as a church**

Let's talk math a second

Every week, about 100 hours of volunteer time are spent providing a great,  
relevant, Biblically based time for our kids and students

About 100 hours / week

Every week, about 15 men, women and students

Give another 100 hours of their time to provide an authentic,  
engaging worship service

And every week, another 40 or so men, women and students

Serve in various roles around the property to provide a welcoming  
place to come and worship and park and prep communion and  
process the offering and and and and

Hundreds of hours

Each week

And that doesn't count our hard working staff

Who've literally dedicated their life

To helping people follow Jesus

Through the ministry of this church

But let's talk about that a second

In many way

We can't do anything

We can't make someone give their life to Christ

We can't force someone into the baptistery

We can't make someone authentically worship God

Or forgive their husband

Or be kind to their neighbor

Or soften their heart

Or any of the other things we work so hard to see

We can't do it

And here's the thing

We create environments for God to do *His* thing

But He has to do it

We can't do any of the things we want done

On our own

So here's what's crazy

When you step back and think about it

We schedule well over 100 people per week

To provide all of the pieces

That go into making WellSpring happen

Over 100 people per week

But we currently schedule 0 people per week

To pray for God to energize those ministries with prayer

We ask for hundreds of volunteer hours

To perform all the ministries

But we ask for zero hours

To energize them with prayer

That's going to change

You may not know, but since the beginning of January

Your elder team has been meeting here  
5 days a week  
At 6 am to gather to pray  
Today – during each of the morning services  
They are back in our new prayer room  
Praying over each part of what happens in the service  
Asking God to *energize* the service  
That *He* would do  
What *only* He can do

They'll be doing that again next week

After that, it's on you

There will be a table out in the lobby  
When you leave in a few minutes  
I'm going to ask you to sign up  
If you're willing to be part of our prayer team

Here's what that looks like:

You'll let us know how often you can serve in the prayer room  
Maybe once a month  
Maybe more or less  
That's up to you

On a day when you're serving in the prayer room

You'll attend one service like normal

But in the other service

And your elementary and pre-school kids

Can stay in our program for both hours

In the other service

You'll go to the prayer room

There in the back

During the first part of the service

There will be a list of things you can pray for

People in the church who are sick

Children's classes that are going on

Leaders in the church

You can pray about anything

But we'll have lists to help prompt you

And you don't have to pray out loud if you don't feel comfortable

And then during the message

I'll have copies of my notes back there

The same ones I have up here

And you'll be able to hear me

Because you're right there

And I'm just asking you to pray to God along with the message

That He'll energize my words

That He'll energize what people here  
That He'll comfort and convict and inspire  
With *His* energy

Charles Spurgeon story

If we want to be more than a collection of empty bulbs

We've got to be energized as a church through prayer

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Why is this important?

Because when the world gets dark

Unlit bulbs

Don't matter

Unless they're energized