

Sermon Series

HOPE for the HOUSE

A Study in James

DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE HEART OF PRAYER

SPEAKER: Russell Joyce
DATE: November 23, 2025
TEXT(S): James 5:13-20

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE: This resource is designed to help you, or your group, step through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage(s) and the speaker's message. Our goal is to help you better understand and apply B4's teaching.

MESSAGE SUMMARY + DISCUSSION PROMPTS

James concludes his letter by calling the church to become a community of people shaped by prayer, whether in trouble or joy, in sickness or sin, in wandering or returning to God. However, prayer is less a task and more a way of being, where God's nearness shapes our hearts and lives to resemble those of Jesus. Through honest, consistent, and confessional prayer, we learn to see how God sees, love like Him, and be strengthened in our communion with Him. Prayer unclogs the soul and deepens relationships. It brings restoration and healing. A hope-filled life, and a church characterized by hope, rests on a continual, shared life of prayer in God's presence.

LEAN IN: These are icebreakers and warm-ups, mostly to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. Growing up, what did you think "prayer" was? How has that changed over time?
2. If you could instantly become an expert in anything, what would it be and why?
3. During a typical week, when do you feel the most present, and when do you feel most distracted?
4. What's a small ritual or habit that helps you start or end your day well?
5. If you had to pick a "theme word" for your week so far, what would it be and why?

LOOK DOWN: These are questions about the Bible passage(s) from the message. Spend about 15-20 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:

1. In 5:13-14, James connects every season of life with prayer or praise. What does this reveal about the kind of relationship God desires with His people?
2. James 5:15 says the "prayer offered in faith" will make the sick person well. What do you notice about the connection between healing and forgiveness? Why might James link the two?
3. 5:19-20 speaks of bringing a wanderer back to the truth. How is restoring others connected to prayer in this passage?
4. How is prayer shown to be a communal practice rather than an individual one throughout James 5:13-20?
5. Ultimately, what picture of the church is James painting in these verses? What does a praying community look like in practice?

LOOK OUT: *These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today. Spend about 15-20 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:*

1. This message assumes that people will face trouble, joy, sickness, doubt, and wandering. Which of those experiences feels most relatable to most people right now, and why?
2. Many people today talk about mindfulness, meditation, or soul care. How does the idea of prayer as “awareness of God’s presence” compare to those practices?
3. Most people will get off track sometimes. What helps them find your way back when they lose direction or perspective?
4. The idea that “prayer can change us” is central to this message. What kinds of inner change or growth do people most long for today?
5. A praying community lifts up, restores, and heals. If every group or neighborhood acted like that, what difference do you think it would make in the world?

LOOK IN: *These questions help you consider how to engage the teaching for yourself. Spend about 15-20 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:*

1. James connects every circumstance, like pain, joy, sickness, or confusion, to prayer. Which of those areas is hardest for you to bring to God, and why?
2. Pastor Russell said, “Prayer doesn’t change God; prayer changes us.” Where in your inner life do you most need God’s shaping work right now?
3. Confession was described as unclogging the soul. Is there anything, big or small, you sense might be blocking your spiritual life right now?
4. Pastor Russell mentioned, “keeping God before your mind.” What would help you remember God’s presence throughout your day?
5. If your life became more rooted in prayer, constant, consistent, and honest, what do you think would change first?

LIVE IT OUT: *These practical action steps help you apply this message to day-to-day life. Choose one prompt and talk it over for 5-10 minutes:*

1. Pastor Russell’s message emphasized being a “person of prayer,” not someone who occasionally prays. What small, practical shift could you start this week that will help you build that kind of life?
2. Commit to a daily 5-minute “honest prayer” this week. Set a timer for five minutes, and talk to God in your real voice about one thing you’re feeling, no filters or overly-spiritual language. At the end of the week, notice how this practice has changed you and share that with a trusted friend.

You can find more on [our series resources page](#).