

- In addition to making you more patient, how else would it make your life different if you reflected more often on this event?
- What does James teach about prayer for those who are sick? How does this compare to the general pattern of praying for those who are ill?
- What illustrations can you provide of the power and effectiveness of prayer, first, from the Bible, and second, from your own and other people's experience?



CARING & SERVING. Perhaps someone in the group has, or wishes to, share a situation where they need the Lord's patience or is facing 'trouble' in their lives. Perhaps it's due to people who are unchangeable (like the prophets experienced) or a problem which is uncontrollable (like Job experienced). Spend time praying for each other.



Talk as a group about the prayer life of our church. Would you describe our church as a 'church that prays' or as 'a praying church'? A 'church that prays' tends to open and close meetings with prayer, includes a brief prayer during weekly services and often talks a lot about the importance of prayer. A 'praying church' spends significant time in prayer every time God's people gather. Talk together about how YOU can play your part in helping Ballyloughan be a 'praying church'.



ENGAGING. Please continue to pray for Alpha. This Saturday is the 'day-away.' Next week is our Easter Special, an event where we seek to present in an informal way the message of Easter to members of our community and friends. Please uphold this in prayer. Your group will be asked to help in practical ways – details have been forwarded to your facilitator. Thank you for your support. Is there someone you could bring along?

Towards the end of April we will on Wednesday nights 'leave the building.' We aim to engage with our community in various ways: some calling on doors, others distributing literature, some praying, others carrying out practical tasks. Should you wish to be part of a think-tank or if you have ideas you think would be good, share them with your facilitator.

Midweek ministry @ Ballyloughan

worshipping, growing, caring, serving, engaging

James: A down-to-earth faith
10 - How powerful is prayer? (5:7 - 5:20)
Notes for teaching night 27th February

I. Be _____. (vs 7-12)

v7, "*be patient, then, my brothers, until the Lord's coming.*"

In vs 1-6 James had been talking about non Christian wealthy landlords were abusing their Christian workers – this is the context for the required patience. There are times in our lives when patience is required: due to the actions of people (like the prophets v10 who "spoke in the name of the Lord" and suffered for it); or because of uncontrollable circumstances like the example of Job v11. How do we remain patient. Remember 2 things:

(i) _____! v7, "*be patient until the Lord's coming.*" v8, "*be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.*" v7 the farmer waits so patiently, but he waits willingly because when it comes the crop is v7 "*valuable*" or 'precious' - worth waiting for. And so you see James says that Jesus' coming will be a time that's worth waiting for.

Return of Jesus mentioned over 300 times in NT – that's once every 13 verses. An assurance of the Lord's return is to colour our whole perspective on life. Every time NT mentions the return of the Lord Jesus, it comes with the challenge to live in the light of the return of Jesus. Do we live our lives as if Jesus could return at any time?

(ii) _____.

v11 "*You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about.*" Be patient, because in every circumstance of your life, God is working in some way.

II. Be _____. (vs 13-18)

(i) **Pray in** _____ (v13). "*is any of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.*" Whatever frame of mind you are in, whatever your life experiences are at present, keep on praying to and praising the Lord. James understands that both the circumstances of trouble and

the circumstances of being in good heart can upset our spiritual balance and lead us to neglect prayer. Alec Motyer: *“our whole life should be so angled towards God that whatever strikes upon us, whether sorrow or joy, should be deflected upwards at once into his presence.”*

(ii) Prayer for _____ (vs 14,15). *“Is any of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil.”* We should approach both the doctor and the Lord. The context here is a frail, ill person who cannot get to church. The sick person is to call for the elders, who it’s assumed are to be people of prayer themselves that they are able to minister in such a situation. They pray, and anoint with oil (a symbol of the Spirit of God e.g. 1 Sam 16). v15... *“and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”* Well the Bible contains various prayer promises like that. e.g. Mt 18:19, John 14:13. These statements are simply encouraging us to come with confidence to the place of prayer. They are not guarantees that whatever we ask for will happen according to what we want. They are simply reminding us that we have a Lord who can do all things, a Lord who is so generous that he doesn’t withhold any good thing from us, a Lord who hears our every word and a Lord who will answer in the way which is best for us.

James’ main point here is this: God answers prayer for the sick. Sometimes physically (and we must believe in faith that He does) other times by receiving a spiritual with the Lord. So if you are ever ill in the future, will you put these words in practice and ask for people to pray for you so that you may receive the help of the Lord?

(iii) Pray with and for _____ (v16). *“confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”* The idea in that verse is that people are coming together and are praying with and for one another.

(iv) Pray _____ (vs16-18). We are to realise and believe that when we pray, the Lord works in answer to our prayers, and things change. v16, *“the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”* We have a God who can do the totally impossible through the prayers of frail human people like us. If we were really convinced that through prayer God brings about remarkable changes in our lives and in the world, then we would pray much more than we do. If we pray little, it’s perhaps because we do not believe that prayer accomplishes much at all.

III. Be _____. (vs 19,20) *“If any of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins.”* Sometimes believers wander. Most people don’t wander deliberately – it just happens. We are to be a fellowship of concern, watchful for each other’s welfare.

Follow-on Material
For Wednesday 5th March

Please do not feel that you have to stick rigidly to this material! It is only a guide!

Remind the group that you are there to experience Christian community – community over which Jesus presides and in which he is the primary participant. We are here to learn from him and to use the gifts that he has given to us to minister to one another and build up one another.

WORSHIPPING.



When reading the Bible it can be so easy to keep reading rather than stopping to do what it says. We come to one such place in James 5:13 ‘Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.’ Many of us read these words and continue to the next verse without a pause. Why not begin your time together with a simple worship song or even reading lines of a song or Psalm of praise if you don’t want to sing!

GROWING



- How would you define patience? What does it look like in our lives when we are exercising patience? Are there any areas of your life where patience is required?
- James states that the second coming of Jesus is a central motive for exercising patience (vs 7,8). How is it that the anticipation of Christ’s second coming enables us to stand firm and be patient?
- How do you think we are to understand James when he writes that the Lord’s coming is ‘near’? What pitfalls must we avoid in reflecting on the nearness of Jesus’ coming?
- Do you find yourself thinking about Christ’s coming with much frequency? If not, why not?