

Facilitator

1. Open with Prayer

2. Welcome any newcomers

3. Read James 5:13-20 and give a five-minute review of the sermon using Peppy's sermon notes.

Facilitator: Please don't feel you have to cover every question. Try to keep your discussion to an hour and a half at the most.

CONNECT Group study questions, James 5:13-20

July 6, 2014

Title: A Declaration of Dependence

The poet writes, "I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul." Nice try William Ernest Henley, but you're wrong. We can flex our muscles and declare our independence, but when tragedy strikes, when we see plans and expectations evaporate with only suffering to fill the void, James says, "Pray." And when you're cheerful, instead of deceiving yourself and thinking you're in control, give praise to God, who really is in control. And when you can't pray, call on those who can—the elders of the church, James says—to pray for you and anoint you. Crossroads Community Church isn't a building on Gahagan Road, it's a gathering of local people who band together to lift each other in the name of the Lord. Let's declare our dependence on our only sure Source of hope and strength, and on His people.

Question: Describe suffering in as many ways as you can think of. Physical pain, certainly, but what else would cause you to suffer?

Question: C.S. Lewis said pain is God's megaphone to rouse a deaf world. Can you recall times of suffering that made you more attentive to what God has to tell you? Share them with the group.

Question: When you can sing "Happy days are here again," and "Blue skies smilin' at me," how do you celebrate? James says, "Let him sing praise." What praise songs or Psalms do you like to sing, knowing that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1:17 ESV)?

Question: Does it surprise you—maybe just a little—that God knows there are times when the last thing you can do is pray? Sickness, depression, anxiety, guilt from the consequences of sinful behavior—name some others—can keep us from the very thing that restores—prayer. Why do you suppose James singles out the elders of the church to be called upon to pray over us?

Question: James includes the forgiveness of sins as a result of prayer. What is it about prayer that brings healing and forgiveness? Is James implying that sins and sickness (physical, emotional, psychological, etc.) are related? If so, how are they related? If not, how are they not related?

Question: Verses 19 and 20 raise more questions than I'm prepared to tackle, but let's take them on anyway. What does James mean by "wanders from the truth?" Is he talking just about the Christian who slips back into sinful behavior? Or maybe the Christian who wanders away from biblical teaching and sound doctrine? In what ways can one "wander from the truth?" Apparently this wanderer is a Christian brother. Does James' statement that bringing him back will save his soul from death raise a question about the security of his position in Christ?

Facilitator: Remind your group that tough questions like these need not raise doubts, but instead they encourage us to dig for a better understanding of God and His ways.