



AWAKEN TO PRAYER

May 30 | Devotional

Day 1 - Devotion

Who do these historical nicknames belong to?

- The Godfather of Soul
- The Great Bambino
- Old Hickory
- The Wizard of Menlo Park
- Old Camel Knees

How'd you do? Maybe you could remember James Brown, Babe Ruth, Andrew Jackson, and Thomas Edison, but how about that last one? Ever heard of the man with camel's knees?

Old Camel Knees lived a couple thousand years ago. He got his nickname because of the large calluses that were on his knees due to all the time he spent kneeling in prayer, interceding for his brothers and sisters in the church. The man's real name was James, and this week, we're diving into how important prayer was to him.

Can you imagine a life *that* devoted to prayer? According to recent surveys, most Christians can't. Crossway recently asked 14,000 Christians about their prayer life and only 2% said they were *very satisfied* with it, with over 20% saying they were *very dissatisfied*. James had found a secret that millions of followers since him have missed--only it's not really a secret at all; he was just repeating what his brother, Jesus, taught all along: *Prayer is our greatest privilege and our greatest power.*

Matthew 18:19-20

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

John 14:12-14

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

John 15:7

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

These are powerful promises from Jesus, and it might be easy to start to see prayer as a rubber stamp. "If I want something, I can ask. Jesus said God will give it to me," we might reason. A missing component to that argument is faith. Faith is trusting God with the results of our prayer; it's belief that God knows what's best for us and trusting him to provide that, which is sometimes different than what we thought was best. When we're abiding--living interconnected--with Jesus, our desires for our prayers change. We pray more for God's will to be done in any situation, not our own. And that's when our prayers really start to come alive.

James instructs us, as people made righteous by Jesus, to pray in faith for physical and emotional healing, for salvation of our loved ones, for suffering, in celebration. No matter what the season or situation, the answer was always simple for James, and it can be for us: pray.

Questions for reflection:

1. If you were to rate your prayer life from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied), where would it fall? Are you comfortable with that? How can you take steps to change it?
2. What is your biggest obstacle to prayer? Maybe you don't know the words, feel like the words are bouncing off the ceiling, or don't see the results you were hoping for? Name those obstacles and release them to God in faith.
3. Re-read the promises from Jesus about prayer. What thoughts or emotions come to mind when you read them? What do those tell you about your own approach to prayer?

Day 2 – James Study Breakdown

James believed in the power of prayer. It was not a last resort for him; it was a way of life. In any situation, prayer was the answer. As we study the Scripture today, let's look at more of the practical teaching James gives in regard to this vital practice. He was adamant that anyone can pray, at any time, and can expect God to work.

Read James 5:13-20. Read it slowly as a prayer itself, asking God to reveal to you the things he wants you to see.

When should we pray?

- When we're hurting emotionally
(**verse 13**, *"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray."*)
- When we're hurting physically
(**verses 14-15**, *"Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord."*)
- When we're hurting spiritually
(**verse 16**, *"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*)

There is healing in Jesus at emotional, physical, and spiritual levels. When we pray in faith for healing, the miraculous can happen, though it might not always look like what we'd expect from it.

Who can pray?

- Anyone
(**verses 17-18**, *"Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years, Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops."*)

Elijah is one of those hall-of-fame prophets in the Old Testament, but James points out that at the end of the day, he was an ordinary man with an extraordinary God. It's the same with us. It should be encouraging to us to know the same God who performed miracles then is the God we serve today.

- The righteous
(**verse 16**, *"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."*)

This one might not be as encouraging on the surface. We might be tempted to think that our sins are keeping our prayers from being heard. It's important to remember that actions and obedience matter; we don't want to ignore God our whole lives and hope that he'll deliver us in those few desperate moments. But it's just as important to remember that as followers of Jesus, we have been called righteous. We have been given the righteousness of Christ. We don't have to be perfect to be heard.

How should we pray?

- We should pray in faith
(*verse 15, "And the prayer offered in faith..."*)
- We should pray selflessly
(*verse 16, "Pray for each other..."*)
- We should pray earnestly
(*verse 17, "He prayed earnestly..."*)
- We should pray continually
(*verse 18, "Again he prayed..."*)

The beautiful thing about the practice of prayer is that it starts to change our desire--from wanting our own will to be done to wanting God's will to be done. We pray boldly, asking for physical, emotional, and spiritual healing, knowing that God has the power to do those things. But we also pray humbly, knowing that God's purposes are better than our own, and that he knows what he's doing.

How does James' prescription for what to pray for, who can pray, and how to pray change or solidify your approach to prayer?

Take some time to read James' instructions and compare them to Jesus' model in Matthew 6. What similarities do you notice?

Day 3 - Scripture Survey

As we look at Awakening to Prayer this week, we want to see what the whole story of Scripture has to say about this week's particular topic. Where else in Scripture do we find this same truth? How do other authors of Scripture support or expand on what James shares in this week's particular passage?

Take a moment first to reread **James 5:13-20**. Maybe even consider reading it in another translation on your Bible app.

After you've read through it, take a few moments to slowly read through the passages below. Take time to note any similarities you find between the passage and the James passage. Jot those similarities down. Note if there are any questions that arise as you read. Finally, ask, "God, what are you inviting me into as I read and look through these verses?"

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

1 John 5:14-16

Matthew 6:5-8

Luke 11:1-13

James 4:3

Matthew 26:36-44

Day 4 - Story Work

You have a story of awakening. Maybe for you that looked a lot like James or Paul where Jesus changed everything in your life in an instant. Or maybe you've always had a constant awaken-ing. As you've gotten older, you've had your eyes opened more and more to who Jesus is and how that impacts your life.

Today we're going to continue looking at our own stories through the lens of James. This week's focus will be on prayer.

Reflect on your story using the questions below. Invite God to lead as you look back on the moments when your prayers have seemed rich and alive, as well as the times when they haven't. Both have things to teach us.

1. When has God answered your prayers?
2. Where has prayer made a difference in your life?
3. What do you need prayer for?
4. When have you prayed for something and not gotten what you wanted? What happened? How did it feel?
5. What are things you wished you prayed for but didn't?

Day 5 – Hear & Do

For this last day, let's slow down and pay attention to what God has been inviting us into as a result of this week's passage. Find a quiet space. Silence any technology around you. Spend some time reviewing your devotions this week. We want to be hearers of God's Word and we want to be doers of God's Word. Jot down your thoughts to the following reflection questions:

As you look over this week, what words, phrases, Scriptures, etc. have stood out to you? What was the most significant thing? Why?

Where else outside of your devo time did you notice "these things" pop up in your week?

What is God inviting you to DO as a response to this week's reflections

Consider some of these suggestions as possible action steps as you step into living this week's truths:

- Pray for someone sick or hurting individually, as a family
- Pray for someone who doesn't know Jesus.
- Try kneeling to pray in honor of Old Camel Knees. The position of our bodies can have profound effects on how we pray.
- Increase the time you pray. Start where you are, not where you want to be.