Effective Prayer Life
James 5:16

Objective: inspire @ to a more effective prayer life.
Reading: James 5:13-20.
Memory: James 5:16 b, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

Introduction:
1. Sometimes when people have serious needs, they ask others to pray for them.
2. This is good. We should be praying for and with each other.
3. BUT, it ought NOT be because your own prayer life has no value or effectiveness. It ought not be because their prayer is more powerful than your own.

We have confidence in the effectiveness of our own prayers. (HOW?)
Nobody has a monopoly on the effectiveness of prayer. The power of prayer does not belong to preachers only, ministers only; It is supposed to belong to every Christian. It is supposed to belong to YOU. Here is the simple formula on how to make your own prayer life genuinely powerful and effective.

The first step in making an effective impact with your prayer is to

I. Make Sure You Are Righteous.
A. Get “In” Christ and stay in Christ.
   1. Be cleansed from sin. This only takes place in Christ.
   2. Does NOT come by paying a fine or keeping a written code.
   3. It does involve baptism.
      a. Here is where the “appeal” is made for a clean conscience. 1 Peter 3:21, “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”
      b. Here is the point where the covenant is entered with Christ and where sins are forgiven;
      c. Acts 2:38, “Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”
      d. Don’t neglect this part. Don’t neglect this Biblical injunction. You need to DO what He says do to be righteous if you want to be righteous.

B. Be absolutely serious about resisting any and all sin.
   1. Put off the old and put on the new.
   2. 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, “Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”
   3. The fruit of the spirit of Christ includes self-control. Practice self control.
   4. Flee from the very temptation.
   5. Examine yourself. Get rid of anything that might not be “right” with God in order that you may be “righteous.”
      a. Coarse and vulgar language. Worldly habits.
      b. Warping your mind and spirit with the wrong TV shows.
      c. Wandering eyes that look to see things that might defile the purity of your heart.

C. Practice continual repentance.
   1. Acknowledge your sins when they happen. Don’t ignore them or excuse them.
   2. “Sin” is anything that “misses the mark. To be righteous, your heart must be set on doing only those things which are righteous in God’s eyes.
   3. Admit them to yourself, to God and to others so you can correct them. James 5:16a, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.…”
   4. You can’t be righteous while you harbor and practice a sin. You can’t stop a sin until you openly and readily admit that it is a wrong thing and that it is not pleasing to God.
   5. Isaiah 66:2, “…This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.”
   6. Tremble at His word. With a humble, contrite spirit. Make being right with God THE priority.
For effective prayer power, get yourself Righteous, then

II. Pray Hard.

A. Pray with fervent, serious effort.
   1. The word “ισχυει” = to be strong, powerful, competent. Some understand this as indication of the result, the efficacy of prayer while others understand it as effort put in to prayer.
   2. KJV; James 5:16, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”
   3. NAS; “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”
   4. But NIV; “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”
   5. These both apply word as descriptive of the prayer effort with emphasis on the prayer being offered effectively, (fervently? genuinely?)
   6. Concept being that effective effort makes effective prayer, powerful effort makes powerful prayer.

B. Pray with confidence.
   1. Pray with confidence: James 1:5-8, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”
   2. Pray with hope, expectation. Look for great things to happen. If your heart is seriously striving to please God, seriously applying itself, seriously asking, you can seriously expect God to respond with power.
   3. Mark 11:22-24, “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. “I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”
   4. You can do this IF you are right with God. “Righteous”. But only when you are right with God. If you are doing things God doesn’t like, how can you have this confidence? If you have willingly, knowingly neglected things He has instructed you to do, how can you have such confidence?
   5. Sometimes people don’t get what they pray for because they ask with wrong motives; James 4:3, “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” So, It is important to …

C. Pray for the right things. Pray for God’s will.
   1. Not so much for your ease and comfort, but for His honor and glory. You are supposed to be here to serve Him! To accomplish His will.
   2. Not so much for personal riches, luxuries, Not so much for things to go your way. Pray for His spirit to preside in you life and in any situation. Pray for receptivity to His will and desires.
   3. Consider the Lord’s example prayer: Matthew 6:9-13, “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” (some manuscripts include; “…for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”)
      a. Praising and honoring the very name, concept of God.
      b. For the advancement of His kingdom in men’s hearts (including our own).
      c. For God’s desires and intentions to be accomplished whatever they are, no matter how difficult they may be for you personally.
      d. For adequacy on what we need to get by in this life (not luxuries).
      e. For forgiveness (personal certainly, but cf. for others, for enemies, nationally etc.)
      f. For right hearts towards others as we forgive them.
      g. For strength and ability to resist any and all evil.
   4. Pray for repentant hearts. For the success and spread of the gospel.
   5. Pray that we can stand faithful and share Christ boldness.
   6. Pray that we can know and understand God word and God’s will.
   7. Look again at some of the elements in today’s passage; James 5:13-20. **Is any one of you in
trouble? He should pray. God wants us to pray about our troubles. To find a way out. To get through. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. God wants us to render thanks and praise for the good things!  14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.  15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. He promises help in times of illness. Wants us to call on faithful people and leaders to pray.  16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. It’s not a solitary thing. We are supposed to be in this together, helping, leaning on each other, encouraging …  17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.  18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. You are just like Elijah, and there is no reason your prayer should not be just as powerful.  19 My brothers, if one 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 over a multitude of sins.” God wants us to be concerned with each other, to help each other, to rescue each other. To the praise and glory of God.

8. There is power in prayer. These are the things we ought to pray for. This is the nature of the prayer we ought to offer.

So What?
Prayer can and should be powerful and effective. For you personally! The power of prayer is not just for others, it is for you. It is God’s intention that you have this resource. Good and great things happen when righteous people pray hard. Get Righteous, Stay righteous, Pray hard.

Closing Prayer:
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Reading: James 5:13-20.

“T_ p_ o_ a r_ m_ i_ p_ a_ e_.”

Memory: James 5:16 b.

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How to make your own prayer life genuinely powerful and effective.

I. Make Sure You Are Righteous.
A. Get “In” Christ and stay in Christ.
   1 Peter 3:21   Acts 2:38

B. Be absolutely serious about resisting any and all sin.
   1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

C. Practice continual repentance.
   James 5:16a   Isaiah 66:2

II. Pray Hard.
A. Pray with fervent, serious effort.
   James 5:16

B. Pray with confidence.
   James 1:5-8   Mark 11:22-24   James 4:3

C. Pray for the right things. Pray for God’s will.
   Matthew 6:9-13   James 5:13-20

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