

CG Leader Guide – Praying With Expectant Hearts

Text: James 5:13–18 (ESV)

Purpose

To help the group see James 5 as a call to **expectant prayer** for people who are **spiritually weak, weary, bruised, and broken**—and to practice prayer in personal, pastoral, and corporate ways.

Opener

- When you hear James 5:13–18, what do you usually assume it's promising (prosperity, guaranteed healing, something else)?
- What questions does this passage raise for you (suffering, elders, healing, anointing)?

Read the Passage

Read James 5:13–18 aloud (consider two readers).

Observation Prompts

- What words or actions repeat?
- What different situations are mentioned (suffering, cheerfulness, weakness, confession, righteousness)?
- Who is involved (individual believer, elders/pastors, the church, Elijah)?

Main Points (Discuss + Apply)

1) Personal Prayer (v. 13)

Big idea: Prayer starts with you. If you're suffering — pray. If you're cheerful — praise.

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- Discuss: James emphasizes not just what caused the suffering, but **what suffering does to you**—and prayer is the first response.
- Discuss:
 - What kinds of suffering tend to push you toward prayer—and what kinds push you away?
 - In a hard season, what changes inside you (hope, patience, bitterness, numbness, fear)?
- Apply:

- What is one “first-response” prayer you can practice this week (before texting, scrolling, venting, fixing)?
- Practice (2 minutes):
 - In silence, each person prays a simple sentence prayer: “Lord, in my suffering I need _____.”

2) Pastoral Prayer (vv. 14–15)

Big idea: When you are spiritually weak or weary, don’t isolate—**call for spiritual leadership and care.**

- Discuss: The key condition described is weakness/febleness and weariness—not a triumphalist guarantee.
- Discuss:
 - Why do you think James includes elders here?
 - What keeps people from reaching out until “rock bottom”?
- Anointing with oil (v. 14):
 - Discuss the possible meanings of anointing with oil: practical care (ointment), symbolic encouragement/strengthening, and shepherd-like ministry.
- Apply:
 - If you were “spiritually weary” right now, what kind of pastoral care would actually help you (prayer, presence, counsel, accountability, practical support)?
 - What’s one healthy step you could take *before* a crisis?

3) Corporate Prayer (vv. 16–18)

Big idea: This isn’t only for elders—James calls the whole church into a culture of prayer, confession, and mutual care.

- Discuss:
 - What does it look like for prayer to be normal “in every verse” of the community’s life?
 - Why is confession connected to healing and prayer in the life of the body?
- Elijah as encouragement:
 - James ends with Elijah to show that powerful prayer isn’t for superheroes—“he was like us.”
 - Discuss: What makes you feel like prayer “works for others but not for me”?
- Apply:
 - What’s one way our group could become safer for honesty (without becoming a gossip circle or a fix-it circle)?
- Practice (10 minutes):
 - Pair up (or triads). Share one sentence each:
 - “Right now I feel weak/weary in _____.”
 - “One thing I need God to do is _____.”
 - Pray briefly for one another (30–60 seconds each).

Closing Questions

- Which of the three kinds of prayer do you most neglect: personal, pastoral, or corporate?
- What would “expectant hearts” look like in your prayer life this week?

Leader Helps

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- **Tone to set:** This passage is for the bruised and weary—not for spiritual performance.
- **Guardrails:**
 - Encourage sharing that is honest but not over-detailed
 - Redirect from fixing to praying.
- **Next step option:** Invite anyone who feels “weary” to reach out to elders/pastors *this week* rather than waiting.