

Praying With Expectant Hearts — Parent + Teen Discussion Guide (James 5:13–18)

Purpose

To help parents and teens practice honest prayer together—when life is hard, when life is good, and when someone feels spiritually worn down.

Read: James 5:13–18

Ground Rules (read before you start)

- **No fixing mode.** We're listening first, praying second.
- **Confidentiality (within reason).** What's shared here stays here (except safety issues).
- **Short answers are okay.** Nobody has to share everything.

Opener (pick one)

- Parent: “When I was your age, prayer felt like _____.”
- Teen: “Right now, prayer feels like _____.”
- Both: “If prayer actually *worked* how I hope, I'd want God to _____.”

1) Pray in whatever season you're in (v. 13)

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James says:

- If you're **suffering, pray.**
- If you're **cheerful, praise.**

Talk about it

- Teen: What kind of stress feels most real right now (school, friends, pressure, anxiety, loneliness)?
- Parent: What kind of stress feels most real right now (work, finances, marriage, parenting fatigue, worry)?
- Both: When stress hits, what happens inside you?

Try it (2 minutes)

Each person completes this sentence out loud (no explanations needed):

- “God, I’m dealing with _____.”
- “God, I need _____.”

2) Don’t carry weakness alone (vv. 14–15)

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James describes someone who is **weak/worn out** and says to call for the elders (spiritual leaders) to pray.

Talk about it

- Teen: What are signs you’re getting spiritually tired? (numb, distant from God, ashamed, hiding, giving up)
- Parent: What are signs you’re getting spiritually tired?
- Both: Why do we wait until “rock bottom” before reaching out?

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James also mentions anointing with oil—often understood as care, encouragement, and shepherding, not a magic trick.

Try it (make a plan)

Answer together:

- “If we needed extra help, who are two trusted leaders we could reach out to?”
1. _____ 2) _____
- “What would be a good ‘early warning’ sign that we should ask for prayer sooner?”

3) Build a home where prayer is normal (vv. 16–18)

James calls the community to confess, pray for each other, and believe prayer matters.

He uses Elijah to show that prayer power isn’t for superheroes—Elijah was “like us.”

Talk about it

- What makes confession/honesty hard in a family?
- Parent: What helps you feel safe sharing?
- Teen: What helps you feel safe sharing?
- What would “a praying culture” look like in our home (simple, realistic, not performative)?

Try it (5 minutes: parent + teen prayer)

- Teen shares one request (one sentence): “Please pray that God would _____.”
- Parent shares one request (one sentence): “Please pray that God would _____.”
- Then pray short prayers for each other (20–30 seconds each).

Wrap-Up

- What’s one thing we learned about each other today?
- Which type of prayer do we need most right now: **personal**, **pastoral (asking leaders for help)**, or **family/community**?

Simple Weekly Challenge (keep it doable)

Pick one:

1. **One-minute prayer check-in** (3 times this week): “High/Low + one prayer.”
2. **Text-a-prayer** once this week (parent to teen or teen to parent).
3. **Reach out early**: Ask a leader/friend for prayer before things hit “rock bottom.”