

But if you have a copy of the scriptures, we're going to be in James chapter 5 this week, the last chapter of the Book of James. And he brings up the subject of prayer. He kind of ends as he began. He began by talking about prayer, and he ends the same way. And we're going to look at some verses that powerfully help us have a picture in mind as we use this gift that God's given to us called prayer. He says in chapter 5, verse 13, and I'm calling this message, "Honest to God", "Honest to God". He says, "Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. 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. 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. 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. 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. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops". This past week, we were trying to solve a mystery. And it's always, the journey of being a parent to figure the mystery of who broke what, who damaged what, where's that smell coming from? I'm just talking about stuff that's gone on in our house in the past few days. But we have this plant. My wife calls plants, happy plants. She feels happier when there's plants around. I think, there's probably good reasons for that. You know, being around green things that are growing oxygen. They're giving out, you're giving them your exhaled air.

So it's kind of a nice symbiotic relationship. But this happy plant, we noticed was not so happy because a big branch of it had been broken off and that all the fragments were lying there. The evidence was not even hid. It was just like someone had walked by and like with vengeance just snapped off a leaf and just torn it in half and then it was just lying there. And we're like who did that? And of course, no one wants to admit to such a senseless crime. And we knew it's fresh because, you know, if it was a couple of days, those things would wither down. But no, it was like just moments ago this was happy and living and vibrant. And now it's just there. It's not flourishing anymore, y'all. And so you know the most likely perpetrator of said heist is of course our three-year-old, who does not want to wear a mask on an airplane or ever. And so we said, I said Lennox, did you, did you tear the leaf off mommy's happy plant? And he looked at me, and was real cautious, real thoughtful, And he said, Dad, the thing is... And I'm like, the the thing, like if your sentence starts with the thing is... you are guilty, right? And I'm like how does this three-year-old know how to say, the thing is.

And then I realized he was just saying that so he could stall while he could think about what to do next. I could actually see the wheels spinning in his little mind of like, I don't know what to say. I'm guilty as charged. I don't want to admit it. I don't want to fess up. I just need I need time to come up with an alibi. So he goes, Dad, the thing is, and then he was just silent. We're like, yes, did you fall asleep? Did you power down. He goes, Clover did it. So I said, let's get Clover down here. And we assumed, like I just figured the moment I get Clover down, I'm going to go over, did you tear mom's plant, Clover? And she's going to go, no Dad, I did not do that. And then we're going to be able to just talk to Lennox about lying and have that conversation with a wooden spoon. And so we get Clover. Clover, get down here. And she's like, am I in trouble? No, you're not in trouble. Did you break that plant? Like I just assumed she'd immediately go, no, I didn't do that. And she goes, I don't remember. I'm like, don't remember. You would remember if you were there or not there.

And then, now I'm just like I don't know which reaction I think is more amusing. We can't discipline anybody. We never did get to the bottom of it. It's a mystery to this day. But honesty with the parent comes up in the home. And here in James, we're told not just as parents to think about the honesty that we're hopefully getting from our kids, but to think of ourselves as kids and be the ones giving honesty to our parent. That's what he's saying. And I think that's a better image to have in mind when we think about prayer, because I think we can overthink prayer. And we can over pressure prayer. And when we simplify it down to just the common denominator, we're kids who want to talk to our

Father. We have a Father who wants to hear from us. And that's what Jesus said.

You see, in His day, prayer was so messed up and so official and so formal and so funky that people had built all this on it, all these systems, tradition, repetition. And prayer became something it was never meant to be. And so when his disciples who watched Jesus pray, now it should tell you something that the only thing the disciples of Jesus ever asked him to teach them to do was how to pray. He preached them epic sermons. But you never hear them go, teach us to preach a sermon. He did some amazing miracles. But we don't ever hear about them going like, teach us how you did that miracle.

You see the thing that stood out to them as being the most noteworthy, the most different, the most shocking, the most disruptive was the way they watched Him pray. He would get away early. He would get away often. And so one day they said, could you teach us to do that, because what you do is not how we have prayer in our heads? And He said, oh, it's chillier than you think it is. Don't pray using a ton of words thinking you're going to impress God with your vocabulary. Don't pray, you know, babbling on. He said, when you pray just say, dad, in heaven, you're awesome. Your name is wonderful. I want your will to be done. I want your reign to be done in me on Earth as it is in heaven. Dad, I need stuff today like food and other things, could you provide it for me?

And Father, I don't want to do wrong things, but I often do so. Could you please lead me in a way that doesn't steer me into temptation, but deliver me from the evil one who I'm scared of and afraid of? And at the end of the day, Father, what I want more than anything is that you would be made famous, you would receive glory, and that your rule would be established forever.

So could that be what happens? And the disciples were dumbfounded by how normal prayer was, by how accessible that was, by how simple, by how they had complicated something that was meant to be beautiful, something that was meant to be natural. Every child knows how to raise up his hands and say, Dad, how to say Mom. It is intuitive in the essence of a child to cry out for the provision and protection and comfort of the parent. And Jesus said, that's what prayer is meant to be for us. And James today in these verses helps us to see the importance and the power and the raw energy that flows through God's followers, the followers of Jesus when we don't neglect or abuse, but we rather pay attention to this powerful tool that we've been given that's called prayer. And there's really two things that run through these verses that are sort of a common denominator. And the two themes that run through it concurrently are health, vitality, being healthy, and having a healthy prayer life.

And what I want to show you is that these two things are actually one. They can't be disconnected, that you actually do become healthier as you pray. That's what James is talking about. You see it come up again, like this person could be well. If they're sick, they could be well. If someone's got this, you pray for him. He's presenting prayer as the means by which we walk in wellness. Now it's interesting because the Bible is not the only place you could turn to to discover this. I have a friend named Ben Stewart. And he turned me on... So shout out Ben and Donna and all those at Passion City DC, leading the charge in our nation's capital, building a vibrant, dynamic church on the part of the Passion City House. But Ben turned me on to an article that ran a few years back in the Huffington Post. And the title of this article, the headline of this article was, and I quote, "Why People Who Pray Are Healthier Than Those Who Don't".

I could have taken that as the title of my message. And I'm going to just read to you an excerpt from this article, it says, quote, "There is a connection between body and soul and heart and health. The relationship between prayer and health has been the subject of scores of double-blind studies over the past four decades". And then it presented a number of them. For instance, a study done at Dartmouth Medical School found that patients with strong religious beliefs who underwent elective

heart surgeries were three times more likely to recover than those who were less religious. The National Institutes of Health funded a study that was done that found that individuals who prayed daily were 40% less likely to have high blood pressure than those who did not pray at all. A study done at Harvard discovered that there is something triggered inside the human body called the relaxation response, which occurs during periods of prayer and meditation. The body's metabolism decreases. The heart rate slows down. Blood pressure goes down. And your breath even becomes calmer and more regular.

Now you could hear that and a little bit skeptically think, oh, that it's a placebo. That all makes sense. We long have known if you've slow down your breathing and come to a more calm state like you would while you're praying that you're going to, of course, find positive benefits to it. But you would say the same can be done doing yoga or any other sort of meditation. Well, the next study they pointed to was one conducted at Bowling Green State University, where they had a group of people self identify as suffering from migraines. And they took one group of the people and they didn't know what they were a part of and they were asked to spend 20 minutes every single day repeating a spiritual affirmation like God is good or God is my peace or God is love, kind of the thing you would say during prayer. And those people were in that group.

The other group was a non-spiritual group and they were told to just mutter something like grass is green and sand is soft while they were trying to calm themselves down. They were both spending 20 minutes sort of meditating. But one was doing so giving themselves over to what we would call prayer and the other group was just sort of just chanting a mindless mantra. And what they found, this is so amazing, the spiritual meditators at the end of it reported fewer headaches and more tolerance of pain than those who were just simply given a benign neutral phrase. So James says, hey, you want to be well, don't forget to pray. You need to use this gift of prayer. And so what we're going to discover as we go through these verses with the minutes that remain is that there are sort of seven keys to a powerful prayer life. And I hope you'll jot these down. We need to understand, to utilize prayer in the right way.

Now in saying all of that, that's not to suggest that you then have to put pressure on prayer. You need to do it the right way. But what I am saying is that there are keys that can unlock prayer and can make it more powerful in our lives. And that's what James says. And you know, I would even just say, why should we listen to James on this subject? Don't forget if you were with us week 1, "Call of the Wild" kick off, we said James had a couple of nicknames. And one of those nicknames was old camel knees. He had like built in knee pads because he spent so much time praying. So he well knew how powerful prayer could become. And no doubt it was a journey in his life. And so it can be for you and for me. So seven keys, we need the keys. We're looking for the keys. We've got to find the keys. Let's discover the keys.

So let's go back. What are we looking for? The keys to prayer. Everything comes with keys. To open doors, you've got to have keys. And James is going to give us some keys to open up ourselves to a powerful prayer life. Why? Because we're going to discover where our prayer life is healthy, we will be healthy in every other way as well, all right. Key number one authenticity. Jot that down. You're going to collect all seven keys. Authenticity. I'm talking about transparency or being vulnerable. This is as opposed to facade. This is as opposed to pretending you have everything together. This is where you're being honest and authentic in prayer. And that's why he starts out right away. Are you in trouble? Man, have you thought about praying about it? And when you pray in trouble, what should you talk to God about? The thing that's troubling you. You should cast your care on him. Cast your burden on him. Bring your anxiety to him.

You dealing with lust today? Tell God about it. Tell God, I'm tempted. I shouldn't be looking at these images. I shouldn't be watching these movies. God, I'm tempted. I'm having this problem. This is a difficulty, even just speaking those words gives you power. The enemy wants to always smother you

in secrecy, keep you silent in the dark so we can snuff you out making you feel just completely alone. But when you're honest to God, it casts light, it brings light on things and nothing sanitizes like sunlight. I'm telling you. Nothing healthy grows in the dark. And when you just tell God honestly about it, there's a power in that. So tell God about your troubles. Here's the great thing about walking with Jesus. We have an anchor for every storm. And I'm convinced that when we tell God what we're afraid of about, when we tell God what's going on, it's sort of like throwing that anchor into the water. The anchor is not going to do you any good in the boat. But when you throw it overboard, when you let it go down to the bottom of the sea, it's able to pull you taut in the midst of that storm. So right there in the mist of it, I'm afraid. I'm feeling hopeless. Are you in trouble? Be authentic as you pray. Tell God. Don't put a nice face on an ugly thing. Tell God, I'm losing my mind here. I feel like I'm on my last nerve here. I feel like I'm being torn in 1,000 pieces here. Some of my most vulnerable moments of prayer were walks where I just literally told God, I don't think I can do this. This is more than I can bear. But in doing that, I was acknowledging I was coming to the end of myself. And then I found out I hadn't even come to the beginning of God's resources, and it tapped me into his strength and gave me a new breath and gave me enough to go another round. So if you're in trouble, be authentic. Tell God all about it. He already knows. But he wants to hear you say it. Then he says, is anybody having a great day? Is anybody celebrating? Is anybody just crushing it in life? Is anybody like feeling awesome? Praise God for it.

So here's the thing. Your prayer should match the situation. If you're doing good and if everything's rosy, don't forget to pray. I think we would often remember. I think the statistic is something like 83% of Americans say that when there's some sort of sickness in their life, they pray about it in some way or another. But I think we oftentimes forget to offer the same kind of prayer on good days. But praise or worship is just a prayer set to music. So what should we be doing? We should sing songs that are cheerful, sing songs of triumph, give God glory for the fact that things are going well. It's easy to let the gas off spiritually in times of blessing. But in those moments, we should return that praise to God, and sort of like be laying up praise for the next trial or difficulty that's going to come. The point is be authentic. There's this little city in Montana where we're broadcasting this from and it's called Big Fork. And the nickname of the city is that it is a city for all seasons, for all seasons.

Now a funny thing about that is that there is no city near us that has such wicked shoulder seasons like this city. It seems like it really comes to life in summer. And then it's a pretty sleepy place the rest of the season. So it's funny to me that out of out of all the seasons, out of all the seasons, it's the city for all seasons, even though it's pretty well a one season city. Don't send me hate mail from Big Fork, all right, I don't want it, or Ferndale or any of the other little outlying places in Big Fork. these people are crazy, all right. But the cool thing about prayer is that prayer really is something for all seasons. Are you in summer? Are you in winter? In fall? Are you in spring? There is a way to express all of that in prayer. So be authentic. James points to Elijah as a sort of the... and we'll kind of come back to him a few times. Elijah is sort of the demonstration of what prayer looks like. I love that when we look to Elijah, we don't see perfectly put together prayer.

There is some raw prayers up in a Elijah's life. James is like, man, that guy prayed in the didn't rain, prayed and it didn't rain. It's like, ah, that's intimidating. You know what I'm saying, like to hold myself up to prayer like that. But the cool thing is James goes, don't worry, Elijah was human like you are, human like I am. He was human. He was frail. He was broken. He just did a really good job of giving God that brokenness, of giving God his humanity. I brought two examples. This is a really funny one to me. 1 Kings 19, verse 4. This is after one of the best ministry days of his life. "He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And then he prayed that he might die, and said, 'it is enough, Lord, just take my life for I am no better than my fathers'" I can relate to this so much.

Someone asked me how it feels like if I have an off weekend, if I didn't feel like I preached good, like is that hard to get over? And I'm like actually, no, it's awesome because there's nowhere to go but up. You know, what I'm saying? Like, that's not... The hardest Mondays for me are the time I feel like it was an amazing weekend. It just flowed and God showed up. It was powerful. Sometimes those are the most challenging Sunday nights, the most difficult Mondays where I just feel like, how we're going to do that again. And it's just kind of like sometimes in the moments of blessing, there's just difficulty. And Elijah sort of had that a high high, but then it was like bang, low low. And he wasn't prepared for that. He wasn't he wasn't ready for it. And he just got to this low place. And so what did he do? He went to God. God, I feel like I can't do this anymore. I feel like I've peaked. I feel like how do I top that? I feel like I can't go on. I'm no better than my fathers. And he authentically, this is the person held up as the image of what powerful prayer is. And he had low, low, low, low, lows but he brought those lows to God.

Another one, verse 10 when God said, well, what's the matter, man? Why are you so low. He said, well, "I've been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, killed Your prophets for the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life now". What is this? He is being real and is honestly articulating self-pity. And I think it's always a sign that there we're unduly focusing on ourselves as the hero of the story when we start to feel words of self-pity coming out. I'm the only one doing this. No one notices this. No one sees the trouble I've seen. I work so hard and they don't appreciate this. Everyone around here takes me for granted, right? And God lets him speak, lets him talk. God lets him get it all out. And it sort of made him feel better. And then at the end, God was like, hey, you know how about that, like, you know, how you thought you were the only follower I have.

So I don't know how to break this to you. I have 7,000 other super legit prophets who haven't forsaken me at all. Like I know, you think you're the only one. The point is God enlightened him by allowing him to be honest with Him. God can handle your honesty. And a lot of times even just in the articulating of it, you'll start to see it for what it is. And you can write that out and look at it and go, oh, I see what's going on here. My lens isn't right. I'm not seeing things properly. But it only happens as you are authentic with God. The second key is unity, unity. One of the reasons that prayer is so powerful is because it releases unity. And where there is unity, there is always strength. Where there's division, there's always weakness. That's why one of the common statements or creeds during the Revolutionary War was "united we stand, divided we fall". It's said that Benjamin Franklin mused after they signed the Declaration of Independence that, "brothers if we don't hang together, we shall all be hung separately". All hang separately.

There's power in unity. And prayer unites your soul to God. And that unity releases power. But that's something I think we would expect. I'm united to God. David said give me a heart that's united give me a single heart for you, right? God's looking for those whose hearts are loyal or united towards His name. That makes sense that prayer unites our heart to heaven. But did you know that prayer also unites yourself within yourself? You are not single. You are like God, the God who is triune: Father, Son, Spirit, three persons, one God has made us in His image. And in His image made, we have body, we have soul, we have spirit. And sin messes with that unity. Sin messes with that union. When we do things with our body that we ourselves in our conscience know not to be right, we are doing something that is against ourselves, it leads to this disruption of the unity.

So sin always divides. It divides you within yourself. That's what guilt is. I'm conflicted because I shouldn't have done what I did. What are you doing? You're dividing your own unity. You're sapping your own power. So you walk around and you had this sense of I'm not whole. I'm not one. I don't feel right. Why? Cause sin divided your power that connects you to God, and sin also cut you off from the power of being one with yourself. And that's why James, earlier on in the book, talked about how we can pray in a way that is not going to give us what we're praying for. He, in fact, said, it's what? Verse 7, the man that should not expect to receive anything from God that's praying prayers that are full of

doubt, what? He is a double minded man, unstable and all that he does. Now the Greek word double-minded literally means fracture soul, fracture soul. So your soul's like kind of fractured. Who you are meant to be united, united towards God, united within yourself, it's split.

So there's this sense of I'm not doing what I should be doing. It's almost like I'm doing things with my body that my soul to God knows that aren't right, like this toxicity I've brought in through self-seeking and through things that I know are wrong, but I did them anyway, the seeking after myself more than caring for other people. All these things, what does it do? It disrupts the unity that's meant to release power. So what's the solution? Confession. Confession makes you whole. Confession restores the unity. Confession mends what's broken between you and God and between you and you by admitting that what God knows to be true, you recognize to be true. And through what the Bible describes as repentance, you set your soul against what was there dividing you and sapping your strength. And it takes away the instability. It mends what's broken. It sets it right in a singular direction. And it releases power. There can actually even after confession or repentance be greater power than there was beforehand.

Come on, a broken bone that's healed, it can be stronger than it was before. But only if it's set, only if it's acknowledged. You can't play hurt, oh, I'm OK, but on the inside you're divided, you're unstable, things aren't right. You know there's a conflict raging. You know there's just things that are ruining your sleep and taking away your peace and the sweetness that's meant to be there. And you don't want to show up at church because this thing in your heart. You don't want to answer those calls and those texts from people checking in on you. You've kind of gone rogue. And you think, I just got to work this out myself. But the answer is to get clean. You won't be clean, if you won't come clean. You've got to confess those things. You've got to get that out there to be dealt with. 1 John 9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteous". In verse 15 James says, "If he sins, he will be forgiven".

So holding onto these things, it divides you. It saps your strength. It takes away your vigor. But by confessing it, by getting it out there into the open, by prayer bringing it to God, you're receiving the health and wholeness and forgiveness from what was already paid for at the cross. You're just allowing there to be a mending of the relational infraction that was done in his sight. I know you saw that happen. I hate that. God, I'm sorry. Please forgive me for that. And you're already whole. You're already on your way towards health. So unity, unity comes when there's constant confession. One of my favorite ideas is that the prayer is like a Tide pen, always in the purse. You don't wait to the washing machine, don't wait to laundry day, just get that Tide pen, deal with that spot as soon as it happens, just right there. Call it out for what it was. I shouldn't have said that, shouldn't have done that. God, I ask your forgiveness for that. And then you can move on.

Don't allow there to be that lack of unity in your heart. It's been said, there can be no revival without confession. For wherever God does a great work, it's always marked by the admission of sin, the confession of sin, people being open about what they need to be held back from before God. The third key is intensity. Didn't James say that the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much? Intense prayers. That word "fervent" literally means, if you look into the Greek language, metal that's heated until it glows. Fervent, hot prayers. What gives prayers their fervency? I would say that it needs to be prayers that are marked by intentionality. Nothing will give your prayer intensity like intentionality. And why do you say that? Here's why. Because when he says pray earnestly in verse 17, directly translated it's this, put prayer in your prayers. Put prayer in your prayers. What will make your prayer glow white hot? You know what would be awesome is if you were actually praying while you were praying, as opposed to your mind being checked out and you being able to babble a prayer in repetition and rote, like you're saying the words to a nursery rhyme or a Beatles song that you can just sort of say it without even thinking about.

And how many of the prayers that you and I have prayed in the past week have been prayers that are just prayed with repetition? And I'm all for like the Lord's Prayer. I'm all for the certain prayers are powerful to pray every day. There are prayers that I pray by repetition before I preach. There are certain specific prayers I pray over my children every time I think about them. And prayers I pray for you. I got on my knees, Fresh Life, for you today. And I prayed for you as you would hear this message. I prayed for you as you live this out. I pray for our staff. I pray for my wife. I pray for my great grandchildren, not yet born. There are certain prayers I do pray by repetition. But I think there also has to be an effort made to actually engage your mind and engage yourself in what are these words that I'm saying and what do they mean and that they're not just coming out, like it's just like Alexa saying something, I hope I just turned Alexa on in your room. Alexa, download the Fresh Life app, right? Alexa, follow Fresh Life on YouTube. I mean, it will help you out.

You're like, what, I don't remember doing this. She's like I took that for care of you, master, you know. But just that you're thinking, you see what I'm saying. What will give you intensity? Intentionality. Think about it. And that's why I always tell you mix it up. If you always pray, you know, standing, pray kneeling. Take a prayer walk. Write your prayers out, whatever it takes to disrupt you and to shock you into realizing, like, I'm talking to God I need to think about what I'm saying. Do I mean what I'm saying? And ask yourself this, how would I feel if the roles were reversed and someone was talking to me the way I'm talking to God? Am I actually thinking about this? And that will cure of some of the ills, some of the we're just quoting verses to him without really even thinking about it, trying to sound flashy and impressive. And when I was a kid, it was you always prayed for travel mercies. We always prayed for travel mercies. Oh, Lord, just travel mercies. Like, what does that even mean? Just to be thinking about what we're actually saying. Intensity. Here's the question. Why should God listen to you while you're praying if you're not listening to you?

So listen to yourself pray. Audit your prayers. Take inventory of your prayers. Who are you praying for? You've been given this incredible weapon called prayer. What are you using it for? The next key is responsibility, responsibility. As you pray you have a responsibility to participate, in my opinion, in the prayer being answered. So example he says, if you're sick, you should also get the church to pray for you. And we love praying for you. I love going to hospital. I love getting to pray when we hear about someone who's not well, to pray for them. I love, as we have the opportunity, to use oil, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, to just put a little dab of olive oil just as a way of saying like in this situation, I'm believing we need the Holy Spirit's intervention here for a miraculous healing. We believe that can happen. God still heals today. He can heal in a moment. But the oil also speaks to the part that we have to play at in doing everything that we can do to see God answer that prayer through medicine that he's given to us, through wise choices that we can make using our brains and using common sense and good judgment.

And if you actually look into the history of the culture in which scripture was written, oil was not just a symbol of the Holy Spirit, which it was. The priest had to be ceremonially anointed before serving. But there was also a use of oil and medicine. So you know, the story of the Good Samaritan. He found the guy on the ground, battered and beaten. What did he do? This is Luke 10. He went to him, bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. There was a medicinal, sounds like he's making a salad, doesn't it? He poured on oil and he poured on wine. But no, he was actually using medicine in that day to treat these wounds. So when James talks about having anointing with oil done, it's a play on words. He's saying yes let pastors pray for you that God would and could miraculously heal you. But also call the doctor, also get a second opinion, also make wise choices. Around Fresh Life, if you've been here at all for any length of time, you've heard us talk about and reference kind of a cultural value that's called being a snake bird. And that comes from Jesus' statement in Matthew chapter 10 where he talked about how we're supposed to be wise as serpents, but also harmless as doves.

And doves, that's a picture of trusting God. And like doves are not exactly like the most fierce animal out there, but snakes are. Snakes are cunning and crafty and hunters. And doves are trusting and unassuming and helpless. And we're sort of always needing to be between both of those two extremes, meaning we pray for what only God can do. I'm a dove. But I also do everything that I can do. So I've prayed for God to work powerfully through this sermon. But then I also worked hard to study and to put the message together and research. You see, I'm not just going to pray for God to give me a great wife one day, I did. I'm also going to, I don't know, brush my teeth, and pay down my credit card, and get finances in order. You see what I'm saying? Like are you ready for the thing God's preparing you for? We need to pray for... yes. But then also be willing to take the wise steps to bring those things about. I'm praying for my neighbor to get saved. You know what I'm also going to do? I'm also going invite him to church and tell him that he can join us for church online. I'm not just going to ask, oh, there you go God. I'm going to remember there's a responsibility in it.

God, move heaven and earth through this church. But you know I'm going to the first time I get paid, the first action is going to be to get the first and the best to God. When He blesses me, I'm going to extravagantly give an offering above and beyond that. I'm going to ask always, how can my resources, it's a big theme in James, how can my resource, not just be laid up for me to die and leave this world with then not doing something of heavenly good? I'm going to be always paying for what I'm praying for. James says you have a responsibility. You have a part to play. Don't just pray, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Be about your father's business every waking day. Elijah, you know, the epic prayer guy. Yes, he sought God and preached sermons and did miracles. But guess what? When he was low that day and feeling hypoglycemic and crashing and I don't want to live anymore and all the rest, you know what God did? God, you're like he probably send him a Bible and had him read it. No, actually, no.

Look at first King's 19:7. God sends an angel to say, hey man, you should arise and eat because this journey's too great for you. So take a nap, eat something. And when he woke up, he's like you're still cranky, go back to bed, and get some more food, like, he literally was like, you're not taking care of yourself. So we come to God, help in this way. And God's like how many hours of sleep are you getting? How many ounces of water do you drink per day? The point is, God will not give us a supernatural answer to a natural problem to something that has its origin in us just not being wise. So you have a part to play responsibility. The second to last key is eternity. In all of this use of prayer, let's always keep our mind on the bigger picture. Yes, God can use prayer to miraculously intervene and heal someone. He also can use medicine that He's given us the ability to figure out to heal someone. But in all of that, it's all a delaying of the inevitable. If God raises the dead, if God heals the sick, they're going to move back towards sickness, back towards the grave. Even Lazarus, who came out, had to die again.

So our biggest agenda isn't just to see signs and wonders. Jesus considered it a failure if only miracles and signs were done and there was not the lasting work of salvation in the soul. And that's what James seems to be pointing to when he says in verse 15, "The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well". Underline that word well. And he says, semicolon, "The Lord will raise him up". That's speaking about the Resurrection. That's the last day. The greatest salvation God can do, the greatest wellness that can happen is not that you're cured of your chronic pain or cancer, that God can and I pray he would do that for you. The greatest thing God could do is do such a work of wellness in your soul that on the last day you're raised up not just well physically but well in body, in soul, and in spirit, made whole by the precious blood of Jesus Christ shed for you on the cross, that you're well inside and outside, that you have a promise that your portion is not just in this life. But your life is hidden with Christ in God, and that when Christ who is your life appears that you will appear with him in glory, not just that you would get 80 years instead of 70 or 90 instead of 80 or 110 instead of, listen, we're all going. If it's a car accident or cancer or COVID, this life is a vapor. It's temporary.

Come on, there's something so much better and it's called eternal life. There's something better, it's called immortality. That's why Jesus died on the cross to conquer death for you. So we're not just clinging to, can I get 7 more minutes 12 more minutes? how do I guard my life here? Can I live inside of a plastic bubble? Look, do all the things, wear your seat belt all the stuff. But at the end of the day, we're all leaving this world through something called the grave. And the Bible says God wants you to be well so you can be forever well. And that's what He has planned for all of us, so keep your mind as you pray on eternity. Eternity, not just praying for the safety of our kids, yes, we want our kids to be safe. But you know what we want? We want our kids to be saved for our children. Saved, we want people... keep your mind on eternity in the prayers that you're praying. I had you under line the word well. God can make you well, even when your prayer is not answered like you wish He would answer it.

The man on the screen is Horatio Spafford. Horatio Spafford lived in Chicago when the great fire swept through in 1871. He had already experienced catastrophic loss when his little boy died of scarlet fever. He lost a lot of his money and resource in the fire. And so he decided the family needed a vacation. So he loaded his wife and four daughters up on a ship, sent them to England. He was going to join them. The ship encountered a storm while at sea. And tragically all four of his daughters perished in the ocean. His wife telegraphed him, letting him know that their daughters had died, asking him what he should do, what she should do. He immediately boarded the next ship he could. And as he made his way to reconnect with his wife, his grieving wife in England, the captain of the ship notified him when they were over the precise location where his daughters had perished.

Horatio went to the edge of the railing and looked over at the waters that held his daughter's bodies, and he wrote the words to a famous hymn. He wrote these words. "When peace like a river attended my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to know it is well, it is well with my soul". God has given us prayer, not merely so that mountains can be moved, but so that God can move things inside of us even when the mountains remain stationary. We can be well because of Jesus. And that wellness flows through our using this gift of talking to God through prayer. The final key is longevity. Longevity means to continue to do something. Longevity means to not give up. We need to pray prayers with longevity. Jesus said men always ought to pray and not to lose heart. Elijah demonstrates this. Yeah, he prayed and it didn't rain; prayed and it rained. But don't forget, when he prayed for it to begin raining, he prayed and it didn't work. And he prayed and it didn't work. He prayed and it didn't work. He prayed and it didn't work.

In verse 43 of 1 Kings 18, we're told that seven times he prayed with his head down on the ground and a servant checked. And finally after the seventh time, we don't know how long that lasted, then finally, the rain came the point is sometimes when we're praying for something, we need to just keep praying and not give up. Daniel prayed for something for 21 days. And then finally, he saw the release of what he had been praying for after that period. I think we need to hold on to these prayers with longevity. Well, there's your six keys. And you said seven, Levi. Well, the seventh key is community. Community, I want to point out to you that two different times in the passage we read the phrase each other or one another is used. So prayer is not meant to be something just used secretly, individually, but also collectively as we as the body of Christ give ourselves over to community. The key of community is one that we find when we're together at a watch party, together watching church online, together in a small group, together in a Zoom, together at a Flourish night, this key is unlocked. This key unlocks that power and health that God has for us and we all get to experience it collectively.

That study I told you about has one last finding. And it was a 16 year long study done at Harvard School of Public Health. And they found that during this study people who attended religious

services at least once per week were 30% less likely to die and were at significantly lower risk from both cardiovascular and cancer related mortality. There is something to be said for being together. There's something to be said for having other people praying for you. There's something to be said for having other people who know your name. I was, I'm going to close with this, fishing with my kids. And we invited a friend to come. And I said I'll pick you up, pick you and your son up. And that was pretty decent of me. Went out to the lake to do some fishing, didn't catch anything. The sun was setting. It was time to go. We went to get in the car. We all loaded up. I pushed the button to start the engine, nothing happened. The car screen just said, fob not detected. Fob not detected, that means I lost my keys.

So of course we begin searching all through the car. Nowhere. With lights and iPhones, we begin combing the ground. It must have fallen out. We're looking everywhere, on our hands and knees. Nowhere. Finally, we gave up, called his wife to come pick us up, left my vehicle there for the night, planned to get Jennie to take me back in the morning. And when she agreed to, I was just about to leave the house to go and get dropped off with the spare key and to look for another two hours until I found my stupid, I refused to get a new key fob made, right? Anybody else like that, like I will find, I had actually rented a metal detector that I was going to go pick up on the way. Like, I will find, I will have my vengeance in this life or the next, right? You know what I'm saying? And just as I was about to hop in Jennie's car to get the metal detector and go back out to the lake, I was walking past the kitchen table. And thought, oh, that's funny, my keys are on the table. And I just thought that.

That's interesting that I left them there. I never leave them there. And those were the keys that we had spent the whole evening looking for at the lake, the keys that I was about to look for with a metal detector for the rest of the morning. What are you doing here? Then it all made sense to me. When I stopped to grab the fishing poles, the girls were already in the car. I said, stay right here, I'm going to go grab the fishing poles. But I had brought the keys in with me, set them down. The car was running in the driveway, you see where this is going. The moment I turned off the engine at the lake, we were doomed. From the moment I shut the car down, there was only one way this story was going to end. And was with us not leaving in that vehicle that evening. The keys were never there. All that frustration, all that looking, all that scrounging around, the keys were never there.

Listen to me, the keys were always in the house. The keys were in the house. What I was looking for out there was right in here the whole time. Church, we don't have to go out there looking for this, looking for that, why am I not healthy? Why is this broken? God has given us within each other and with prayer and with our relationship with him and one another everything we need to thrive, no matter what the gates of hell are able to throw at us. Come on, shout it if you hear. The key is in the house. The key is in the house. Thanks be to God for giving us each other that we might flourish in the midst of the craziness of this life. Honest to God, It'll work, I guarantee it.

Father, we thank You. We thank You for what happens when we lean into our relationship with You and with each other. I pray we would not soon forget that the key is in the house. That's why You care so much about the Church. That's why You built it. That's why Your mind is on it, Your heart is in it. You want us to thrive and be well. You want it to be well with our soul.