

James 5:13-18

Prayer series from James #3

Prayer: with confession

James tells us to confess our sins to one another and pray (v16) – why confess?

1. to reverse the trajectory of sin

- sin comes bundled with fear, anxiety, guilt, shame, etc. – confession consciously flips these around
- the goal of confessing is to pray and be healed, not simply to release pent-up feelings

2. to repair relational damage

- James likely has in view our confessing to those whom we have sinned against

3. to present our bodies and souls to God for healing

- sin involves our turning from God – God is the source of life and health
- those suffering can wonder if their suffering is a punishment – the good news of v15 directs our minds to think rightly in those situations

putting confession into practice: private, personal and public sins

questions for reflection:

1. Why is it so hard for people to be open about their deepest struggles and failings? What are some potential problems in trying to create a culture that is completely transparent? What problems come from a culture in which people don't share with anyone what is really going on?
2. What are examples of "personal" sins in your life – those things you think and do that are only known to you and God (and presumably don't affect others directly)? "Private sins" – the wrong that is against a person? "Public sins" – the sins that have an impact on several (or many) people? As you reflect on sin in your own life, what needs to be confessed to God, what needs to be confessed to others and made right?
3. Which are you more likely to do: share regret and feelings of guilt beyond boundaries that are appropriate, or not share at all and keep it to yourself?
4. James tells us to confess so we can pray and be healed. What keeps you from believing that God forgives those who confess, turn and hope in Christ? What keeps you from seeing real change after you have confessed?
5. Jesus died so that sins can be forgiven – how can you reflect on Jesus and what he did so that healing and change come into your life?