

The Power of Interpersonal Prayer

Epistle of James

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the fifth chapter of James, James 5, turning to our exposition of the book of James this morning. I appreciate Jess preaching last week, a wonderful message and good to be back this morning, though also. In the book of James, we're nearing the end and I want to continue to mine what we can from this wonderful, the treasure of God's word. This morning we're looking at verses 16-18 and we're going to see that the Lord is really offers some amazing encouragement to us about the resources that are available to us that many of us are just not availing ourselves of, that God has given to us everything necessary for life in godliness, he has made available to us tremendous riches, and we're going to see in this passage one of the areas where we tend to not lay hold of those. We live as paupers when we should be living as children of the King and we're looking at "The Power of Personal Prayer," and let's say "The Power of Interpersonal Prayer." Not really thrilled with that title but that's what we're gonna do today, probably a two-part message so we may change it next week. The power of interpersonal prayer.

We looked at, we talked about for the last two messages the healing power of the prayer of faith. We looked at when you called the elders of the church and the prayer of faith, the power that it has, and this morning what we're gonna see is James basically looks at that example and he draws an inference from that and says if it's true, if what I just told you is true, that when the elders come and pray for the spiritually sick, when the elders come and pray for those that are weakened by the battle with sin and overwrought, when the elders come and pray and it's decisive, the impact of it is decisive for spiritual healing, if that is true, then why aren't you all confessing your sins to one another and praying for one another that you may be healed? That's essentially the argument in the passage. If prayer makes that big a difference, why are you not praying? If confessing our sins makes that big a difference, why are you not confessing?

One of the things that makes it clear that the prayer of faith, remember the elders, we're gonna read the passage in just a moment and you'll see it again, that if any among you is sick, the text says but we've taken that as weak because the word in Greek can be translated weak, in fact, about half the time in the New Testament it's translated weak. So sick, spiritually weakened and then also the second word that's translated sick in verse 15 also can be translated differently to be exhausted is the more normal translation. So we've

said that James here is talking not about physical sickness and physical healing but spiritual sickness and spiritual healing and that's why there is an absolute unconditional promise that if you do what is called for here, your heart reaches out to God in this way, he will bring decisive healing spiritually. So he's saying that if this is true when the elders come, when you get to the worst case situation, is it not obvious that we need to be doing the same kind of thing in our lives on an ongoing way? This is like preventive medicine spiritually. Why wait until you need to call in the surgeon to do radical surgery, which is what the elders are doing spiritually, why not help one another deal with the various ailments spiritually that you have on a regular basis by doing what he calls us to do in this verse?

So let's look at it together, James 5. We're gonna read James 5:13-18 to get the full context but we're focusing in this morning and probably next Sunday on verses 16 to 18. We might say the transforming power of interpersonal prayer. The transforming power of interpersonal prayer. Maybe one-anothering prayer if you want to write that down. I might like that better, one-anothering prayer.

Verse 13,

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

Let's pray together.

Father, we ask that You would help us by the power of Your Spirit working in our minds and our hearts, enlightening our spiritual eyes to see and understand wonderful things from Your word, to see our need to change and help us, Lord, to repent and trust more fully in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

Now I've mentioned we're taking this it's spiritual healing and there are some, it's a minority position, John MacArthur takes that. I really think it's the right position because James is talking, when you take the words that he uses in context of the chapter in which he writes them, chapter 5, in the book in which he writes, the whole epistle, chapter 1, he's not writing an instruction at the end of his letter to tell you how you can change your circumstances every time; that if you're physically sick you can just get over it by this prayer. No, that's not what...he's talking about spiritual realities throughout his book. He

says if any of you is suffering in chapter 1, don't call for help to stop suffering, he says rejoice that you're suffering because suffering is going to produce godly character. Then in chapter 5, anyway I'm not gonna say more about that. If you want to look at that, previous messages explain that so I'm gonna move on ahead. This is spiritual healing he's talking about.

We're looking at verses 16 to 18. He turns the corner from the prayer of faith where someone who is spiritually overwrought, beaten down, overcome with discouragement, spiritual depression, is out of the game, calls for the elders of the church, they come and pray over him, anointing him with oil, and these wonderful things happen. The prayer offered in faith restores him, saves him literally, not in a saving way like he was unsaved before but it delivers him, it rescues him. That's the root idea of the word save. It rescues him from peril. It will raise him up. If he's committed sins, they'll be forgiven him. Then he says therefore confess your sins to one another. So we're looking at this verses 16 to 18, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." Then the example of Elijah.

We're going to organize our thoughts around two main points and the first main point is the doctrine. What is this passage saying? What's it teaching, the doctrine? And we're gonna have four subpoints which we'll probably not finish this morning so really going to be on point 1A, B, C, maybe D, and the next time we'll look at the second point, Lord willing.

So the doctrine. What is this passage saying? What's it teaching? First of all, the first subpoint here is the precepts. We need to note the precepts that are here. There are two commands, there are two statements and commands that are basically set down for us as prescriptions for how we're to live, what we're to do. In verse 16, two imperatives. The verb "confess" is a command, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another." Those are two commands. That's the precepts here that he lays down. He says, "Listen, in light of what I've told you, what you must be doing, what I'm commanding you to do is to do this, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another."

Interesting that in the tenses of the verbs, those two verbs, confess and pray, are in the Greek present tense. Remember Greek present tense, tense in Greek is more about the kind of action than the time of the action and so what he's emphasizing by putting them in the present is he's basically saying, "Therefore go on praying for one another, continually pray for one another, continually confess your sins to one another and continually pray for one another. Go on in this way of life of confessing your sins to one another and praying for one another." This is to be a pattern in your life.

It's interesting that he says, "to one another." In fact, the key word in the passage is "one another." It occurs twice. The English translates it and I'm reading it in the New American Standard Bible, "confess your sins to one another and pray for one another." He puts it in there twice. It's a reciprocal pronoun and it means "each other; one another."

It pictures two people who are relating to one another in such a way that one's doing, you're doing the same thing for each other. So confess your sins to one another means I confess my sins to you, you confess your sins to me. Pray for one another means I pray for you, you pray for me and it pictures a relational, especially in the context. He's described what happens when someone is spiritually overwrought and has to call for the elders to come and pray for them, the elders go, the elders counsel with the person to see what's going on in their life, and apparently as we see from this particular verse, and the verse actually precedingly says if they've committed sins they'll be raised up, part of what that counsel, prayer session is, is talking with them about potential ways that they're not living in obedience to God. A person who's overwrought, they start confessing their sins and the elders are talking with them about that, "Hey, what's going on in this area of your life? How are you doing? Are you struggling with this? How are you doing if it's an illness that you're also dealing with, tell me how you're feeling about that. What are your thoughts? Are you embittered?"

So the person then opens their heart and then there's confession. They confess their sin to the elders and to God. Prayer happens. Now the prayer of faith. When that all happens, spiritual healing is gonna come in some decisive way. It doesn't mean that you're never gonna struggle again. That's not what it's teaching, but it's something decisive is going to happen in that person's life. There's a measure of deliverance. That's what it means when he says the prayer offered in faith will restore, will save, will deliver.

So he says, "That's what I've been talking to you about and then I say the word 'therefore.'" It's important to note how the verses of Scripture connect to one another. "Therefore" is an inferential conjunction. It basically says this is what logically follows. Based on what I've just said, this is what logically follows from what I just said to you. If you understood what I said to you about the prayer of faith, then you would understand that this is the implication. If it is true that when someone is in distress they meet with the elders, there's counsel and prayer and there's decisive change in their life, if that is true, then consequently you need to understand this needs to be a part of all of our lives. We all struggle with sin. We all become weakened. We all become weary, worn down. Rather than allow it to get to crisis points, God wills for us to be relating to one another in such a way that there's an ongoing dialogue from the heart to the heart. This is what he's describing.

We've seen this a number of times over the last year when we were looking at the passages on the church in the first part of this year, what the church is called to be. We saw the importance of "one-anothering" over and over and over again. Our sanctification, our growth in grace when you come to faith, we're not to be Lone Ranger Christians. God does not intend to sanctify you only with your own personal quiet time and your own personal wrestling with God. That's an essential part of your sanctification is your own time with God, yes. It's essential but it is not sufficient. Another essential component in your sanctification is relationship, real transparent relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ and James is saying, "Listen, this is key," and I think in light of what he said in chapter 4, it just hits me with force, "You have not because you ask not. You wonder why you're floundering in areas of your life and it's because you are not obeying this

exhortation." God is withholding blessings that will only come through the means he's appointed. If you want to avoid his means, you will avoid his blessings. He can do all things. You just praying and crying out to God is important, it's essential, it's absolutely essential, but again it is not sufficient.

You have to obey all the instructions that God has for us and one of the key things and it's so hard for us as Americans particularly, those of us who were raised in America, we think atomistically, individualistically. It's true of the whole West. I'm speaking of Europe and America, Western civilization. It's like Americans are Westerners, Western individualism on steroids is the way Americans think. It's all about what I've gotta do. You know, it's about my, and we see it how incredibly selfish we are as a culture too, I mean, it's all about the individual pleasure and all that now, whatever the individual wants, the individual gets. But even that infects us as Christians where we think even as we walk with God we have to do it on our own. We may not say it that way but we act as if we believe that and James is saying, "Listen, if you've understood what I've said about the power that happens when people humble themselves and call for prayer, what God does in those moments, would you not understand that if you on a regular basis humble yourself to another brother in Christ and he prays for you, that it's gonna move heaven and earth in your life." That's what he's saying.

The precepts are do these things and it's not that you do it once, confess and pray, "Yeah, I did that once. I told a friend about some sin issues I was having. It was 1987. I remember it like it was yesterday." No, he said it's a present tense, it's to go on doing, this is to be a part of your life. In fact, I think it's interesting, that's the precepts. Go on confessing. Go on praying. He doesn't mean confess to everyone around. No, it's wisdom with a brother or sister who knows you. Woman to woman. Man to man. Husband to wife in the marriage relationship. Parents and children. But it's to be an ongoing part of our lives and it's just exactly what we'd expect when we see all the "one another" in the New Testament. You know, when the Bible, "one another" occurs in command form as the object of an imperative about 50 times in the New Testament. Here are two of them: confess your sins to one another, pray for one another. Those are objects, at least object of a preposition in the first, but in an objective case, one another. You have love one another, serve one another, teach one another, admonish one another. It's where you point out what's wrong with someone else, what's going wrong in their thinking, if they're thinking wrong, you admonish them. Encourage one another. Build up one another.

So the picture is we're in relationships with each other helping one another to follow Christ and so he's saying there needs to be in our lives ongoing relational confessing of sin and targeted prayer, intercessory prayer for one another in our lives. That is, those are the precepts of this teaching in this passage. Now secondly, the second subpoint under the doctrine is the promise and it's there in the middle of verse 16, "pray for one another so that you may be healed." You will experience spiritual healing if you do this. That's the promise.

Now it's also interesting to note the tense here comes out somewhat in the English, "may be healed." Healed sounds like a past tense. That's a past tense verb or actually that's

"may be healed," that's future perfect or something. Anyway, I don't want to go into that too much. I'm not an English expert by any stretch of the imagination. But what he's saying is that if you go on confessing and go on praying, you will be healed and healed here in the Greek is in the aorist tense. He changes the tenses of the verb for this one. He says go on confessing, that's continuous action, present tense, go on confessing, go on praying, and then, aorist tense, punctiliar action, a point in time, and then that you may be healed. What he's saying is that as you keep on confessing and you keep on praying, there will come a point in time where there will be decisive breakthrough and healing. It doesn't mean that you'll never struggle again but there'll be breakthrough and what he's saying is, "Listen, it's not gonna happen the first time you confess and pray." Don't expect, like I said, in 1987 I tried that. It didn't work. No, he says you need to keep confessing and keep praying. Keep on confessing and keep on praying and then you will see God work. In his time he will heal you. That's the promise. There will be a decisive turn, a dramatic advancement, some breakthrough in some way, new clarity, new understanding of grace, and you will experience new level of freedom.

So that's the promise. The precepts, the promise, the third subpoint is the principle. The principle. It's stated at the end of verse 16, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. What is really interesting to me about the structure of what James is saying here and just having read the passage so many times through the years but not really having worked through it well, it hit me with force that what he is saying here and this is an amazing statement, the principle that is here is amazing. It's basically saying that a righteous man and he's not talking about some kind of special level of, you know, sainthood, only certain spiritual people. He means a righteous man, a believer, a justified Christian.

How do I know that? Well, I think it makes it clear in verse 17 when he said, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours." Not just the elders. He's not talking about the elders' prayer here in verse 16. I mean, he's already told us that what their prayer does in verse 15. What he's saying is when you confess your sins to one another, when it happens believer to believer and you pray for one another, I'm telling you, the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. He's talking about that prayer, the individual Christian. Two new believers praying for one another, justified, washed in the blood of Christ, having testified to having a new heart like we saw today in baptism, but even a brand-new believer praying for another Christian who's struggling, he says that prayer has incredible achieving power.

It's hard to translate into English exactly, verse 16. There's some complexity to it. That's why there's a lot of variation. I mean, you read the different translations, this is the New American Standard, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." The NIV, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." The ESV says, "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." That gets a little closer, I think, to the Greek itself. And then the King James maybe hits more of the force of it when it says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." In the Greek literally the first words in the sentence are, "Very mighty." To be very mighty. It's like the sentence starts off with, "Is very mighty," then it says, "the prayer of a righteous

man being put to work." So "Is very mighty the prayer of a righteous man being put to work," is how if you were to write it literally in the word order. That's not how you translate so that's why they don't do it that way. The word order shows you the emphasis and that first phrase, "Is very mighty," is what's emphasized.

He's saying, "Listen, it is incredibly powerful, there's incredible accomplishing power in the prayer of a righteous man." Interesting, the word for "prayer" here, James uses a word he hasn't used in his letter to this point, the word "deesis" which means, is often translated "a wanting or a need; a lack; a privation," and the word in verb form, "deomai," can mean "to beg; to plead; someone who's deprived, who's in great need like a beggar begging for bread." This is the word he uses here.

So he says, "Is very mighty this kind of prayer." And so it means prayer but it means a specific prayer. It means a prayer that is looking at real specific need and is asking God to meet that specific need, pleading with God to meet that specific need. He says that kind of prayer is incredibly powerful and then to try to help us understand, he says, "I know you guys don't understand this." I mean, and I think for me I feel like one of the pitfalls of being Reformed in your theology is that you know God's got it all together so we don't pray like we ought to. It's easy, now it's not biblical. It's completely inconsistent. It's ridiculous that we think that way. We're fools for acting like that and I say that myself. But it is easier, it's a more natural sin for those of us who have a high view of the sovereignty of God.

But he's saying, "Listen, prayer makes a huge difference," and James knows, "I know they don't even get this. What I just said was really enough, should have been enough, but I'm gonna give them an example," and he says essentially he pulls up Elijah, verses 17 and 18. So this is actually the fourth subpoint, the proof. We looked at the precepts, the promise, the principle, now the proof. "I want to prove to you that what I've told you is true, that if you will confess your sins to one another, open your hearts." This happens in a lot of different ways. It's when as believers we love each other enough to say, "Hey, you really seem bothered about that and your attitude seems off. Tell me what's going on?" What do you mean my attitude's not right? What are you saying? But we keep working at it talking through things and we realize, "You know, yeah."

Do you not find yourself at times saying something that you feel like is really solid and sound, this happened to me just a couple of days ago, I think I agree with what I said today, I think I said the right thing but the tone of my voice betrayed something. Like why am I being so emphatic? Why am I so into this? I mean, truth is important and it should always be in truth but there's something else going on there in my heart. What is that? That's usually just self-interest in some way. Ungodly self-focus mixing in with the truth. What happens is we can help each other to see that, "Hey, why does that bother you so much?" I don't know. And we talk it out and we have dialogue back and forth and what happens is clarity comes. "You know, I've really got a problem in wanting this too much. I see now that this is a real struggle in my life. I have this stronghold where I'm always thinking this way. Will you pray for me? Right now will you pray for me?"

That's doing what James is talking about and when the believer prays right now about a specific need, there's a want, there's a lack in my life, I am lacking grace in this area, and when they pray for you in that way not just one time and you keep on because isn't it, our sin is like layers of an onion, you get through one layer and there's another layer and you think, "Man, I've got this. I'm so glad to get this off. Isn't that great that's gone?" But then there's another layer and then there's another layer.

So it's that relational, loving, open, transparent communication where we and even as we do this, it's messy. I mean, I like the title of Paul Tripp's and Timothy Lane's book, "Relationships: A mess worth making." You know, we need relationships, God intends us to be sanctified in relationship but it's not easy. It's not gonna be pretty but it is his ordained means to make you holy. So it's a mess worth making.

So we help each other. We pray for one another. We keep on helping each other. We keep on praying for one another and there will be breakthroughs. How do we know? Because the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. In fact, the tense of the verb here is a little bit helpful too, it's present tense verbs in both of those, both verbs in that clause. There's actually two verbs, the adjective "effective" is actually a verbal form that doesn't translate well. It's the prayer of a righteous man, this is how I would translate the verse, I think, "The prayer of a righteous man being employed continually is incredibly powerful. The prayer of a righteous man being employed continuously is very powerful."

So you've got to continue to employ it. In fact, the word for "effectual" is the word "energeo," is the verb. We get our word "energized" from that. It means "be operative; be at work; put forth power." So that's why the King James is wrestling with that idea of the effectual fervent prayer, trying to communicate what's being said here. So the prayer of a righteous man being employed continually is very powerful.

Now the proof. Elijah. He said, "Consider Elijah. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours," literally with passions the same as ours, of the same passions that we have. He's using a word to make it very clear he's not talking about the spiritual elites in the congregation. He's talking about every Christian. He says, "Listen, Elijah is just like," he didn't say just like the leaders, the elders, no, "just like all of us, and he prayed, he did pray earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."

He's talking about Elijah which you can read the story of Elijah's life in 1 Kings 17, beginning in 1 Kings 17. Elijah is one of the great heroes of the Old Testament, one of the great heroes to the Jewish people. He is the paradigmatic, the paradigm prophet. That's why, remember on the Mount of Transfiguration who appears with Jesus? Moses and Elijah, the two great prophets of God. So he's a hero to the Jewish people. He says, "You, if Elijah prayed like that, you can pray like that. If Elijah prayed to that kind of effect, you can pray to that kind of effect." Wait a minute, Elijah's one of the great heroes. No, Jesus says he was a man of passions just like us but what happened when he prayed? Well, he did pray fervently. He prayed earnestly is how the New American Standard

translates it. He prayed earnestly. It's actually literally in the original it says, "Praying, he prayed," or "In prayer, he prayed." So we translate it, "prayed earnestly." It's a Hebraism. It's a form that the Hebrew uses and James as a Jewish Christian thinks as a Hebrew and he has a Hebraism come out in his letter.

"He prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months." When you read back to 1 Kings 17, we don't hear about, we don't see the author of Kings doesn't give us Elijah's first prayer. Actually 1 Kings 17, we find Elijah telling Ahab that it's not gonna rain until he gives the word. He's a prophet of God, "I've been sent to tell you, you know, you are disobeying God, you're dishonoring the Lord and it's not gonna rain until I say so." But apparently, according to James, he had prayed earnestly for that to happen and it doesn't rain for three years and a half. The regular cycles are totally thrown off because a man prayed earnestly.

Then you read the story of Elijah and you see the great power of prayer he has. He prays and raises a boy who's dead to life. We have his prayer also in chapter 18 where he prays on Mount Carmel that God would show his glory and answer by fire and it happens. But after Mount Carmel, the victory at Mount Carmel, he then prays that it will rain and you read in 1 Kings 18 the last few verses of 1 Kings 18, how he bowed on the ground, put his head between his knees and he prayed that it would rain. He's told Ahab it's gonna rain and he goes up on top of Mount Carmel, he gets down on his face, he prays, he tells his servant, "Go and look toward the sea." Elijah doesn't look, he's still praying. "Go and look toward the sea. Do you see anything?" I don't see anything. He's asking, "Do you see any clouds?" He prays like that seven times, six more times after that. He's sitting there praying, praying, "Lord, let it rain. Lord, let it rain. Lord, let it rain. Go and see, is there anything happening?" No, Elijah, nothing. "Lord, let it rain," crying out to God not just one little one sentence prayer, he's earnestly praying, "Lord, answer with rain." Time after time he comes back and says, "I don't see anything." Finally the seventh time he sends him, he comes back and says, "I see a cloud as small as a man's hand." And Elijah knows the answer is there. That's not a very big cloud. We were talking about a rainstorm not a little wetting of one little small area. But he knows his prayer has been heard and he says, "Go tell Ahab to meet me and tell him to be ready, it's gonna rain." And of course, it rains.

This is what James is saying, "Look, he prayed earnestly, he prayed again," and literally, "the heavens poured rain and the earth produced its fruit." I think that heaven and earth, prayer moves heaven and earth is what he's saying. God has ordained it so. It doesn't make sense that it would just from a human standpoint. What do our prayers matter? But our prayers matter because God makes them matter by his divine will and when we pray in accordance with his will, and this is what he's assuming. You're praying for spiritual healing. It is always God's will to sanctify you and to make you holy, for this is the will of God, your sanctification, 1 Thessalonians 4:3. You don't have to wonder is it the will of God to make me holy? He has told you. This is the will of God, your sanctification.

So when you are praying for another believer's sanctification, you know that you are praying in line with what Jesus once prayed, so pray boldly and keep praying and be like

Elijah, keep praying looking do you see any difference. Keep praying. Look and if you don't see any difference, keep praying. Look and if you don't see any difference, keep praying as long as it takes until you see God decisively work. Then he says rejoice in the glory of God and now just keep doing that in every other area of your life where you encounter sin, where you find weakness. This is the way God intends to change us.

He's intended to make, he makes relationships essential. It is his will to do so. I think it goes all the way back to creation when he says, "It's not good for man to be alone." That's not just, it is about marriage, man and a woman for life, it is about that but it's about more than that. It's not good for any human being to be alone. Why? Because you as a human being, you are an image-bearer. You bear the stamp and image of Yahweh who is, himself, Triune, a God who exists in relationship. Nothing is done independently in the Trinity. The Father and Son and Spirit always working in perfect harmony and if you and I are going to image that glory, how can we do it as Lone Ranger Christians? It can't be done.

So we need to repent of our pride and humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, find brothers and sisters we can trust and we need to begin living this out. We're gonna talk about next time, Lord willing, the application, the implications of what we talked about today.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, how good You are and how wonderful You are. Your ways are perfect. Everything is so consistent, glorious, and yet always so counterintuitive to the way we think. Lord, we just confess sin has so messed us up that we don't think as we ought to think. We need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We want to think Your thoughts after You. We want to want what You want, to choose what You choose. Lord, we want to be holy. We want to want to be holy more than we want to and we see that You will help us want to more in relationships with other believers who are working together with us. Forgive us, Lord, for our pride, for listening to Satan who's always wanting to isolate, insulate us from relationship because he hates You and he hates us. By your Spirit make us one, Lord. Help us to entrust ourselves to You and then to entrust ourselves to one another and realize that we're entrusting ourselves to imperfect people who at times are going to hurt us, times we're going to hurt them, and yet You by Your amazing, matchless love and grace will take even the missteps, even the mistakes and make them redound for Your greater glory and our greater good. We praise You, O Lord. We pray for those that are here that do not know Christ that You would help them to repent and place their faith in the Lord Jesus to give themselves to a God who is so good and so worthy of their trust. Help us all, Lord, to give ourselves more fully to You. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.