

# PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

*James 5:12-20*

In the 1400's a monk named Brother Lawrence wrote a book about how to bring God into every area of life, not just the "religious" areas. As James concludes his epistle, he too shows us that Jesus should be recognized as Lord over all of our lives.

## What Does It Say?



*Above all, my brothers, do not swear--not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No" no, or you will be condemned.*

## What Does It Mean?

"Lying has become an integral part of the American character. We lie and don't even think about it. We lie for no reason. 91% (of Americans polled) lie regularly, 65% say there's nothing wrong with it, and we lie most to those who are closest to us."

The Day America Told the Truth

In Jesus' day, an entire section of the Mishnah (a rabbinical commentary on the Old Testament) was devoted to explaining how to get out of an oath. Some oaths were binding (if they mentioned God's name) and others weren't; the cunning person would know the difference!

What modern oaths do we take?

When was the last time you found it necessary to "embellish" the truth? (C'mon, be honest!)

However, Paul took oaths (see **2 Corinthians 1:23** and **Romans 1:9,10**). Was he wrong in doing so? If not, then what is the principle here?

What incident in the life of the early church underlined God's attitude towards lying? (see **Acts 5**)

*"Omniscient Father, Help us to know who is telling the truth. One side tells us one thing, and the other just the opposite. And if neither side is telling the truth, we would like to know that, too. And if each side is telling half the truth, give us the wisdom to put the right halves together. In Jesus name, Amen"*

prayer of F. Holloman,  
chaplain of the Kansas Senate

<sup>13</sup> *Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.* <sup>14</sup> *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.*

<sup>15</sup> *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.*

<sup>16</sup> *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.*

<sup>17</sup> *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.*

<sup>18</sup> *Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.*

### Prayer

How many references to patience can you find in 5:7-11?

How many references to prayer can you find in 5:13-18?

Does that tell you anything?

*"Prayer is reflecting all of life upward, acknowledging the sufficiency and sovereignty of God, that His will is indeed good. Prayer involves conversation, relating all of life to God."*

Gary Vanderet

What do you learn about **prayer** from verses 13-18?

Using a concordance, find the Old Testament passage where the incidents in verses 17 and 18 take place. What insight do you get from reading that account?

### Confession

*"Therefore when I admonish you to confession, I am admonishing you to be a Christian."*

Martin Luther

Is there anyone with whom you feel comfortable and safe enough to confess sin? (By the way, is your group a safe place to be honest, or have you not stressed confidentiality?)

*"Our churches are filled with people who outwardly look contented and at peace - but inwardly they are crying out for someone to love them just as they are - confused, frightened, frustrated, guilty, and often unable to communicate even within their own family. But the other people in the church look so happy and contented that one seldom has the courage to admit his own deep needs before such a self-sufficient group as the average church meeting appears to be."*

Keith Miller, A Taste of New Wine

<sup>19</sup> *My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, <sup>20</sup> remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.*

The Greek word for “wander” is “planao”, the source of our modern word “planet”, (a heavenly wanderer).

How does **2 Timothy 4:10 & 15** illustrate this section?

If a brother or sister is living a destructive life and needs to be warned, what counsel do the following verses give as to how we should deal with the situation?

**Galatians 6:1**

**1 John 5:16**

**Matthew 18:15-17**

**1 Thessalonians 5:14**

**2 Thessalonians 3:15**

*"Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraw him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him."*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*Every congregation has a choice to be one of two things. You can choose to be a bag of marbles, single units that don't affect one another except in collision. On Sunday morning you can go to church or choose to sleep in; who really cares whether there are 192 or 193 marbles in a bag?*

*Or you can choose to be a bag of grapes. The juices begin to mingle, and there is no way to extricate yourselves if you tried. Each is a part of all. Part of the fragrance. Part of the “stuff”.*

Anne Ortlund