

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

Prayer is a common expression of faith. Non-believers see Christians as people who go to church on Sunday and people who pray. What does your prayer life look like? Do you treat prayer as a 911 call? You will not use it unless you face an urgent issue you cannot solve. Is God more like a harsh boss, who you try to avoid to meet at all cost? Or do you consider Him a close friend to whom you can talk about anything? Pastor Billy Graham once said: “Prayer is not about using God. It is more about getting us in a position where God can use us.” Pastor Graham got wisdom as he saw an ocean-liner dock at the harbor. A sailor from the ship threw a rope to the person on the shore. Then the motor went to work and pulled the cable. The pier did not pull to the ship. Rather, the ship drifted to the pier. Pastor Graham said prayer is the force that connects us to God. Our words will not drag God down to us. Prayer draws us near to Him. The more we spend time with God, the better we know His will. James ends the book with the topic of prayer that he begins it with. In chapter 1, he says God will give wisdom to those who ask for it. Also in chapter 4, the author cautions us to pray with the right motives. We should not ask God with an intent to fulfill our selfish desires. He will answer us when our petitions align with His will. It is natural to pray for our personal needs. In this passage, James encourages us to pray for others. Prayer works because God works. Prayer directed by God’s power will accomplish His plans.

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 為病人禱告 Pray for the Sick

First, James asks us to pray for the sick. We often pray for minor or chronic sicknesses. We also pray for people suffering from serious illnesses like cancer or before they have a surgery. Verses 14-15 describe a special situation where church elders went to a patient’s home to pray for the person. Who are those elders? In the New Testament, elders, overseers and pastors refer to the same group of church leaders. Therefore, elders are pastors. In fact, the word “pastors” only appears once in the Bible in Ephesians 4. Bible scholars debate whether James is talking about a medical issue or spiritual sickness, in other words, sin. The context seems to be about physical illness. We see the phrase “if he has committed sins” in verse 15. It means that God can heal the person if he has a disease. God can also forgive him if his sickness is due to sin. With that in mind, we now examine the practice of anointing oil. This oil is likely olive oil. Some Bible scholars say the oil serves as a medicine. For example, the good Samaritan in Jesus’ parable poured oil and wine over the wounds of the man beaten up by thieves to treat him. I rub my hands with Vaseline in the winter when my skin cracks. It fixes the problem in a matter of days. But if James has healing in mind, then why bother to call the elders? Family members can put oil on the patient themselves. You do not see me stand by the entrance with a bottle of White Flower Oil to rub on people. Quite likely, the oil serves a symbolic function. We can refer to Exodus 28:41 as an example: **“And you shall put them on Aaron your brother, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests.”** The chapter gives instructions to prepare priests before performing animal sacrifice. They need to wash themselves in water, then put on a special robe. The final step is to anoint their heads

with oil to consecrate them, in other words to set them apart, for the service. To pray for the sick by anointing oil may carry a similar symbolic meaning. The elders set the patient apart for God's special attention. This is the only place in the New Testament where prayer with anointing oil is mentioned. Therefore, it is an optional procedure. In my previous experience, I went with other pastors to anoint patients only a few times. They were all people with terminal diseases. The oil itself has no healing power. Verse 15 tells us the key factors for effective prayer: **And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up...** The two important elements are our faith and God's grace. Our words have no magical effect. Only God has the authority to act upon our requests. He will do so if our wish is consistent with His will. It works the same way in everyday situations. For example, you apply for a job. You send your resume, reference letters and related documents. The company will evaluate whether your qualifications match its goals. It does not mean you are an incapable person if the firm decides not to hire you or not even interview you. It only means that your wish to work there does not meet its purpose. In some instances, God may seem to reject legitimate petitions. For example, healing of loved ones from severe illnesses, salvation of seekers or the longing for a future spouse. God does not say yes may not mean that you pray for the wrong things. He does not do things randomly. Perhaps there are reasons beyond your understanding why He delays or even denies your requests. That requires a bigger faith. We do not only believe that He can fulfill our wishes. We also trust that He has a higher goal when He does not answer our prayer. It is devastating to blame ourselves or say to others that we do not get results because of a lack of faith. After all, if God gives me everything I ask for, then who is the boss? Our faith can grow even when we face an unanswered prayer. We believe that God cares about us and He is still active in our life. If we claim Jesus as the Lord of our life, we trust that He has the best plans for us.

## 2. 為罪人禱告 Pray for the Sinners

We can pray for the sick. Secondly, James also urges us to pray for the sinners. He says in verse 16: **Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.** Besides praying for healing, we must ask God for forgiveness if the sickness is caused by sins. Sins will hinder God's grace. much like plaques will interfere the flow of blood in vessels. Notice the shift in focus. Instead of asking the elders to pray, now James invites all church members to pray. He says the prayer of a righteous person is effective. Who are righteous? God claims us as righteous the moment we receive Jesus into our hearts. The point is that the prayer of every Christian will work equally. A pastor does not have a direct hotline to God. Having said that, I consider it a privilege to pray for you when you share your needs with me. What about the practice of confessing sins to one another? Should we schedule confession meetings where people openly air their dirty laundry? Perhaps some people admit that they said nasty things to their spouses, they were dishonest when filing income tax or they drool over neighbors' new cars. Some Christians in church history actually did that. The point is about the holiness of a church. We should not allow sin to linger. For example, we need to seek forgiveness if we have offended another member in actions or words. The other party should gladly extend a pardon too. The Holy Spirit will continue to prick our hearts until we confess. Otherwise, Satan will attack us by saying: "Why should God listen to your prayer, you wicked sinner?" Conflict will become a laughing-stock to outsiders too. They may wonder why they should believe in Jesus if Christians are just a mess. The lesson for us is that we must deal with sin decisively. We need to heal a wound before it stinks and spreads.

James has more advice about dealing with sinners in verses 19-20: **19 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, 20 let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.** Both verses have the same lesson: we have to restore a believer who deviates from the truth. James mentions a few examples in this letter. In chapter 2, some church members looked down on poor people. In chapter 3, people stirred up disorders. In chapter 4, they slandered against and judged each other. Conflicts will cause disunity. Some brothers and sisters in my previous church went to a training. The pastor was an influential person. Those people brought back his teaching and they began to challenge church leaders. They advocated that we should not call “The Lord’s Supper” as the “Communion” because the word cannot be found in the Bible. Also, they insisted that we should only sing classical hymns because contemporary Christian music is secular. Are those notions really that important? Perhaps not. Those suggestions are unrelated to the core doctrines. The problem had to do with their attitude. They demanded that it was either their way or the highway. We need a lot of wisdom to handle a situation like that. We can lay out opinions in a mutually-respectful manner. We can discuss various options. Ultimately, we should submit to the decision of the coworkers if we believe that God puts them in a leadership position. We can agree to disagree if the issues will not affect the missions God entrusts us. The final goal is not to kick people out, but to maintain unity. That highlights the corporate nature of the church. We live in an individualistic society. We respect others’ freedom. We are told that we should mind our own business. We should not rebuke others for their sinful choices either. Surely, we do not have the right to judge people. We do not have the power to change them. But God gives us the duty to remind each other when we depart from the truth. We do so carefully with gentleness and love.

### 3. 為國家禱告 Pray for the State

James asks us to pray for the sick and pray for the sinners. He expands the scope and suggests us to pray for the state, namely, our country. In verses 17-18, the author quotes the example of prophet Elijah to illustrate that God hears the prayer of a righteous man. We turn this event into an application. We should pray for our nation like Elijah did. The incident is recorded in 1 Kings chapters 17 to 18. At that time Ahab was the king of Israel. He did evil things in the eyes of the Lord. In particular, he married a foreign princess named Jezebel. She introduced the idols she worshipped into Israel. Marriage is not just about two persons. Your spouse will help or hurt your relationship with God! Jehovah sent Elijah to confront Ahab. The prophet said unless he prayed again, there would be no rain the following few years. The drought lasted over three years. It was God’s discipline to the rebellious king and his people. There was a spiritual reason behind a natural disaster. In the ancient world, a drought could easily lead to a famine. Crops, people and animals would be at risk. Remember Israel is the Middle-East where water is precious. God’s discipline culminated to the contest between Elijah and the false prophets of the Baals on Mount Carmel. Each side prepared a bull on an altar. They then prayed to their deities. Whoever sent fire to burn up the sacrifice was the real God. Nothing happened when the false prophets performed their rituals. They called on the idols, danced and even cut their bodies with knives. It was Elijah’s turn next. He asked servants to pour water on the altar. Then he prayed to God. Fire came down and consumed the water and the animal completely. Jehovah proved to be the real God. He hoped that people would come back to Him. In 1 Kings 18:21, Elijah pleaded: **...“How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if**

Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word. God is the provider for basic elements like water and fire. Why follow useless idols? The unproductive land due to a lack of water symbolizes the unfaithful Israelites. They worked hard in the fields. But nothing could grow without God’s blessing of rain. Hence, no food for people and no grass for their flocks. The story of Elijah fits well into James’ arguments. Israel suffered from a drought was like a person inflicted with a disease. A rebellious country returns to God is similar to a patient being cured. The Bible encourages Christians to pray for their nations. Paul tell us in 1 Timothy 2:1-3 – **1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior.** God asks us to pray for civil leaders. We pray that they will have a fearful heart toward God as they draft policies. We ask God to strengthen leaders who believe Jesus so that they will not compromise their faith in their work. We also pray that those who do not know Jesus will be saved soon. A country will be strong when its leaders obey God. Without a doubt, our nation is in a serious condition. Problems like crime and hatred flood daily news headlines. People are greedy for money and power. They worship idols of wealth and pleasure. They try to create their version of heaven in this life. Unfortunately, many Christians fall into the same trap. They focus on today while forgetting about eternity. Revival begins from repentance. God is calling us to return to Him too. Do not be double-minded. We must follow Jesus wholeheartedly in all aspects of life. True prosperity of a nation is not only measured by its economy and military. It also depends on people’s humility before God and their loyalty to Him.

## 結論 CONCLUSION

Prayer directed by God’s power will accomplish His plans. We know that we should not ask God for things that are out of His will. More than likely, He will not grant your wish of winning the lottery or inheriting millions of dollars from a distant relative. We should not only pray for ourselves, but also pray for things that please God. He desires to see more people come to Jesus, churches to exert a bigger influence in the culture and believers to increase their love for God, His Word and each other. Moreover, we should not let our faith limit our prayer. John Newton, compose of “Amazing Grace” shared that he believed in “large asking.” He explained by citing a legendary story about a man who asked Alexander the Great for a huge sum of money in exchange for his daughter in marriage. The king agreed. The father then went to the treasury and requested an enormous amount. The official was shocked. He checked with the king, suggesting that a fraction of the money the man wanted would serve the purpose. Alexander had a different idea. He said: “Let him have it all. It gives me honor. He believes that I am both wealthy and generous.” Newton concluded: “In the same way, we should present our petitions to God in a way that shows the love, glory and abundant grace of our Heavenly King.”



## 引言 INTRODUCTION

祈禱是信仰的表達方式之一。非信徒認為基督徒是星期天去教會和禱告的人。你的禱告生活如何？你是否把禱告看作打 911 求救？除非你遇到無法解決的緊急問題，否則你不會使用它。神是否像一個嚴厲的老闆，你會盡量避免接近祂？或者你認為祂是你可以無話不談論的好朋友？葛培理牧師曾經說過：「禱告不是為了使用神，而是為了準備我們被神使用。」他從觀察輪船靠近港口得到智慧。船上的一名水手向岸上的人拋一條繩子，然後馬達啟動拉緊繩子。碼頭不會被扯到船那邊，而是船逐漸漂向碼頭。葛培理牧師說，禱告是連結我們與神的力量。我們所講的話不會把神拖到我們身邊，禱告乃是使我們親近祂。我們花越多的時間與神相處，就越明白祂的旨意。雅各以祈禱作為主題開始這卷書，他同樣以祈禱結束這卷書。在第一章中，他說神樂意賜智慧給那些尋求智慧的人。然後在第 4 章中，作者提醒我們要以正確的心態禱告。我們不應該只是為了滿足個人的慾望向神祈求。當我們的請求符合神的旨意之時，祂就會回應我們。為我們個人的需要而祈禱是很自然的。在這段經文中，雅各鼓勵我們為別人禱告。禱告之所以有功效，是因為神有能力。神的能力引導的禱告將會達成祂的計劃。

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

### 1. 為病人禱告 Pray for the Sick

首先，雅各要求我們為病人禱告。我們常常為輕微或是慢性的病患禱告。我們也為患有癌症等嚴重疾病或即將開刀的人禱告。第 14-15 節形容一個特殊情況，教會長老到病人家為人祈禱。那些長老是誰？在新約聖經中，長老、監督和牧師是指同一批教會領袖。因此，長老就是牧師。事實上，「牧師」這個稱呼在整本聖經只出現過一次，是在以弗所書第 4 章中。聖經學者討論雅各在這裡提到的是身體的疾病還是靈裡面的疾病，換句話說，就是罪。上下文似乎是關於身體的疾病。我們在第 15 節看到「他若犯了罪」這句話。它的意思是，如果一個人有疾病，神可以治好他。如果他的疾病是因為犯罪引起的，神也會饒恕他。有了基本的理解後，我們現在探討抹油這個做法。那些油很可能是橄欖油。一些聖經學者認為，油具有醫療的作用。例如，耶穌比喻中的好撒瑪利亞人將油和酒倒在被盜賊毆打的人的傷口上來作處理。冬天當我的皮膚裂開時，我會用凡士林擦手，幾天後就能解決問題。但如果雅各是提到治療，那為什麼還要叫長老來呢？家屬可以親自為病人塗油。你也沒看到我站在門口拿著一瓶白花油給人抹。很可能，油具有像徵意義。我們可以參考出埃及記 28:41 作為例子：「要把這些給你的哥哥亞倫和他的兒子穿戴，又要膏他

們，將他們分別為聖，好給我供祭司的職分。」這章經文提到祭司在獻祭之前的準備。他們需要先洗澡，然後穿上祭司袍。然後在他們頭上抹油，把他們分別為聖，讓他們可以進行儀式。為病人抹油祈禱可能具有類似的含義。長老把病人分別出來，希望神特別關注他的需要。這是新約聖經中唯一提到抹油祈禱的經文。因此，它不是必須的程序。在我過去的服事中，我只和其他牧師一起去為病人抹油過幾次。他們都是患了絕症的人。油本身沒有治療功效。第 15 節告訴我們有效禱告的關鍵因素：出於信心的祈禱要救那病人，主必叫他起來…。兩個要素是我們的信心和神的恩典。我們的話語當然沒有什麼神奇的功效。唯有神才有權柄按照我們的要求做事。如果我們的心願與祂的旨意一致，祂就會動工。日常生活的事情也是按同樣方式進行的。例如，你申請工作。你送履歷表、推薦書和相關的文件。公司會評估你的資格是否符合它的目標。如果公司決定不僱用你，甚至不面試你，這並不表示你能力不足。這只能證明你在那裡工作的願望並沒有達成。在某些情況下，神似乎會拒絕合理的請求。例如，醫治親人的重病、使人信耶穌或是期望找到配偶。神沒有答應並不等於你為了錯誤的事情禱告。神從來不會隨意做事。或許由於一些你無法理解的因素，祂暫時沒有應允甚至拒絕你的請求。這需要更大的信心。我們不只相信神能夠供應我們的需要。當神沒有回應我們的禱告時，我們相信祂有更高的計劃。我們不應該責怪自己或告訴別人因為缺乏信心而沒有得到結果。畢竟，如果神滿足了我一切的要求，那麼誰才是老闆呢？即使我們的祈禱沒有得到回應，我們的信心也能夠增長。我們相信神仍然關心我們，並且在我們的生命中工作。如果我們宣稱耶穌是我們生命的主，我們相信祂為我們安排了最美好的計劃。

## 2. 為罪人禱告 Pray for the Sinners

我們可以為病人禱告。其次，雅各也鼓勵我們為罪人禱告。他在第 16 節說：所以你們要彼此認罪，互相代求，使你們可以得醫治。義人祈禱所發的力量是大有功效的。如果疾病是由罪所引起的，除了祈求神醫治之外，我們還必須向神祈求赦免。罪會阻礙神的恩典，就像血塊會減慢血液的流動。注意雅各轉移了焦點。他在這裡不是請長老祈禱，而是邀請所有教會成員祈禱。他說義人的禱告是有效的。誰是義人？當我們接受耶穌進入我們心中的那一刻，神就稱我們為義了。重點是，每個基督徒的禱告都同樣有效。牧師沒有與神直接溝通的熱線電話。話雖如此，當你與我分享你的需要時，我覺得為你禱告是一種榮幸。那麼我們要如何操練彼此認罪呢？我們是否應該安排懺悔聚會，讓每個人公開承認自己的過錯？可能有些人他們對配偶說了難聽的話，在報稅時不誠實，或看到鄰居的新車流口水。在教會歷史上，的確有些基督徒這樣做過。重點是在於教會的聖潔。我們不應該對罪置之不理。例如，如果我們的行為或言語冒犯了另一位成員，我們需要趕快承認。另一方也應該樂意赦免。聖靈會繼續刺我們的心，直到我們尋求饒恕。否則，撒旦就會攻擊我們說：「你這個邪惡的罪人，神為什麼要聽你的禱告？」衝突也會成為外人的笑柄。他們可能會想，如果連基督徒也是一團糟，為什麼他們要相信耶穌。總個來說，我

們必須果斷地解決罪。我們需要在傷口發臭並蔓延之前把它醫治好。雅各在 19-20 節中給了更多處理罪的建議：19 我的弟兄們，你們中間若有失迷真道的，有人使他回轉，20 這人該知道：叫一個罪人從迷路上轉回便是救一個靈魂不死，並且遮蓋許多的罪。這兩節經文都傳達同樣的意思：我們必須把偏離真理的信徒帶回來。雅各在這封信中提到了幾個例子。在第 2 章中，有些信徒看不起窮人。在第 3 章中，有人製造紛爭。在第 4 章中，他們互相批評和論斷。衝突會破壞合一。我之前教會的一些弟兄姐妹去參加訓練。那位牧師是個有影響力的人。那些成員帶回了他的教導並開始挑戰教會領袖。他們主張，我們不應該把「主餐」稱為「聖餐」，因為聖經裡找不到那個字。此外，他們堅持我們只應該唱古典聖詩，因為現代基督徒音樂很像流行曲。這些看法真的那麼重要嗎？可以不是。那些建議與核心教義無關。問題在於他們的態度。他們要求必須要按照他們的方式，否則就是不對。我們需要很多智慧來處理這種情況。我們應該以互相尊重的方式表達意見。我們可以討論各種方案。最終，如果我們相信神把同工放在帶領的位置，我們便應該順服他們的決定。如果結果不會影響神給我們的使命，我們可以互相遷就。最終目的不是趕走不同意見的人，而是維持合一。這就牽涉到教會的團結。我們生活在一個個人主義的社會。世界主張我們要尊重別人的自由，不要多管閒事。我們也不應該責備別人的罪。當然，我們沒有權利去審判別人，我們也沒有能力去改變它們。但當我們偏離真理之時，神給了我們互相提醒的責任。我們要帶著智慧，以溫柔和愛心去表達。

### 3. 為國家禱告 Pray for the State

雅各建議我們為病人和罪人禱告。然後他擴大了範圍，鼓勵我們為國家禱告。在 17-18 節中，作者引用了先知以利亞的例子，說明神聆聽義人的祈禱。我們把這事件轉為一個真理的應用。我們應該像以利亞一樣為我們的國家禱告。這件事記載在列王紀上第 17 至 18 章。當時亞哈是以色列的王。他做了神眼中看為惡的事。他娶了一位名叫耶洗別的外邦公主。於是皇后把自己敬拜的偶像帶進了以色列。這就證明婚姻不只是兩個人的事。你的配偶會建立或是破壞你與神的關係！耶和華差遣以利亞責備亞哈。先知說，除非他再次祈禱，否則接下來的幾年都不會下雨。結果旱災持續了超過三年，那是神對悖逆的王和他的子民的管教，說明了自然災害背後可能有屬靈的原因。在古代世界，乾旱很容易導致飢荒。農作物、人和動物的生存都會有危機。請記住，以色列位於中東，水非常珍貴。神的懲罰最終導致以利亞與巴力的假先知在迦密山上的較量。雙方在祭壇上準備了一隻公牛，然後他們向自己的神明禱告。誰降火來燒掉祭物，誰就是真神。當假先知們進行他們的儀式時，什麼事也沒有發生。他們呼喚偶像、跳舞，甚至用刀割傷自己的身體。接下來輪到以利亞了。他叫僕人在祭壇上倒水，然後他向神祈禱。天降下火來，將水和動物完全燒盡。事實證明耶和華是真神。祂希望人們能夠回到他身邊。在列王紀上 18:21 中，以利亞懇求道：...「你們心持兩意要到幾時呢？若耶和華是神，就當順從耶和華；

若巴力是神，就當順從巴力。」眾民一言不答。神供應水和火這些基本元素。為什麼要跟隨無用的偶像？因缺水而沒有收成的田地象徵對神不忠心的以色列人。人們在田裡辛勤工作。但是，如果神沒有賜下雨水，就什麼都無法生長。於是，人們沒有食物，牲畜也沒有草吃。以利亞的故事與雅各的論點非常一致。以色列遭遇旱災就像人生病一樣。悖逆的國家回歸神，就如同病人得到醫治一樣。聖經鼓勵基督徒為自己的國家祈禱。保羅在提摩太前書 2:1-3 告訴我們：1 我勸你，第一要為萬人懇求、禱告、代求、祝謝；2 為君王和一切在位的，也該如此，使我們可以敬虔、端正、平安無事的度日。3 這是好的，在神我們救主面前可蒙悅納。神吩咐我們為民間領袖禱告。我們祈求他們在制訂政策時要存著敬畏神的心。我們也求神保守一些信主的官員，使他們不會在工作中妥協信仰。我們也祈求那些不認識耶穌的人能夠早日得救。當一個國家的領袖順服神之時，國家就會變得強大。毫無疑問，我們的國家正處於嚴重的危機。犯罪和仇恨等標題充斥著每日新聞頭條。人們貪愛金錢和權力。財富和享樂是他們敬拜的偶像。他們渴望在今生建立自己的天堂。很可惜的是，許多基督徒也墮入同樣的陷阱。他們只注重今天而忘記了永恆。復興必須要從悔改開始。神也在呼喚我們回到祂身邊。不要三心二意。我們必須在生活的各方面全心全意地跟隨耶穌。一個國家真正的繁榮富強，不僅僅是以經濟和軍事來衡量，同時也取決於人們在神面前的謙卑和他們對神的忠誠。

## 結論 CONCLUSION

神的能力引導的禱告將會達成祂的計劃。我們知道我們不應該向神祈求不符合祂心意的事情。神大概不會讓你中彩卷的頭獎或是從遠房親戚繼承幾百萬美元的遺產。我們不應該只為自己禱告，也要為神所喜悅的事禱告。祂希望看到更多的人相信耶穌，教會在文化中發揮更大的影響力，信徒們對神、對聖經以及對彼此的愛不斷增加。此外，我們不應該讓自己的信心限制我們的禱告。《奇異恩典》的作者約翰·牛頓表示，他相信「大膽的懇求」。他引用了一個傳奇故事來解釋。有一個人向亞歷山大大帝要求一大筆錢，作為把女兒嫁給王的代價。國王同意了。父親隨後前往國庫，要求那筆錢。官員大吃一驚。他向國王確認，並建議只需要給那個人一小部分的錢就可以達到目的。亞歷山大有不同的想法。他說：「他要多少都通通給他。這樣做帶給我榮譽。我相信我既富有又慷慨。」牛頓總結道：「同樣，我們向神提出請求時，也應該彰顯天上君王的愛、榮耀和豐盛恩典。」