

*Transforming Lives with the Surprising Message of God's Grace*

## Prayer Ministry for Healing January 2007

Prayer is one of the cornerstones of the ministry at Grace Chapel. The founders of our church relied heavily upon it as they sought to be obedient to Jesus' teaching that His church should be a 'house of prayer' (Luke 19:46). We as a church continue to pray faithfully towards that end.

Jesus is our model for prayer, and we look to Him for guidance. He teaches us how to pray by both words and deeds. He taught His disciples how to pray through the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9), and He encouraged them to 'always pray and not give up' (Luke 18:1). In addition, He spent a considerable amount of time with his Father in prayer, and demonstrated a range of tones as He spoke; from bold ("I will do whatever you ask in My Name" John 14:12) to humble ("Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me" Luke 22:42). He prayed with 'loud cries and tears' (Hebrews 5:7) and quiet surrender ("Father, forgive them, for they know not what they're doing" Luke 23:34). When we follow His teaching and go before God in prayer, we have the assurance that Christ has gone before us and prepared the way. Our duty is always to follow Him and be 'faithful in prayer' (Romans 12:12).

James, the brother of Jesus, wrote a letter in which he instructs us further in prayer. In particular, he taught:

*"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."* (James 5:13-14)

Are you in trouble? Are you happy? Are you sick? These conditions are universal; they are not limited just to James' day. But what do you do when you encounter them? When we are in trouble the most natural thing to do is cry out to God for help, and when things are going well, it is good and right to sing songs of praise to Him, but what about when we're sick? James teaches that we should call on the elders of the church so that they can pray for us and anoint us in the name of the Lord.

James goes on to say that before we petition the Lord in prayer we need to confess our sins and pray for each other:

*"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."* (James 5:16)

We first need to make things right first between ourselves, others, and God. After our confession we are then invited to call on Him, knowing that the prayers of God's people are 'powerful and effective'.

In an effort to grow in obedience to all of God's Word, Grace Chapel is beginning a Prayer Ministry for Healing the first Sunday of every month. This ministry is in direct response to the teaching of James and is being offered to anyone who is sick, whether the sickness is physical, emotional, relational, or spiritual. The ministry will be offered after each of the morning services, and it will be led by the elders. The first Sunday of the month was chosen because it is the time we gather as a body around the Lord's Table and celebrate Communion. The Communion service prepares us for the type of prayer ministry James talks about; it is a reflective time in which we can confess our sins and be spiritually cleansed. The Prayer Ministry for Healing is an extension of the existing Sunday morning prayer ministry, which is available every week.

If you are sick and would like an elder to pray for you, simply go to the Chapel following the communion service. Someone will be there to greet you and introduce you to an elder. If there are several other people ahead of you, please be patient as the elders would like to pray individually for everyone who comes. The elder will be assisted by a prayer partner, and they will ask you about your particular needs. The team will pray for you, and during the prayer you will be anointed you with oil in the name of the Lord, as taught by James. Please note that there is nothing magical about the oil - it is offered simply out of obedience to God's Word and symbolizes His powerful touch. The oil cannot heal, nor can the words of the prayer. Our prayers can be powerful and effective not because we have some special power or technique, but because of the One on Whom we call. We pray to our heavenly Father, the One Who created the heavens and the earth and Who holds the power of life and death in His hands, and our prayer is a petition seeking His help.

The good news is that God has assured all those who trust Him that they will be healed. For some that healing may come within this lifetime, and for others it will come when we are resurrected and living with Him in eternity. God has not told us when we will be healed, or how it will happen; only that it will happen (Romans 8:19-25). He has also promised us that His grace will see us through any season of sickness and suffering, and that He will work through such seasons to accomplish His good purpose in our lives. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) So the elders enter into this Prayer Ministry for Healing with the words of Jesus before them:

*"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."* (Romans 12:12)

**Grace Chapel Board of Overseeing Elders**