Be like Elijah!

James 5:16, *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.”*

Notice James *didn't* say *"Hide your flaws, put on a mask of perfect confidence, and pretend you have it all figured out."* He starts with vulnerability. True spiritual community and true healing begin when we are honest about our struggles, our doubts, and our failures, and yet still pray for one another.

By opening with **"*confess your faults to one another*,"** James shows this isn't a finger-pointing and diagnosing a "lack of faith" - we are rescuing ourselves from the spiritual baggage of that manipulative modern-day vending-machine theology has us bound in.

We have all seen the spiritual cheerleaders on television or at conventions. They strut across stages, shouting ‘spiritual’ formulas for faith, promising that if you just declare it loud enough, name it perfectly, and "claim your breakthrough" (and oh btw, seed their ministry with a $50 donation), God is *contractually* obligated to do whatever you speak.

It is exhausting. Worse, it’s a lie.

Many of us swing wildly between two painful extremes:

- **On one side**, we try to parrot that artificial hype, shouting louder to cover up our deep insecurities.
- **On the other side**, we look at our own flaws, our weak track records, and our heavy doubts, concluding, *"God could never use me. Why would He listen to a broken mess like me?"*

If you have sat in both of those seats, you are not alone. We shoot off our mouths without really believing God is paying attention, **or** we treat prayer like a grueling religious exercise where we have to spiritually whip our backs just to get our Father's attention.

If you have ever felt like your faith wasn’t "strong enough" to get God's attention, truth is, many of us, myself included, have been the victims of a toxic vending-machine mentality. We’ve been told that if we just say the *right formula loud enough* we sound confident enough for God to answer us!

But James blows up this performance trap by giving us an example of a real prayer warrior: **Elijah**.

James 5:17 *“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are”* (…read 1 Kings Chapters 17-19)

In other words, Elijah was just like us. He got scared. He got lonely. In fact, **right after** his greatest spiritual victory, he crumbled into deep depression ran into the desert, sat under a bush, and begged God to take his life (1 Kings 19:4). He was a bundle of raw human frailty.

Yet, God didn't disqualify him, and **God didn't stop listening to him**. Why? Because the power of prayer *never belonged* to Elijah's perfect emotional state; it *belonged* to the God who loved him.

Ephesians 3:14-21, where Paul completely dismantles the performance trap. In the original Greek, this passage is *actually one giant*, uninterrupted sentence. It reveals God's power for us **is** directly unlocked by our willingness to *simply* be loved by Him first!

14-16 “*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man;”*

- Notice where the power goes. It’s not an external armor to make us look tough to others; it’s an internal reinforcement. Before God uses someone externally, He strengthens them internally.

17 *“…that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,*

- Notice the blueprint here. The foundation isn't your perfect theology, your ministry talent, or your flawless emotional certainty. The foundation is *agape* - the unconditional love of God.

18-19a *"…may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge,"*

- Paul is praying that God will give supernatural strength *just so you can handle knowing how much you are loved!* Christ's love is so massive that our fragile, insecure human hearts literally need divine power just to receive it without fainting or doubting it.

19b *"…that you might be filled with all the fulness of God."*

- God doesn't just want to pour a little bit of grace into us; He wants us **crammed full** to overflowing with His very character and presence. When a believer is "filled with the fullness of God," they naturally become an instrument God uses. The ministry becomes an **overflow** of the tank, not a *straining* of the engine.

20-21 *"Now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."*

- Where is this power located? Paul says it is **"that works in/within us."** The exact same power that just rooted us in love is the power that goes out to change the world.

What About Past Spiritual Scars?

Let us be honest in the moment we talk about praying for others - a painful memory/barrier pops up.

We remember the times we prayed desperately, and the answer felt like total silence. We look at the scar tissue of a loved one who passed away despite our tears, and the enemy whispers: *"God didn't answer you then, why would it be any different now?"*

There could be hundreds of reasons why a tragedy happens or why a loved one dies. We do not possess God's bird's-eye view of history, and it is entirely okay, even healthy, to look at those situations and say, **"*I don't know why*."** God does not expect you to solve the mystery of human suffering before you are allowed to talk to Him again.

The mistake we make is decoupling God's answers from His affection. We project our human flaws onto Him, thinking that *No Miracle = No Love*, but God's love was permanently and irrevocably proven at the Cross.

Remember back in James 5 **Elijah was a human being just like us**, with a nature exactly like ours.

Sure, we love to remember him (1 Kings 18) calling down fire on Mount Carmel, but notice right after that victory, Elijah crumbled into deep depression, ran into the desert, sat under a bush, and begged God to let him die. (1 Kings 19:4). He completely ran out of "faith." **Yet** God didn't yell at him; He met him in a gentle whisper, a small still voice (1 Kings 19:12).

God has always used broken people who swing between boldness and self-doubt.

When we realize that God's love for us is already at 100% even **before** we open our mouths, the pressure completely evaporates:

If prayer were solely about giving God a checklist of our needs, it would be entirely redundant - Jesus Himself said, "your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8).

• God commands us to pray because He desires relationship and intimacy.

• Just like in any human relationship, communication is how trust, love, and bond are built. God wants to hear your voice, your heart, and your devotion, even though He already knows your needs and the Spirit is already interceding. But here is the beautiful, reassuring thought: Elijah's public "super faith" didn't cure his private human frailty.

Faith isn't a permanent, untouchable state of perfection. It's a *moment-by-moment relationship* of trust. When we rest in God's presence, we can do great things but when we get exhausted and look at our problems, we fall apart, however the beautiful thing is God loves us through both times.

Even after spending all that time in prayer, even after seeing fire and rain, Elijah's human wiring didn't change. The moment he took his eyes off the God "before whom he stood" and put them on Queen Jezebel's threat, he cratered.

Prayer forces us to practice humility, acknowledge our dependence on God, and actively surrender our anxieties. The Holy Spirit's intercession ensures that this transformative process is successful.

1 Timohty 2:1-5 I exhort therefore, that, **first of all**, *supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks,* be made **for all men**; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit also **helps our infirmities**: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray **without** ceasing.

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

We are made righteous in, and by, faith in Jesus and by what He did on the cross for us.

Romans 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One (Jesus) shall many be made *righteous*.

Romans 6:18 Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of *righteousness*.

Romans 8:4 That the *righteousness* of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 10:10 For with the heart man believes unto *righteousness*; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He (Father God) hath made Him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the *righteousness* of God in Him/Jesus.

We are in a battle, but not alone:

Ephesians 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

Jude 1:20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

1 John 1:9 *He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us* - God doesn't walk away from us when our prayers are hindered; He stands ready to clear the line, just ask in simple faith.

So step out in faith today, not because you have a 100% guarantee how the story ends, but because you have a 100% loving God who wants to hear your voice!

Why Human Intimacy Makes Relation-Based Prayer Hard

• **Fear of rejection:** Opening up completely to another person leaves us vulnerable to being misunderstood or cast aside.
• **The burden of performance:** We often feel we have to present the best, cleanest version of ourselves to keep people close.
• **Past wounds:** Human intimacy often comes with baggage from people who have let us down, making us naturally guarded.

I struggle with intimacy too, but I show up anyway, and that helps break the religious pressure.

Other spiritual giants who had moments of failure, fear, or moral breakdown:

🏃 **Moments of Fear & Self-Preservation**

- **Jonah:** Instead of preaching to Nineveh, he literally hopped on a ship to Tarshish to run away from God's explicit command because of his own prejudice and fear.
- **Peter:** Right after declaring he would die for Jesus, he denied even knowing Him three times to a servant girl out of sheer panic and social pressure.

💥 **Moments of Anger & Moral Failure**

- **Moses:** In a fit of frustration with the complaining Israelites, he disobeyed God by striking the rock twice instead of speaking to it.
- **David:** A man after God's own heart, he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then orchestrated the murder of her husband, Uriah, to cover up the pregnancy.

🌪️ **Moments of Doubt & Burnout**

- **John the Baptist:** The ultimate herald of Christ, while sitting in prison, sent his disciples to ask Jesus, *"Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"* Even he experienced a crisis of faith when life got dark.
- **Gideon:** Even after the angel called him a "mighty man of valor," he repeatedly demanded signs from God (the fleece test) because he struggled to believe God could use someone from the weakest clan.

🔄 **From Denying Christ to Leading the Church: Peter**

- **The Screw-Up:** Peter denied Jesus three times, wept bitterly, and went back to his old life of fishing, feeling completely disqualified.
- **The Bounce Back:** Jesus met him on the shore, cooked him breakfast, and asked him three times, *"Do you love me?"* (cancelling out the three denials). Jesus completely restored him and told him to "feed my sheep."
- **The Message:** Failure doesn't disqualify you; it prepares you for a ministry of mercy. Peter went from hiding in the shadows to preaching boldly at Pentecost.

💡 **Hooks & Takeaways**

- **"The God of the Second Chance"** The Bible is a book written by flawed people, for flawed people, to point to a flawless Savior.
- **"Failure is an Event, Not an Identity"** Peter failed, but he wasn't a failure. David sinned, but he wasn't cast out.
- **"The Shoreline Restorations"** Like Peter on the beach, God loves to meet us right where we failed, not to lecture us, but to feed us and send us back out.

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