

WHITFIELD PARISH

St James' Church † St Luke's Church

LIFE Group study notes w/b Sunday 11 November 2007

Teach us to pray – Prayer Busters

James 4:1-10

1. Did you ever write a letter to Father Christmas? Maybe you still do! Can you think of something that you really wanted for Christmas, or maybe a birthday, and you *didn't* get it? You may smile now, but how did you feel then? Share your experiences... if not too painful!

Read James 4:1-10 (in the New Testament, after Hebrews and before 1 Peter)
The church that the apostle James was writing to was in a bit of a mess and, rather like Paul writing to the church in Corinth, James has to address a whole range of problems. James is primarily a letter of *correction*.

2. Just from those 10 verses, what kind of issues do you think are besetting this 1st century church?

Sometimes our prayers don't seem to get answered. It may be that they are being answered but we just don't see how God is answering them. It may be that there is an obstacle, a prayer buster, that needs dealing with. Bill Hybels, in his book *Too busy not to pray*, lists five common prayer busters. Let's think about each in turn, with reference to a Bible passage for each one.

Prayer buster 1: Prayerlessness

Read James 4:2

3. What had these folk substituted for prayer?

Prayer buster 2: Unconfessed sin

Read Isaiah 59:2 (Old Testament, 4 books after Psalms)

4. What does confessing our sins to God *do*?
5. Why should this make any difference to our prayers being answered?

Prayer buster 3: Unresolved personal conflict

Read Matthew 5:23-24

6. Why should being at peace with others (as far as it depends on us, Romans 12:18) make any difference to our prayers being answered?

Prayer buster 4: Selfishness

Read James 4:3

7. If your prayers went up on a notice board outside your house for everyone to see, how might it affect the way you prayed?
8. What are the priorities in the model prayer that Jesus taught us (see Matthew 6:9-14 for a reminder)?

Prayer buster 5: Uncaring attitudes

Read Proverbs 21:13 (Old Testament, straight after Psalms)

9. Again, why should this make any difference to our prayers being answered? (Clues, if needed: Matthew 5:13-16 and Philippians 2:5)
10. In what ways is the Father of Christ *not* like Father Christmas?

Now.... PRAY!!!

Let thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (The collect for the Xth Sunday after Trinity.)