

That all of them may be ONE

ONENESS GUIDE #9

# TOWARD ONENESS

November 7, 2010

Psalm 32 & James 5:12-20

DESTINED FOR UNITY...  
WITH GOD

In Jesus Christ Our Lord

WITH EACH  
OTHER  
In The Church

WITH EACH  
OTHER  
In Our Family

## Unity: An Indispensable Means of Growth II

PSALM 32

Of David. *A maskil*

- <sup>1</sup> Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
- <sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.
- <sup>3</sup> When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long
- <sup>4</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.  
*Selah*
- <sup>5</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.  
*Selah*
- <sup>6</sup> Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.
- <sup>7</sup> You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. *Selah*
- <sup>8</sup> I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

...that all of them may be one,  
Father, just as you are in me and  
I am in you. May they also be in  
us so that the world may believe  
that you have sent me.

- Jesus (John 17:21)



## Psalm 32 & James 5:12-20 - The Need for Confession

<sup>9</sup> Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

<sup>10</sup> Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.

<sup>11</sup> Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

### **Structure of Psalm 32**

*Individual Psalm of Thanksgiving and Psalm of Wisdom*

A. Wisdom vv.1-2

*The Blessing of Forgiveness*

B. Thanksgiving vv.3-5

*A Personal Testimony of Repentance*

B'. Thanksgiving vv.6-8

*Summoning the Godly to Prayer*

A'. Wisdom vv.9-10

*The Conclusion of Wisdom*

C. Conclusion v.11

*Call to Praise the Lord*

### **JAMES 5:12-20 - The Prayer of Faith**

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<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. <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.

<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.

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## Self Study in Oneness for Week Nine

**YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH. - PSALM 119:105**

**Day** Look: Read Psalm 32 & James 5:12-20

**1 Ask:** 1. What do these texts suggest about confession? Is it positive or negative? Important or insignificant?

2. What results are suggested by David and by James for those who confess their sins?

3. James tells us: “confess your sins to each other.” Why not just “confess to God” in prayer? What difference would it make to tell another person about our sinful ways & dirty deeds? What dangers or limitations do you see in this exhortation?

**Meditate:** When have you made a difficult confession to another person? Why was it difficult? What happened as a result?

**Pray:** *Each day* - Think about the secrets you are keeping about yourself, your struggles & failures with faithless, selfish, lustful, sinful thoughts & actions. Ask God to help you seek & find someone you could tell about these things who could be His agent of healing for you, offering prayer, accountability & wisdom. Ask Him to guide your studies in His Word this week.

*Today* - Thank God for His grace... *Lord, you know everything about me. Everything! And with this knowledge, Jesus, You chose to die so I could live forever with You! And with this knowledge You tell me Your desire is for me to accept Your eternal love & know You as my Good Heavenly Father. Help me to live today in the joy & freedom You give, a joy & freedom that transcends each & every one of my life circumstances.*

**Day 2** **Look:** Read Psalm 32

**Ask:** 1. Who is blessed? Why? How do we get this blessing? From Whom?

2. What happened to David when he “kept silent” about his sins? Why do you think God’s “hand was heavy” upon him?

3. Who controls the horse or the mule? (v.9) How is this animal controlled? Why are such measures necessary? How might this reflect the relationship between God and a wicked person? What would God’s purpose be in this? How would things be different (un-mule-like) for someone living in trust under the Living God?

**Meditate:** What is deceit? What is the relationship between confession (“*acknowledge my sin*” - v.5) & “deceit” (v.2) (“*cover up my iniquity*” - v.5)? What does this say about the person who doesn’t think he/she ever has anything to confess? (see 1 Jn. 1:9)

**Pray: Today** - Is God’s hand heavy upon you? Follow David’s wisdom and respond appropriately in prayer. Do you instead feel God’s forgiveness today? Thank Him and praise Him for His lovingkindness to you.

**Day 3** **Look:** Read James 5:12-20 & Matthew 5:33-37

**Ask:** 1. What is the value of an oath? (Like in a courtroom... *Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth...?*) Why do people do it? Why do Jesus and James suggest that such things ought to be unnecessary (and ill-advised) for God’s people?

**Meditate:** How are people who swear “on the Holy Bible,” or “on their father’s grave,” similar to those who will not confess their sins to God or men? How is deceit involved in both? How do both behaviors pose a threat to unity among people?

**Pray: Today** - Ask God to help you become, more and more, a person of integrity, needing less and less any external guarantees for the truth of your words because your internal character is like His.

**Day 4** **Look:** Read James 5:12-20 & 1 Kings chapters 17-18

**Ask:** 1. What did Elijah say to King Ahab at the beginning of 1 Kings 17? Why? What happened at the end of 1 Kings 18 after Elijah “bent down to the ground...” (18:42)? What do you suppose Elijah was doing then?

2. What prayers do we see Elijah making? What happened? What does this teach us about prayer? How does all this relate to what James is saying here?

3. What does James say about the “prayer of a righteous man?”

**Meditate:** What is the difference between “the prayer of a righteous man” being powerful and “the righteous man himself” being powerful? How does this distinction help us understand what James is saying (and not saying) about prayer? Is faithful prayer a tool for men and women to use to gain power from God to do what they want? If not, what is it?

**Pray: Today** - Pray with confident hope for someone who is sick today... for their physical health but also for their spiritual health (that they will be empowered not only to get well but also to be strong against sin).

**Day 5** **Look:** Read James 5:12-20

**Ask:** 1. What should Jesus’ followers do when they are in trouble? when they are happy? when they are sick? when they have sinned (vv.13, 14 & 16)?

2. What responsibility do we have toward those who have turned away from faith in Jesus Christ (v.19)? What two blessings will result for such a person if we “bring him back” (v.20)?

3. Romans 5:14 tells us that “*sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men.*” James suggests that praying for healing and confessing our sins are interrelated activities. How would you explain the relationship of the spiritual reality of sin in the world and the temporal reality of physical health to someone.

**Meditate:** How do physical health, confession of sin and prayer relate to Oneness in God’s family and in the world?

**Pray: Today** - Thank God for your eternal salvation through Jesus & pray for your own physical, emotional & spiritual healing.



## Notes

**Psalm 32** - The Book of Psalms is the Ancient Songbook of the People of God. The 150 “songs” found in this vital part of God’s Word express human thoughts, hopes, fears, wisdom, doubts and faith in times of joy and times of stress, in poetry that was intended to be sung. Psalm 32 has been characterized as both an *Individual Psalm of Thanksgiving* and as a *Wisdom Psalm* with elements of both of these types brought together in what is called a chiasmic (A-B-B-A) structure (see the “Structure of Psalm 32” on p.2). It is one of the “Psalms of David” which could mean that it was written *by* him or *for* him or *about* him. This Psalm about the blessing of confession and forgiveness was said to be the favorite of St. Augustine who wrote “*the beginning of knowledge is to know oneself to be a sinner.*” It’s initial wisdom--the blessing of sin removed comes to those who stand before the Lord without deceit” (= admitting our transgressions) -- is supported by the following section of personal thanksgiving and testimony of how David (or his psalmist) moved from curse to blessing, from “groaning all day long” to openness and forgiveness with the Lord through honest confession. Three words (vv.1-2 & 5) are used for what was wrong in David’s life: *transgression [pesa]* (acts of rebellion against God), *sin [hata]* (emphasizing a straying from the right path) and *iniquity [qawa]* (emphasizing a distortion, criminality or the absence of respect for God’s will). Taken as a whole, the idea is that these words encompass the totality of human sin seen from every vantage point. Given the freeing consequences of confession, one can see that God’s “hand... heavy upon me” is an expression of His grace as well as His wrath moving those He loves toward real health and wholeness. Following his testimony of personal relief, David calls his people to prayer knowing that their God is their protector and deliverer and to receive God’s wisdom as he has done. He concludes by wisely contrasting two ways of life. First, he warns against being “like a mule” which must constantly be controlled by compelling force to stay near its master. Then he commends the way of “the man who trusts in the Lord” and is thus “surrounded by His unfailing love.” Finally, David ends his song with a call for all the “righteous” and “upright” to join him in praising God.

**The Book of James** - This letter is unique in the New Testament. It features very little of the themes we find, for example, in the letters of Paul--the Holy Spirit, redemption, resurrection--and it tends to emphasize God the Father more than Jesus the Son. It resembles a sort of New Testament version of the Old Testament Book of Proverbs, emphasizing ethical choices rather than doctrinal truths and exhorting believers to live out their faith with courage and conviction and in tangible ways.

**James 5:12-20** - This concluding section of James’ letter is shaped by letter-writing conventions of his day which prescribed a concluding oath, health wish and statement of purpose for writing; however, James uses these in surprising ways. **Do not swear** (v.12) - Instead of an “oath” guaranteeing the truth of what he says,

though, James echoes the words of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and rejects all oaths! **The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well** (v.15) - Rather than simply sharing a wish for health, James tells his readers how to obtain health and wholeness--through prayer, and he goes on to affirm both the connection between sickness and sin and the resulting importance of confession: **Therefore confess your sins to each other** (v.16). **Elijah was a man... - Turns a sinner from the error of his way** (v.20) - James summarizes his letter’s purpose as an effort and an encouragement for us to help one another turn from error, falsehood and deadly sin and turn to health, wholeness, faith, truth... God.



## Small Group Guide

**Hearing About Us** - 1. What was the sickest you’ve ever been in your life? What got you through it? Where did healing come from? 2. What do you do when you are “sick of life?”

**Heeding God’s Word** - 1. It has been said that more people go to a bartender to confess their sins than to a church. Why would this be true? What are churches missing in this area? 2. What does James indicate about the connection between physical health and spiritual health/sin? What do you think about this? 3. How might confession be a practical aid toward health? Has it ever been so for you? 4. As time permits share other insights you gained in your personal Bible Study in Oneness this week.

**Helping One Another in Prayer to God** - With one week to go in our Small Group, consider & pray about what your next step to grow in faith in Christ and to help others do the same will be. Share additional prayer requests & pray for one another.