



WEDNESDAY EVENING

AT BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH

Title: The Power of Ordinary Prayer

Passage: James 5:16b-18

Speaker: Pastor Dan Preston

Introduction: Most believers don't struggle with whether prayer works in theory; we struggle with whether it works when we pray. We know it's important, biblical, and commanded, yet deep down we wonder: does it really make a difference? It's easy to think prayer is powerful for people like Moses, Elijah, or Paul, but not for ordinary believers. James ends his letter by correcting that mindset and answering a crucial question: what kind of prayer actually moves the hand of God?

I. Prayer is Powerful - Not Because of Who Prays, But Because of Who Hears (Verse 16b)

That word *availeth* means to accomplish, to be effective, to have real results.

The word *effectual* carries the idea of something that is active, working, producing results.

The word *fervent* speaks of intensity. It literally has the idea of something that is energized, stretched, even boiling over.

When you put those words together, you have prayer that is real, engaged, comes from the heart, and does not quit. It is not about saying the right words; it is about having a heart that is truly seeking God.



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Being righteous doesn't mean perfect; it means a person who belongs to God, walks with Him, and lives honestly before Him.

II. Elijah Proves that Ordinary People Can Pray Extraordinary Prayers (Verse 17)

Elijah struggled with loneliness and despair. In other words, he was not superhuman. He was human.

Elijah prayed specifically, boldly, and according to God's will. And God responded.

Prayer is not about personality, position, or platform. It is about dependence.

III. God Responds to Persistent, Faith-Filled Prayer (Verses 17-18)

Elijah prayed more than once. He didn't pray once and move on. He prayed again.

Scripture teaches us that persistence is not unbelief; it is faith refusing to quit.

"...Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." (Luke 18:1)

Prayer that avails much is not prayer that never struggles. It is prayer that keeps showing up.

IV. Our Prayers Matter More Than We Think

Prayer changes circumstances, hearts, strengthens faith, unites the church, and invites God's power into ordinary life.

A prayerless Christian is not necessarily rebellious, but they are self-reliant.



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A praying Christian is not necessarily impressive, but they are dependent.

Dependence always honors God.

Conclusion: James leaves us with a simple but weighty truth. Prayer is not reserved for the spiritual elite. It is the privilege and responsibility of every believer. The same God who heard Elijah hears us. The same power that worked then is at work now. So the question is not whether prayer works. The question is whether we will pray. Will we come to God with real, earnest, persistent faith, trusting that He is able to do what we cannot see? When we do, we are not just speaking into the air. We are calling on a God who listens, who cares, and who still moves in response to His people.



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Prayer Focus for Tonight:

1. Pray for Confidence in Prayer

“Lord, help me believe that my prayers matter to You.”

Ask God to remove doubt, fear, and hesitation from your prayer life.

2. Pray for Persistence

“Help me not give up when answers seem slow.”

Bring a burden you’ve been tempted to stop praying about, and commit it to God again.

3. Pray for God's Power to Be Displayed

“Do what only You can do, for Your glory.”

Ask God to work in ways that clearly point to Him, not us.

4. Pray for a Praying Church

“Make us a church that depends on prayer, not programs.”

Pray for unity, humility, and spiritual power among this body.