

# God-Sized Prayers: Learning to Pray Boldly from Elijah's Example

When life takes an unexpected turn and tragedy strikes, how do we respond? The story of Elijah and the widow's son in First Kings 17 provides a powerful example of what it means to pray bold, God-sized prayers in the face of seemingly impossible circumstances.

## When Life Takes an Unexpected Turn

In First Kings 17:17-18, we find a widow whose life had been blessed by God's provision. Through Elijah's presence, her oil and flour never ran out, and she experienced God's faithfulness daily. But then tragedy struck - her son became ill and died.

## The Natural Response to Suffering

The widow's immediate reaction was to blame. In her hurt and anger, she turned to Elijah and said, "Man of God, what do you have against me? Have you come to call attention to my iniquity so that my son is put to death?" - First Kings 17:18 (ESV).

This response reveals something important about human nature. When suffering comes, we often assume it's because of something we've done wrong. We ask "Why?" as if knowing the answer would somehow make the pain easier to bear.

## Are God's People Immune to Suffering?

This story reminds us of a crucial truth: the people of God are not immune to suffering. The Bible is filled with real people who experienced tragedy, trials, difficulty, pain, grief, loss, and even death. Being blessed by God doesn't mean we'll be protected from all hardship.

## The Biblical Model for Responding to Suffering

Throughout Scripture, there's a consistent pattern for how we should respond when facing suffering: take it to the Lord. God can handle our anger, heartache, and disappointments. He's not surprised by our honest responses or offended by our vulnerability.

The Psalms, which serve as both the prayer book and songbook for God's people, are filled with honest cries to God. Psalm 10:1 asks, "Why, Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself from me in times of trouble?" - English Standard Version (ESV). Psalm 6:2-3 pleads, "Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint. Heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long?" - English Standard Version (ESV).

## **Elijah's Bold Response**

When faced with the widow's accusation and her son's death, Elijah's response was remarkable. He didn't get defensive or argue. Instead, he immediately took the situation to God.

### **The First Prayer for Resurrection**

"But Elijah said to her, "Give me your son." So he took him from her arms, brought him up to the upstairs room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. Then he cried out to the Lord and said, "Lord, my God, have you also brought tragedy on the widow I am staying with by killing her son?" Then he stretched himself out over the boy three times. He cried out to the Lord and said, "Lord, my God, please let this boy's life come into him again." - First Kings 17:19-21 (ESV)

This was the very first time in Scripture that someone prayed for someone to be raised from the dead. Elijah didn't have the advantage of looking back at other biblical examples of resurrection. He simply prayed this bold, God-sized prayer.

## **What Enabled Elijah to Pray So Boldly?**

### **Remembering God's Past Faithfulness**

Elijah was able to pray this bold prayer because he remembered God's proven track record. He hadn't forgotten that God stopped the rain, provided through ravens, and kept the oil and flour from running out. His prayer was based on God's past performance.

The greatest enemy to our faith is forgetfulness. In seasons of difficulty, we forget what God has done in the past and who He is. We should regularly make lists of the times God has shown up, provided, restored, delivered, and healed in our lives.

### **Standing on God's Promises**

Elijah also prayed boldly because he remembered God's promises. He was able to take God at His word, knowing that God's word is true and will not fail. God had promised through Elijah that "the flour jar will not become empty and the oil jug will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the surface of the land" - First Kings 17:14 (ESV).

Since it hadn't rained yet, Elijah's faith was built on the promise of preservation - that God would see to it that he, the widow, and her son would survive the famine.

## **The Foundation of Bold Prayer**

The faith we need for present situations is always rooted in God's promises. This includes His promise to always hear and answer our prayers. While the answer isn't always "yes," God promises to hear us.

## The Purpose of Prayer

The purpose of prayer isn't always getting what we ask for. The priority of prayer is to align our hearts with God's will and purpose so that ultimately, God alone receives the glory. As we pray, our desire should be: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory."

## God's Response to Bold Prayer

"So the Lord listened to Elijah, and the boy's life came into him again, and he lived. Then Elijah took the boy, brought him down from the upstairs room into the house, and gave him to his mother. Elijah said, "Look, your son is alive."" - First Kings 17:22-23 (ESV)

The most powerful line in this passage may be: "So the Lord listened to Elijah." God hears our prayers and has the power to heal, deliver, provide, reconcile, restore, and set us free.

## The Call to Pray Like Elijah

James 5:16-17 reminds us: "The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect. Elijah was a human being as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and for three and a half years it did not rain on the land." - English Standard Version (ESV)

Since Elijah was a man just like us, we too can pray bold, God-sized prayers. James 5:13-16 gives us clear instructions:

- If anyone is suffering, they should pray
- If anyone is sick, they should call for the elders to pray and anoint with oil
- We should confess our sins to one another and pray for one another so that we may be healed

## Life Application

This week, challenge yourself to pray bold, God-sized prayers. Don't let fear, doubt, or past disappointments keep you from bringing your biggest needs and deepest hurts to God. Remember His faithfulness in the past and stand on His promises for the future.

Consider these questions as you apply this message to your life:

1. What situations in your life need God-sized prayers right now?
2. How can you better remember and celebrate God's past faithfulness in your life?
3. What promises of God can you stand on as you face current challenges?
4. Are you willing to be vulnerable and honest with God about your struggles, fears, and needs?

God hears your prayers and has the power to do the impossible. Like Elijah, you can approach God's throne with confidence, knowing that He listens and responds according to His perfect will and timing.