

# Armed with Prayer: What Elijah Teaches Us About a Powerful Prayer Life

Prayer is one of the most powerful weapons available to every believer, yet it is often one of the most neglected. The life of the prophet Elijah gives us a vivid and practical picture of what it looks like to pray with purpose, humility, and perseverance. James points to Elijah as the example, and his words are worth sitting with: "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." (James 5:16, English Standard Version (ESV))

Do you really believe that?

## Why Does Prayer Matter in the Christian Life?

Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 6 that every believer is in a spiritual battle. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:10-12, English Standard Version (ESV))

After listing every piece of armor, Paul calls believers to pray. Continuously. Without stopping. Prayer is not an afterthought. It is a weapon.

## What Does Elijah's Prayer Life Teach Us?

In 1 Kings 18, right after calling down fire from heaven and seeing the nation of Israel turn their hearts back to God, Elijah climbs to the top of Mount Carmel and prays for rain. This moment is packed with lessons for anyone who wants a more effective and meaningful prayer life.

### 1. Powerful Prayers Are Prayed Purposely

Elijah did not offer a casual, passing prayer. He went to the top of the mountain with one specific intention: to pray. James describes it this way: "He prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain and the earth bore its fruit." (James 5:17-18, English Standard Version (ESV))

In the original Greek, the phrase "prayed fervently" is actually a repetition of the same root word. James is emphasizing the intensity and intentionality behind Elijah's prayer. This was not a quick request tossed upward on the way to something else. It was deliberate, focused, and purposeful.

This raises a practical question for all of us. Do you have a place where you go specifically to meet with God? A prayer closet, a quiet corner, a specific time set aside where the only agenda is to be in His presence? Praying throughout the day is good and encouraged, but there is something powerful about setting aside intentional time and space to say, "Lord, I am here for the sole purpose of meeting with You."

## **2. Powerful Prayers Are Prayed Humbly**

After calling down fire from heaven, Elijah could have stood tall on that mountaintop with confidence in his own track record. Instead, verse 42 tells us he "bowed himself down on the earth and put his face between his knees." (1 Kings 18:42, English Standard Version (ESV))

This is a man who just witnessed one of the greatest miracles in Israel's history, and he gets on his face before God. Why? Because the posture of the body always expresses the condition of the heart.

Scripture is full of this. Psalm 134 calls believers to lift their hands in the sanctuary. Psalm 63 speaks of lifting hands in God's name. Even Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, "knelt down and prayed." (Luke 22:41, English Standard Version (ESV))

There is no room for pride when we enter the presence of God. Humility is not weakness. It is the right posture before a holy God who hears and answers prayer.

## **3. Powerful Prayers Require Perseverance**

This may be the most challenging and most encouraging part of the story. After Elijah prays, he sends his servant to look toward the sea for any sign of rain. The servant comes back with one word: nothing.

Elijah prays again. Nothing. Again. Nothing. This happens seven times before the servant finally reports a small cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, rising from the sea. And from that tiny cloud, a great rain came.

Seven times. Elijah did not give up after the first unanswered prayer, or the second, or the sixth. He kept going back to his knees.

Jesus told two parables specifically to address this. Luke 18 summarizes the point plainly: "Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." (Luke 18:1, English Standard Version (ESV))

Charles Spurgeon captured this beautifully when he wrote that prayer pulls the rope below and the great bell rings above in the ears of God. Some scarcely stir the bell because they pray without energy or conviction. But the one who wins with heaven is the one who grasps the rope boldly and pulls continuously with all his might.

## **What Happens When One Person Prays Persistently?**

The story of Dwight L. Moody's unexpected revival in England illustrates this truth in a remarkable way. Moody agreed to preach at a local church while on vacation, and the morning service felt spiritually lifeless. He dreaded returning that evening. But when he came back, the atmosphere had completely changed. The Holy Spirit was clearly at work. That night, nearly the entire congregation stood to receive Christ.

What had changed? It was later discovered that an 86-year-old bedridden woman had read one of Moody's sermons in a newspaper two years earlier and had been praying ever since that God would send Him to her church to bring revival. When she heard he had preached that morning, she pushed away her lunch and spent the afternoon fasting and praying.

Over the following ten days, more than 400 people gave their lives to the Lord. All because one woman refused to stop praying.

## **Who Can Pray with This Kind of Power?**

James says the earnest prayer of a "righteous person" has great power. That might feel discouraging if you are aware of your own failures and shortcomings. But Scripture is clear that every believer in Christ has been clothed in His righteousness. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21, English Standard Version (ESV))

That said, it is possible to be a believer and still be walking in willful disobedience, out of step with the Spirit. For some, the invitation is to repent and return. For others, it may be the first step of placing faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Either way, the door to powerful, effective prayer is open.

## **Life Application**

This week, identify one specific prayer request that you have been tempted to give up on. Maybe it is a prodigal child, a struggling marriage, a health battle, or a longing for spiritual renewal in your own heart. Commit to praying for it every single day this week with purpose, humility, and perseverance. Find a specific place and time to get on your knees and bring that request before God. Do not stop after one or two days. Keep ringing the bell.

Ask yourself these questions as you reflect on this message:

- Do I have a dedicated time and place where I meet with God intentionally, or is my prayer life mostly casual and scattered?
- Is there a prayer I have given up on that God may be calling me to bring back to Him with renewed faith?
- Does the posture of my heart in prayer reflect genuine humility before God, or do I approach Him on my own terms?
- Do I truly believe that my earnest prayer has great power and produces wonderful results?