

Joke: Larry went to a revival in a nearby town and after the message the the preacher asks anyone that needed prayer to come forward as he would love to pray from them.

Larry moved by the service gets in line, and after a little wait he finally gets to the front when the preacher asks:

So, what do you want me to pray about for you?"

Larry replies: "Preacher, I need you to pray for my hearing."

The preacher puts one hand over Larry's ear, and he places the other hand on top of his head and prays.

After a few minutes, the preacher removes his hands, stands back and asks him: "Well, how is your hearing now?"

Larry says, "I don't know, Reverend, it's not until next Wednesday"

Elijah - Week 3

We are in week number three in our study of Elijah And today we are going to be looking at the prayer life of this man of God.

But before I begin, I want you to imagine for a moment that you are on a reality show. The voice, American Idol something like that. Not survivor, or the Great race. But your not being judged according to your voice but rather they are going to judge you from 1 to 10 based upon the intimacy and effectiveness of your prayer life.

How do you think you would do?

How many of you would score a nine or ten. Your prayer life is incredible, your always making time no matter what distractions come up, your a nine or ten. Anybody?

What about the five or six range? Most days you make it, you do miss a few, sometimes distracted, but your doing alright.

How many would say prayer what's prayer? I'm like at a zero, maybe one or two.

Well here's the truth church, I know there have been times in my life that I've hit everyone of those. There has been times I was like bring it on I had the faith that could move mountains and my prayer life was pretty much on track. But I've also been on the other side as well where I felt like every prayer I gave hit a brick wall and never reached the throne room of heaven.

And maybe your in that place today that your even wondering if prayer works.

Because you've been praying for some things in your life and you have yet to see a change in the situation. You've been praying for your health and it seems like your getting worse. You've been wrestling with an addiction but still not free.

And your wondering where are you God? Why haven't you answered me.

And as we look into the life of Elijah today we are going to see that this man of God understood prayer. He went before God with a boldness and a confidence that is to be admired.

Now let me say this before we get started, because I think many of us read about the characters in Scripture and think that they

had on some kind of super hero cape and was able to leap small buildings in a single bound.

But the truth is that's not at all accurate. Scripture tells us this about Elijah. . .

James 5:17–18 (NLT): Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! 18 Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.

I love that he's a regular guy just like us. Not a Clark Kent turned Superman, Bruce Wayne into Batman, or Dr. Bruce Banner transforming into the Incredible Hulk. Elijah was as human as we are.

And he prayed and for three and a half years it didn't rain, not one drop of dew covered the ground.

That's a powerful prayer.

Look again what the Scripture tells us in James. . .he prayed how? Earnestly.

If I'm being honest I don't remember ever praying in the middle of a rainstorm and have it just suddenly stop and the sun stand still and a rainbow crossed the sky.

And when I look at Elijah's prayer life and compare to ours I think for many us when we pray, we pray with a little p, a little r, a little a, and a little. . .why. Not the letter y but that word why.

We just kind of pray. God will you. . .God help me, heal me, be with me, give me. We just sort of pray.

But as you look at Elijah he prays with a capital P R A Y. He prays with a boldness and confidence that God is going to move and do. He prays expecting God to show up. On the other hand, many of us pray hoping God will show up.

And if you remember over the last couple of weeks God tells Elijah to go to this evil king Ahab and his wife Jezebel and say that they need to turn back to Him. They are taking the nation in the wrong direction. They said we're not doing it so God says ok no rain.

And for three and a half years there was no rain.

Then one day Elijah wakes up and God says, it's time for some rain.

And here's what Elijah does, it's found in 1 Kings 18 I will begin at verse 41. . .

1 Kings 18:41–42 (NIV): And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain." 42 So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

He bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

Verse 43. . .

1 Kings 18:43 (NIV): 43 "Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked. "There is nothing there," he said. Seven times Elijah said, "Go back."

Seven times Elijah told his servant to look. And six times the same answer, there's nothing.

But on the seventh trip. . .

1 Kings 18:44 (NIV): The seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.” So Elijah said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.’ ”

And just in case you didn’t know the number 7 in scripture represents completion or perfection.

And on that seventh trip a cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea. Remember that because I’ll be coming back to that part in just a bit.

And when I read a story like this my first impression is that this great man of faith he must be super human, but as we were told in James he was human just like us.

And the reality is, so many of us struggle with our prayer lives. I know I do. It’s not that I don’t think prayer works, I know it does. It’s not that I haven’t seen God do the miraculous because I have. It’s not that He has never answered my prayers, He’s answered many.

But it seems that consistency is difficult to have. Authenticity seems even tougher. And the truth is, there are times that we feel like God doesn’t answer.

And my prayer for this message today and I truly believe if you will stay engaged with the message I will show you things that you can implement into your prayer life and it will transform, and change your life forever.

And you can walk out those doors different then how you walked in.

I truly believe that God wants to transform your relationship with Him through this message. That's my prayer for today.

So, what I want to do is extract a few nuggets of truth from this prayer that Elijah prayed and give you four qualities of an effective prayer.

The first quality, if your taking notes, is this. . .effective prayers are humble prayers.

Elijah climbs to the top of Mount Carmel. He makes his way up to the top of the mountain to be alone with God. He needed to get God's attention. They needed some rain, and he didn't allow for distractions to get in the way of his prayer.

He left the cell phone, the video games, Facebook, everything that would have been time not spent with God at the bottom of the mountain.

Look again what the Scripture says,

1 Kings 18:42 (NIV): 42 So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

What a picture of humility? He makes his way to the top, falls down to his knees, and he puts his face between his knees and he just sits there before a holy God.

He humbled himself. He realized that he couldn't bring the rain. He knew they needed rain, but he knew that he couldn't do it, and this humbling of himself was him spiritually saying, "God, I'm inadequate, I can't do this. But I know You can. You are the creator, You are the healer, and You are the provider."

He humbled himself before God, because he knew that he could not bring the rain. But, he knew who could.

Number one effective prayers are humble prayers. And number two is. . .specific prayers are effective prayers.

And listen church if I'm being honest I'm not always specific in my prayers and I dare say many of you are not as well.

I've had and used those prayers that sound something like this. God give me strength. God, help me. God, protect me.

But hear this, specific prayers are effective prayers.

I'm not saying God doesn't already know your situation because He does. He is all knowing.

Matthew 6:8 (NLT): Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

So, again I'm not saying God doesn't already know your situation because He does.

But. . .

Philippians 4:6 (NLT): Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

And in the book of James we read this. . .

James 4:2–3 (NLT): You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask

God for it. 3 And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

Elijah was specific. He was like, “God, we need some rain. It's been three and a half years. Give us water. We need some liquid from Heaven.

It wasn't some haphazard praying for rain moment.

He knew exactly what it was that he wanted.

Do any of you remember the movie Breakthrough? John falls through the ice and is under water for over 15 minutes. It really turned into a recovery mission instead of rescue mission because of the time he spent under that water. Then after he was found, which was a miracle in and of itself, he was transported to the hospital and while there had no heartbeat for 55 minutes.

Doctors let his mom know that everything they tried didn't work. There let her into the room where he laid lifeless. The doctors had given up, her husband had given up. And all she knew to do was. . .well just watch.

Watch Breakthrough clip

3 days later he woke up, by the the way the number 3 much like the number seven is divine perfection, or wholeness, and 16 days later John walked out of the hospital. John went to study at a Christian college in Minnesota to become a pastor.

I don't think you will be able to convince John that prayer doesn't work.

Elijah was specific in his prayer and then he says, “Go and look towards the sea. . .”

That’s what he tells his servant. Elijah’s like dude I’ve touched the throne room, I’ve prayed go look towards the sea.

And watch this. . .

1 Kings 18:43 (NIV): Go and look toward the sea,” he told his servant. And he went up and looked. “There is nothing there,” he said. Seven times Elijah said, “Go back.”

He went up and looked. There is nothing there.

And for many of us we would have just stopped there. And I will talk more about that in a minute. That will be point three. But for many of us we would just stop praying wondering why we didn’t get the answer, or why God didn’t seem to care about our situation. Because so often we look at our circumstances and if they’re not changing then God most not be working.

Hebrews 4:16 (NIV): Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Elijah went to the top of that mountain with a confidence that God would do what he asked Him to do.

We must become a group of people that will humble ourselves before God, and come to Him without shame and with a boldness and a confidence, praying specific prayers so that God can move and work on our behalf.

So, number one was effective prayers are humble prayers.
Number two. . .specific prayers are effective prayers.

And number three is; effective prayers are persistent prayers.

Elijah has humbled himself. He's prayed a specific prayer.

Then he tells his servant, "go look toward the sea."

Servant goes and comes back with this report, there's nothing there.

Elijah doesn't say well bummer I must have missed God's will. No, he prays again and sends his servant to look toward the sea once more. And once again same report.

Elijah says ok hold on a second. Humbles himself, sticks his head between his knees, God we need some rain.

Go look again. Seven times. And maybe the servant is starting to think hey Elijah I know God heard you and crushed the false prophets a little bit ago, but this prayer thing isn't working so well this time.

I don't know that for sure, but I do know I've had that feeling before. Wondering why my prayer wasn't answered when I wanted, or how I wanted.

But you don't hear Elijah saying, prayer doesn't work. He doesn't say that.

Instead he prays that specific prayer over and over and over again.

And here's what I find so wonderful in this story, Elijah doesn't allow the outward circumstances of what's going on, or what he can see to affect his inward assurance.

When he prayed and it didn't look like God was moving in the situation, when it seemed like God wasn't answering, he doesn't get frustrated and think what a waste of time this has been.

He doesn't say I'm done, he doesn't say it doesn't work. What does he do? He prays again.

It doesn't look like God is hearing me. Let's pray again

1 John 5:14–15 (NIV): This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

He what? He hears us. The key is if we know. . .

And Elijah he's persistent.

James tells us that the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much. And in case you have forgotten if you are a follower of Jesus, of He is indeed your Savior, you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. So, your effectual fervent prayer avails much.

And so, maybe some of you need to tape that verse, or the one in James to your mirror so every time you look at it you remember to pray for that thing that you feel God hasn't yet answered.

So, here's my question for you. What have you quit praying for that you need to start praying for again?

Maybe it's your marriage, your finances, your job, whatever it is you've grown tired and weary.

But church the effectual fervent prayer avails much.

So, number one, effective prayers are humble prayers. Number two, effective prayers are specific prayers. Number three, effective prayers are persistent prayers.

And lastly, number four is this, effective prayers are expectant prayers.

This is where the story really gets good.

Elijah he's on Mount Carmel, he humbles himself, prays a specific and persistent prayer.

He's not quitting.

And Scripture tells us. . .

1 Kings 18:44 (NIV): The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea. . ."

And for many of us if that's all we saw we would have no where near the response of Elijah, we would look at that and think to ourselves that's it, there must be something more? I can't count on that can I?

But look at his response. . .

1 Kings 18:44 (NIV): The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea." So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.' "

The servant didn't come back saying, dude you should see it the clouds are swelled with floods from heaven. I can smell the thunderstorm brewing.

No, all he said was, I see a cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea.

And Elijah is like, oh boy rain is coming. . .better go tell Ahab to hitch up his chariot before it's too late.

I'm not sure if I would have had that same response. I might of been looking up on the weather app to see what the chances of rain actually was.

But Elijah, he was expectant. He believed God would do what He said He would do. He believed the promises of God and that God would do the thing He said. That cloud the size of a man's hand was enough to know God was moving in the situation.

The gospel of Mark tells us this. . .

Mark 11:24 (NIV): Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

And then in Hebrews we read this. . .

Hebrews 11:1 (KJV): Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

I don't see anything yet. That's ok stand on the promises of God. I only see a cloud the size of a man's hand. That's all the info I need. It's looking like a rainstorm to me.

Church we need to put action in place. Believe. Believe that God is going to move and that God is going to work.

So, what happened to Elijah after he evacuated the town?

1 Kings 18:45 (NIV): Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel.

Picture that a moment. What started as a cloud the size of a man's hand now was turning into a sky the grew black with clouds and a wind and a heavy rain, not just a light rain, but a heavy rain started to fall.

And this is to me is even more incredible. . .

1 Kings 18:46 (NIV): The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

I love that, the power of the Lord came on Elijah and he outran Ahab's chariot.

Church, God answers prayers. God moves supernaturally on behalf of His people. Do you believe that? He cares.

He cares about your situation, your addiction, he cares and He's as close as the mention of His name.

And as we get ready to pray there's some of you here or watching online or who will hear this message a few days, weeks, or months from now and it's just been a long time since you've connected with God through prayer in a real and intimate kind of a way.

Maybe you've stopped praying for someone you should be praying for. Maybe it's your finances. But you know it's time to re-energize your prayer life.

There may be some of you that prayer isn't the first thing you think about doing but it's the last result when everything else you've tried didn't work.

And there may be others of you that have never even given God a chance. You've heard about Jesus but never have asked Him to be your Lord and Savior.

Let me pray for those first two groups of people first. . .**PRAY**

And then for those of you that aren't walking with the Lord, haven't given Jesus your life, stop running. Let me pray for you as well. **PRAY**