

JAMES Part 10: Effective Prayer

The fruit of a MATURE Christian life is a purposeful, consistent, powerful PRAYER LIFE.

- * According to James, the prayers of the righteous are DYNAMIC, EFFECTIVE & POWERFUL (James 5:16b).
- * Our EXPECTATION should be set by Jer 33:3, Jn 14:13-14, 1 Jn 5:14-15.

Why is a fruitful prayer life a sign of Christian maturity?

Looking at promises like Jer 33:3, John 14:13-14 & 1 John 5:14-15, what expectations should believers have when they pray?

What factors sometimes cause Christians to expect less from prayer than Scripture encourages?

3 PREMISES / PARAMETERS

1. "If God SAID it, we BELIEVE it & that SETTLES it."

- * The WORD is the SOURCE of prayer's POWER.
- * We pray knowing God has tied His POWER to His WORD.
- * The PROMISES of God must be our STARTING-POINT.
- * Prayer becomes powerful when established on WHAT GOD HAS SAID

What should the statement 'If God said it, we believe it and that settles it' mean for the way we approach prayer?

Why do you think Scripture should be the starting point of our prayers rather than our circumstances or feelings?

2. If God COMMANDS it, He intends to EMPOWER it

- * Gen 1:1-3 → God the Father SPOKE the Word, Jesus Christ IS the Word made flesh, the Holy Spirit is hovering above the waters, waiting to MANIFEST the Word (Isa 55:10,11, Jer 1:12).

What does Gen 1:1-3 reveal about how God's Word and Spirit work together? How does knowing the Holy Spirit is involved in manifesting God's Word change the way we pray?

3. If God has done it BEFORE, He can do it AGAIN

- * We do not pray in ISOLATION, in a VACUUM. There is HISTORY, PRECEDENT, TESTIMONY.
- * The power of open and close the heavens was not in the force of Elijah's PERSONALITY, but in the CHARACTER of God.

Why is it significant that we do not pray in a vacuum, but within the history of God's activity?

What does Elijah's example teach about where true power in prayer comes from?

The GOOD NEWS: You can have a Dynamic, Powerful Prayer Life

1. Focus on what GOD CAN DO, not what you CAN'T

- * When believers begin to focus on GOD'S promises, faithfulness & capacity, rather than THEIR OWN, they begin to pray differently (Mark 10:27, Rom 4:18).
- * The danger: Reducing God's CAPACITY to the LIMITS of our own.
- * What's the power? THE WORD (Heb 4:12, John 6:63, Jer 23:29)
- * Who's the dynamis? HOLY SPIRIT (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, 1 Cor 2:4-5)
- * Ineffective prayer is MY BEST IDEA, MY HUFF & PUFF, MY PROPOSED SOLUTION.
- * Effective prayer is WORD-based, PROMISE-releasing, HOLY SPIRIT-inspired.

Why do believers often focus more on their own limitations than on God's ability?

What is the danger of reducing God's capacity to the limits of our own thinking?

What is the difference between prayer that is driven by our best ideas and prayer that releases God's promises?

How can we allow the Holy Spirit to shape & inspire our prayers more intentionally?

2. Speak TO your mountain, rather than ABOUT your mountain

- * Ineffective prayer spends all its time MOANING at God, telling Him HOW BIG its problems are & feeling SORRY for itself.
- * Danger: That MAGNIFIES the problem until it seems BIGGER than God.
- * The prayer of faith doesn't NEGOTIATE or APOLOGISE. It speaks DIRECTLY TO the mountain, telling it WHAT to do & WHERE to go (Matt 17:20, 21:21).
- * e.g. Jesus simply COMMANDED the wind & waves to 'BE STILL!' (Mark 4:35-41)
- * We can pray with a BOLDNESS rooted in the PROMISES of God, an AUTHORITY that flows from TRUST in Him and a CONFIDENCE anchored in His CHARACTER.

Why is it easier to talk about problems than to address them in faith?

In what ways can focusing on the size of a problem actually magnify it?

In Mark 4:35-41, Jesus simply commands the storm to be still. What does this teach us about authority in prayer?

How do God's promises character & faithfulness give believers confidence when they pray?

What might change in our personal prayer lives if we prayed with greater boldness & trust in God?