



POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE PRAYER

This week's devotions are written particularly with our Prayer Week in mind. Scripture tells us that ***the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective*** (James 5:16). The following verses go on to explain that ***Elijah was a human being, even as we are***, and that that was no hindrance to him experiencing amazing answers to prayer! (v.17) Let's take a walk through his story recorded in 1 Kings chapters 17-19 to see what we can learn...

DAY 1/ PROVISION – THE RAVENS AND THE WIDOW

1 KINGS 17:1-24

Elijah breaks into the pages of God's story announcing to the king of Israel that there will be no rain until he says so. Imagine... his obedience to God's will is an immediate disadvantage to him. Would we be so quick to prophesy and risk our comfort?!

Yet God always has a plan for provision. As Elijah follows God's guidance, he is miraculously provided for, first by ravens and then a widow who was herself in a desperate situation. Elijah must have initially thought that he had asked the wrong person for help, but note firstly: our faith can lead to someone else's miracle too! Secondly, the widow trusted God's instructions, even though they were unreasonable, and experienced His provision beyond her expectations!

Lord, I choose to submit to Your will, follow Your instructions (even the irrational ones) and trust You to provide.

DAY 2/ POWER – MOUNT CARMEL SHOWDOWN

1 KINGS 18:16-40

During the third year of drought, Elijah meets with the king, who has turned to a different faith (Baal worship), many prophets have been put to death and the people of Israel were now in a place of indecision. It's not that Yahweh had ceased to be a 'god', but He was no longer their 'Lord'.

Elijah decides it's time to settle this and bring some clarity! Will the 'sun-god' or the true God answer with fire? This is, without doubt, one of the craziest scenes in the Bible, but

Elijah has absolute confidence that God will show His power and do the impossible. Sometimes situations become extreme so that it is beyond any doubt that God has answered!

Lord, may I recognise the opportunities for You to show Your power, and then to speak up and pray with confidence!

DAY 3/ PERSISTENCE – UNTIL THE CLOUD APPEARS

1 KINGS 18:41-46

How many times are we willing to pray before an answer, or hope of an answer, comes? Twice, three times, maybe four? Each time Elijah's servant went to look, there was no sign of the rain he was praying for, yet he persisted.

He persisted because he already had God's word that it will happen (v.1) – the difference between knowing God can and that God will! Our faith is built up as we journey with God through seemingly impossible situations.

Lord, strengthen my resolve to persist in prayer today! I will trust and ask according to Your word.

DAY 4/ PEACE OF MIND – THE WHISPER OF GOD

1 KINGS 19:1-18

Having experienced incredible signs and wonders, fulfilled prophecy and answered prayer, you would think that Elijah would have felt like he was soaring. Yet after great triumph came an all-time emotional low. He who had shown such courage was now extremely discouraged. He was exhausted, alone and threatened; *“I’ve had enough Lord”* was his prayer (v.4).

This was indeed his ‘dark night of the soul’, but God was present. He always understands and provides a way to meet our emotional needs. And then He speaks. He speaks into our emptiness and disorientation... with a whisper.

Watch out, for when we are low we tend to exaggerate and lose perspective (v.10 & 14). Interestingly, God doesn’t deliberate with Elijah, but simply gives him three tasks to pick him up and move him forward. Can we still ourselves, or will circumstances bring us to stop, that we can receive and hear from God? Either way, our mental well-being depends on it.

Lord, I bring my fears, doubts and disappointments to You. I will be still and receive what You have to say.

DAY 5/ PROGRESSION – NO SUCCESS WITHOUT SUCCESSION

1 KINGS 19:19-21

It is never enough to have run our race or fulfilled our calling – there is no success without succession! The Lord directs Elijah to Elisha, to whom he can transfer his role, knowledge, and in good Old Testament fashion, his anointing.

It can be challenging for us to hand over what we have been commissioned to do, but in doing so, God’s work can continue to grow and flourish. Whatever our age, we can all have the privilege and joy of passing on what we have experienced and received from the Lord to the next generation.

Lord, I pray for the rising generation. Enable me to recognise the potential in those you have placed around me, and to encourage them!