



PREVIEW

Why don't we pray more? Could it be that we sometimes don't pray because we think we can get more done if we actually "do" it than if we pray about it first? Today we are going to look at the powerful effects that prayer can have in our lives.

PRAISE

Play the Airplane Prayer game. Each person needs to have their own piece of paper. On this paper, have them write down a prayer of their choice. Inform your group that these prayers will be prayed at the end of the session today. Advise them to not write their names on the paper. After everyone has written down their prayer, have them fold the paper into a paper airplane. Gather the group in a circle and have each person toss their airplane. Once a plane lands near them, tell them to pick up the folded paper airplane and open it to see what is written on it. That will be their prayer for the day.

PARABLE

Our lack of praying says to God that our own activity and our own working is more important than asking Him to act and work and do. Read James 5:16. James inspires us to believe that prayer is a powerful, effective thing. The NLT says, "The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results." Our prayers matter. Our prayers change things. Our prayers make a difference!

The Prayer HABIT

PARABLE *(continued)*

Let me show you what I mean. In Greek (the language the New Testament was written in), the phrase "effectual fervent" is *energéō*. This word is defined as to be operative, be at work, put forth power. This is the root word for the word you and I know as ENERGY. Prayer is not dull; prayer is not boring; prayer is not lifeless. Prayer generates divine energy; prayer changes things!

PRESENT

If you thought something would make all the difference in the world, you would make sure it happened. If you thought something mattered, you would make time for it, intentionally, purposefully, regularly. That's what we do for things that make a difference and matter to us.

James gave an example of effective prayer by reminding us of the story of Elijah in I Kings 17 and 18. Ahab, king of Israel, was doing "more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him" (I Kings 16:33). The prophet Elijah confronted King Ahab and told him there would not be any dew nor rain until he—the prophet—said so. God withheld rain for three and a half years because of Elijah's declaration. Toward the end of the drought, Elijah again met up with Ahab, and the wicked king blamed the prophet for "troubling Israel." Elijah turned the tables on Ahab: "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have!" He called for a confrontation between himself and 850 false prophets.

The confrontation took place on Mount Carmel. The false prophets called on their gods throughout the day without any response. At about the time of the evening sacrifice (about 3:00 pm), Elijah built an altar to Jehovah and laid on it the wood and the sacrificial bullock. He asked that the sacrifice be soaked with twelve barrels of water. Then he prayed a simple sixty-three-word prayer. Read I Kings 18:36–37. The Lord answered Elijah's prayer by sending a fireball out of heaven that consumed the bullock, the wood, the stones of the altar, and the water. All that was left was a crater. When the people saw it, they fell on their faces and declared, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!"

The Prayer HABIT

PRESENT *(continued)*

There was one more item of unfinished business. Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel and prayed it would rain. He kept sending the servant to look for a rain cloud, and after Elijah's seventh prayer, the servant said, "There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea!" It wasn't long before the wind whipped up, the sky grew dark with clouds, and a torrential rain watered the earth, ending the drought.

PRACTICE

Prayer works. Prayer matters. It is powerful and effective because of the righteous life of the person who is praying and because that person is invoking God's powerful name and relying on God's gracious promises and saving will. The story of Elijah—and many other stories throughout the Bible—show us that this is true.

So pray. Make a habit of it. Jesus loves you and He loves to hear from you. He has forgiven all your sins, and He now invites you to call on Him in prayer. He will hear your prayers and work powerfully for you and for the world.

PRAY

Lord God, You teach me that prayer is a powerful thing. In Your grace, Father, You invite me to pray. Help me to understand how powerful prayer is so that I make it a part of the very fiber of my life. Teach me to pray without stopping. Amen.

PLUS

In closing, have each of the students read the prayer that landed near them during the opening game.