

## **Powerful Prayer!**

"The ONE Thing That Changes Everything" series- Part 03

Use the next few minutes to connect and fellowship with other members of the group by discussing the following: What was the hardest thing you ever had to do in life? Why was it so hard?

### **Let's get on the same page -**

The following story illustrates our experience with prayer and how we sometimes pray without expecting God to act:

*A tale is told about a small town that had historically been "dry," but then a local businessman decided to build a tavern. A group of Christians from a local church were concerned and planned an all-night prayer meeting to ask God to intervene. It just so happened that shortly thereafter lightning struck the bar and it burned to the ground. The owner of the bar sued the church, claiming that the prayers of the congregation were responsible, but the church hired a lawyer to argue in court that they were not responsible. The presiding judge, after his initial review of the case, stated that "no matter how this case comes out, one thing is clear. The tavern owner believes in prayer and the Christians do not." -(Why Christians Sin, J. K. Johnston, Discovery House, 1992, p. 129).*

It could be said that the judge's comments were comical, an over-simplification, and yet, somewhat convicting (ouch!).

Despite our own weakness in prayer, the invitation of Hebrews 4:16 should be a source of encouragement to all of us: *"Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

To motivate us to pray, James asserts the power of prayer and then illustrates it with the life of Elijah:

### **Book: James 5:16-18**

James 5:16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

James 5:17 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!

James 5:18 Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.

### **Let's get into the Word:**

According to verse 16, what are the qualifications for a powerful prayer life?

How can we cultivate or strengthen those qualifications?

How would you advise a Christian who said that he/she didn't feel worthy to pray?

Why does a prayer of a righteous man have great power?

E. M. Bounds once wrote: *“Prayer can do anything that God can do”* (*Purpose in Prayer* - Moody Press). What does this quote imply concerning our prayers and powerful results?

James states that Elijah, the great Old Testament hero, is a human (or man) just like us. What does this mean and how does it encourage or discourage us from being a prayer warrior like him?

How long should we continue praying if God doesn't seem to be answering? Is there a point at which we should give up?

How does verses 17-18 encourage us to pray in what we might perceive to be an impossible situation?

Seminary professor, Dr. Howard Hendricks would challenge his students with the following question: *“What is there in your life that you cannot explain apart from God?”* How would you answer?

Paul stated in 2 Cor, 1:9: “Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.” Where is the proper balance between prayer and taking personal action to cause our situation to change?

### **Let's get real (with self!)**

What is something or someone in your life, that in the past claimed much of your efforts in prayers, that you once again need to pick up and spend more time asking God to intervene?

The psalmist says, “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” (Ps. 66:18). What area of your life do you need to bring under the obedience of God?

Is there a problem you are facing that as you pray, you also need to step up and take some action? What will you do next?