

## Try Prayer Power: It Works!

### 1 Kings 18

*41 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. 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." 44 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.' "*  
*45 Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. 46 The power of the LORD came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.*

### Introduction

**EX.** Lori had just completed her freshman year at a Nazarene college. We were both back home at our parents for the summer, working at the same place and commuting together. Lori, my sister and I felt extremely burdened for another relative that really needed God to work in their lives. She told me she believed God was calling us to bind together and to fast and pray for three days for this family member. When she said it, God spoke to my heart and said, "Alan, this is from Me." It was the first time either of us had ever fasted for that long. We'd grown up in the church where we'd practiced prayer and self-denial for missions for a meal or for a day but never beyond that. We set a date and began our fast. We talked about specific things that we knew God needed to help this person with. We were working at the same place that summer – we were working ten hours a day and commuting an hour each way to work for those three days. I thought I was going to die. But of course I didn't. But here is what happened. Every time my stomach said "feed me!" I said, Lord you know what we are praying about and we are desperate for you to hear and answer. The need is tremendous and we love this family member dearly. Oh God, move in her life. And you know what happened? God did!

God hears and wants to answer our prayers. God is looking for a people who will partner together with Him in prayer to achieve His purposes. [Let me say that again] When God's people pray, God unleashes His power to achieve His purposes. And that is never more true than when God's people fast with prayer.

1 Kings 18 tells the story of Elijah's confrontation with King Ahab and the prophets of Baal. Ahab was a wicked king. 1 Kings 16:30 says that Ahab did more evil than all the kings before him. He and his wife Jezebel led Israel away from worshiping and serving God to serve other gods. The worship of these other gods led to disobedience and

immorality of all kinds. So, God sent Elijah. Elijah said, "Ahab, there isn't going to be any rain. There isn't even going to be any dew for the next few years until I say so."

Three years later, Elijah called for a confrontation between God and the gods that Ahab and Jezebel were serving. Over 800 prophets of Baal and Asherah confronted Elijah at the top of Mt. Carmel. They prepared an altar, slaughtered a bull and cried out all day for their god to send fire ... but they got no answer.

At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah called the people to the Lord's altar. He rebuilt it, laid a fire on it, and had them pour enough water on it to soak the wood, the sacrifice, the altar and leave about 4 gallons in the trench around the altar.

And then, Elijah prayed.

*"O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 1 Kings 18:36*

Then fire fell from heaven and burned up the sacrifice the wood, the altar, and the water in the trench. The people were overwhelmed at the miracle and cried out "The Lord, He is God." Elijah had them grab the other prophets and he killed them in the valley at the foot of the mountain.

But Elijah wasn't finished. He told Ahab, "Go eat and drink for there is the sound of a heavy rain." Some teachers think everyone there had been fasting all day so he told Ahab to break his fast and celebrate. There wasn't a cloud in the sky and it hadn't rained in three years -- so Elijah wasn't finished.

He didn't eat. He didn't celebrate. He climbed to the top of the mountain, got on his face before God, buried his face in his knees and prayed until he got an answer.

Elijah prayed with power. None of Elijah's recorded prayers are long. None are particularly eloquent. But every prayer he prayed had power.

How did he pray with such power? You may say, "duh, he was Elijah." I want to rush to agree with you but you know what James 5:17 says? *James 5:17* *Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18* *Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.*

Elijah was a man just like us? You know what James is saying? You and I can pray with the same kind of power that Elijah prayed. How? Come on Alan ... how do we pray like Elijah? [I'm glad you asked ☺]

## **1. Pray in Faith**

*1 Kings 18:1 ...the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."*

Praying with power means praying in faith. Elijah believed God. In 1 Kings 18: 1, God gave Elijah a definite promise that God was going to make it rain.

Elijah believed that promise God gave him was real. But Elijah still had some praying to do.

God has given us a lot of promises in His Word, but we still have some praying to do. God promises that if we will pray in faith and be faithful to Him, He will take care of all our financial needs. God promises that if we pray in faith He will heal the sick, He will strengthen the weak, He will protect us from the enemy, He will deliver us from temptation, He will lift us up when we're discouraged and Church, when we pray in faith ... the gates of hell won't be able to stand against us.

Praying with power means praying by faith.

## **2. Shut Your Eyes to the Conditions**

Praying with power also means shutting your eyes to the conditions. Elijah was in northern Israel on the edge of the desert

**EX.** Last year we had a student at NBC who discovered he had cancer. He had it bad. His doctors said it was in his bones and there was nothing they could do. They gave him six months to live. But he said, God has told me He is going to heal me. He still has a purpose for my life. He moved back home so that his wife and daughter would have family support just in case. He continued to shut his eyes to the conditions. He continued to believe. Before he left we gathered and anointed him for healing. When he got home, he went to the doctors at Johns Hopkins medical center. They looked at his tests from his doctors here. They ran more tests. They said, "we agree with your Colorado doctors. You had cancer. But you don't have cancer anymore."

Elijah got on his face, put his head between his knees and shut out all the conditions. Praying with power means by faith shutting out the conditions and focusing on God's promise.

Praying with power also means persistence.

### **3. Persist**

Elijah didn't give up when he prayed the first time and didn't get an answer. He kept on praying and sending his servant to look. Faith isn't stupid. Faith may shut out the conditions but faith still knows all the facts. Faith isn't burying your head in the sand. Faith knows the conditions but doesn't let the negative conditions stop power-filled prayer. Sometimes good and godly people miss God's miracle because they give up too soon. Jesus said, keep on asking. Keep on seeking. Keep on knocking. Elijah didn't get an answer the first six times he prayed.

Powerful prayer is faith filled prayer that shuts out the negative conditions and continues in prayer. When I'm holding onto one of God's promises, I pray until He says stop or redirects the prayer.

Prayer power requires persistence.

### **4. Fast and Pray**

*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. 1 Kings 18:42*

The greatest support to power in prayer that I know of is fasting together with prayer. When God said He was going to destroy Israel for making the golden calf at Mt. Sinai, Moses spent 40 days fasting and interceding with God and God relented. When multiple armies were invading Israel, King Jehoshaphat called for a day of fasting and prayer and God delivered them. When Ezra and those returning from captivity with him needed protection on their trip, he called for a day of fasting and prayer and God protected them. When Jesus was beginning His ministry, he fasted and prayed 40 days and overcame the temptation to take shortcuts to reach God's purpose and plan.

Elijah sent Ahab off to eat and drink but he went back up the mountain to pray. And you know what I like about this passage as it relates to fasting? All we know for sure is that Elijah skipped one meal. Elijah may have eaten a hearty breakfast. He may have sent out for lunch while he was taunting the prophets of Baal.

But look what happened as a result of this one meal fast ...Elijah prayed all the way through to God's promise and saw a 3 ½ year drought broken.

### **A. Fasting Strengthens Prayer**

Imagine what can happen when God's people fast and pray. Fasting sharpens the edge of our intercession and makes our prayers more passionate. It causes us to concentrate on the focus for our praying and the importance that our prayers have. When you are fasting about something specific – every time your stomach screams for food, you are reminded to concentrate and pray about whatever it is you are fasting for.

### **B. Fasting Strengthens My Faith**

Fasting is not a spiritual hunger strike that causes God to do something that He doesn't want to do. But fasting will strengthen my faith to believe that God can and will do what I ask.

### **C. When We Fast with Prayer We Have More Boldness to Ask**

Its not that I'm saying "look at me God, I'm fasting, you owe me something." God doesn't owe me anything. When I fast, I become more intensely aware of my desperate need for God. I realize just how dependent I am on God. When I'm fasting, I come to the point where I must say, "God I recognize that I am utterly dependent on you. You are the only one who can answer this prayer. You are the only one who can meet this need. You are the only One to whom I can turn. God help! You must help God, I believe you will help God. Help now God!

### **D. When We Fast, We are More Focused on Prayer**

Many of the church services I attend, people seem more concerned about what they are going to eat after the service than what God might do in the service. Fasting jolts us. It gets our focus onto the things of the Spirit – especially prayer. When I'm fasting, I want to know why I'm fasting and what God is doing in answer to my prayers.

**EX.** First extended fast – didn't know why at first but God made it stronger and stronger.

### **Conclusion**

[Prayer releases God to do things He has chosen to do only in response to the prayers of His people. In prayer, we become partners together with God in accomplishing His will. In John 14-16 Jesus said at least six times, "if we ask anything in His name, God will do it."

Why did He emphasize this so strongly? Because; we need to know that God wants to answer prayer in agreement with His Name/character.]

Andrew Murray said, "Prayer needs fasting for its full growth. Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the invisible. Fasting is the other hand, the one with which we let go of the visible." (With Christ in the School of Prayer, 100)

John Wesley said, "The man who never fasts is no more in the way to heaven than the man who never prays." (Sermons on Several Occasions, vol. 2, p. 440)

This week, the NBC family has been called to prayer. I like what we've been experiencing on our campus this year. Amen? We want to see real revival across our campus. We've also contacted every Nazarene church across the United States and told them we'd pray for them. We have some specific requests but we need to pray for our church.

When Elijah fasted one meal, God broke a three year drought. Imagine what God might do if a handful of us committed to fast a meal this week ... if a handful of us committed to fast for a day this week ... if a handful of us committed to do more. What might God do?

*2 Chronicles 7:14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*