

# Powerful prayers

Good morning church. To say that this an unusual time in our lives is an understatement. I could never even imagine a time when our nation is being asked by our president to practice social distancing and as much as possible, to quarantine ourselves in our homes from a threat.

Due to this virus, in Oklahoma, a small percentage of our population is ill.(53 positive tests).

Due to this illness and social distancing...

- Many people are afraid.

Some are afraid of the illness for themselves or their loved ones.  
Some are afraid due to their financial losses.

- Many people feel alone.
- Many people feel angry.

Everyone's plans have changed. Many people believe the government is abusing it's power. Many are angry about it.

- Many people feel anxiety.

Our heavenly Father's has told us what to do in this circumstance.

- He tells us to put our hope in Him and His promises.
- He tells us to love one another.

I am very grateful for our church family and specifically our small group ministry. Our small group ministry is not within the walls of our building. We are a church without walls. Our small group ministry enables our church to carry out His command to love one another in very practical ways. Our groups are all still meeting. Our small group leaders are leading their members to connect with one another daily. Our small group leaders are leading their groups to take care of various needs as they arise. Our small group leaders are leading their groups to minister to the needs of the unchurched.

One of our members recently said,

["Wow, it's almost like God knew what was in store for Western Hills more then a decade ago; almost like He knows the future. LO! We serve and awesome and wonderful God."](#)

I could not agree more! Our ministries are currently limited to just live streaming and our small groups. I cannot express how grateful I am for our small group leaders and their ministry to our church family and our community.

I am praying that not one of our members is infected by the virus. But if it occurs, through our small groups, our members will feel loved and supported.

Jesus is showing us that...

“My church can exist and thrive if it’s only meetings are small groups meeting in homes.”

Our heavenly Father is showing us that the ministry of meeting in small groups in homes is the only essential ministry in His church.

God is also using what is happening now in our society to prepare our church for the future.

I want to encourage you to do your part. Stay actively connected with the members of your small group.

If you are not actively connected, get connected. It is the best means to love one another! Jesus modeled it for us with His disciples. Follow Him!



The following story takes place in Israel in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, also called Israel and Samaria.

Ahab was the king of the Northern Kingdom. Ahab married a priestess of Baal named Jezebel. **Jezebel** was the daughter of the priest-king Ethbaal, ruler of the coastal Phoenician cities (now in Lebanon). When **Jezebel** married Ahab, she persuaded him to worship Baal and to introduce the worship of Baal to Israel. He even built a large temple for the worship of Baal.

Baal was the Canaanite god of nature. Baal was responsible for rain, thunder, lightning, and dew.

The worship of Baal violated the covenant that God had made with Moses. It violated all the ten commandments. Baal worship included cutting yourself, child sacrifice, and performing acts of sexual immorality with temple prostitutes.

The bible says...

1 Kings 16:33

33 And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

## NKJV

Elijah was a prophet who was sent by God to judge Ahab and Israel for their sin and to call them to repentance. Elijah means my God is Yahweh. During his life, Elijah prayed, and God answered His prayers and performed incredible miracles that confirmed that Elijah was speaking for God.

One of those miracles occurred when Elijah prayed, and it did not rain for 3- and one-half years. The drought was so severe that dew would not form on vegetation. Elijah prayed and God literally took all the humidity out of the air over Israel for three- and one-half years even though it was located right next to the Mediterranean Sea. What was the most prosperous nation in the world under King Solomon became one of the poorest nations in the world in just three- and one-half years.

Then Elijah prayed and God sent rain. This is the story from God's Word.

1 Kings 18:41-46

41 Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain."

42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees,

43 and said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So, he went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing." And seven times he said, "Go again."

44 Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, "There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea!" So, he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.'"

45 Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So, Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel.

46 Then the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

NKJV

This story teaches us these lessons about powerful prayers.

- Powerful prayers are prayed based on faith in prophecies from God.

1 Kings 17:1

17 And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

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1 Kings 18:1

18 And it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth."

NKJV

- God told Elijah that there was going to be a drought before it happened.
- God told Elijah how long the drought would last.
- God told Elijah when the rain was coming.

Elijah's prayers for the drought to start and for the drought to end were based on what God told him was going to happen.

Powerful prayers are based on faith in prophecies from God.

- Powerful prayers are prayed by righteous people.

Righteous is used in the scripture to describe God's state of being; His nature that never changes.

Psalms 11:7

7 For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.  
KJV

Deuteronomy 32:3-4

3 Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.  
4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.  
KJV

The word righteous literally means straight. The word was used by carpenters to describe a straight cut or a straight measuring line.

When the bible says God is righteous it means His nature is perfectly straight. He is never selfish. He is never greedy. He is never proud. He is pure. He is just. He is right. He is perfect.

Because God's nature is righteous God never does that which is wrong. To do wrong would be against His nature. Since His knowledge is also perfect, it is impossible for God to do wrong. God's actions and His judgments are inerrant. God has never been wrong, and He will never be wrong. The test score for His behavior is 100% correct.

We should bow down and say, you are great!

Because God is righteous, His law is righteous.

Deuteronomy 4:8

8 And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?  
KJV

Psalms 19:7-11

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;  
8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;  
9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.  
10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.  
11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.  
NKJV

In the bible, story after story reveals that God favored the requests of those people that were seeking to be righteous like Him.

### 1. Daniel

Daniel 10:11-12

11 And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

12 Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.

NKJV

God favored His prayers because God knew that Daniel was seeking His righteousness.

### 2. Zacharias and Elizabeth

Luke 1:5-13

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

8 So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,

9 according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

10 And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

NKJV

God favored their prayers because God knew they were seeking His righteousness.

### 3. Cornelius

Acts 10:1-4

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment,

2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.

NKJV

God favored His prayers because God knew that he was seeking His righteousness.

#### 4. The Jews

God told the Jews...

2 Chronicles 7:13-14

13 When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people,

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 I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

NKJV

God told the Jews that He would favor their His prayers if they were seeking His righteousness.

He also admonished the Jews for praying to Him when they were not seeking His righteousness.

#### 1. The Jews

Isaiah 58:3-5

3 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' "In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exploit all your laborers.

4 Indeed you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, to make your voice heard on high.

5 Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the Lord?

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James admonished the church for praying when they were not seeking His righteousness.

#### 2. The church

James 4:1-10

4 Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

4 Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

NKJV

James 5:16-18

16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

NKJV

Powerful prayers are prayed by people that are seeking to be righteous like God.

Our heavenly Father is like any father that loves to say yes to His children's request when those requests are within His will. But He can accomplish His will on earth without us. The blessing of powerful answers to prayer is given to those who are sincerely seeking God's righteousness.

2 Chronicles 16:9

9 For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.

NKJV

- Powerful prayers are prayed based on faith in prophecies from God.
- Powerful prayers are prayed by righteous people

Do you know what it means to do a moral inventory?

It means with the Holy Spirit's help we examine our lives for sin.

Do you know what repentance means?

It means we decide to turn from sin.

Do you know what confession means?

It means with the Holy Spirit's help we tell God and others about our sin and how we want to change.

We should not expect to receive the blessing of powerful answers to prayer if we are holding on to sin and being disloyal to our heavenly Father.

But if we will repent, God will demonstrate His power through us.

If we will repent as a church, God will demonstrate His power through our church. It is called revival.

Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for my sin. Because you gave your life for me, I want to give my life to follow you.

Lord Jesus, thank you for giving me your Holy Spirit. Because you have given me the Holy Spirit, the power of sin over me is broken.

Lord Jesus, thank you for giving me your Word. Because you have given me your Word, I can know your righteous ways.

Lord Jesus, show me your righteous ways and I will follow you.

In Jesus Name!

Amen!