

What is Effective Prayer?



The Real Power of Prayer

James 5:16b

*"The effective, fervent prayer
of a righteous man avails much."*

"Prayer is not getting man's will done in
heaven, but getting God's will done on earth.
It is not overcoming God's reluctance but
laying hold of God's willingness."

Richard C. Trench

A. What are You Expecting? When a woman is pregnant it is said that she is "expecting." What is she expecting? Not a dog or a field of poppies or a bag of stones. She doesn't have to worry about what will be birthed in nine months. She is expecting a baby.

What are you expecting from God?

Psa 138:8; Psa 46:1; Psa 118:6; Isa 54:14-15

B. Go To God In Prayer James 5:13-18

In every circumstance of life we should go to God in prayer. In this short concluding passage to the book of James—the word 'prayer' appears 7 times and forms the basis for 'perfecting prayer.'

C. What is 'Fervent Effective' Prayer? James 5:16b

The words "fervent effective" in this verse are translated by a single Greek word: Energoumene. It has the meaning of 'energetic' or 'power.' However, this is the kind of 'energy' that does not give up, is consistent (daily), without ceasing, inspired by the Holy Spirit. **Here are three things that are essential to fervent effective prayer:**

1. Find God's will—then pray in agreement with Him.

- Sometimes we have already decided OUR will in a matter and we are trying to get God into agreement with us. Or we assume what God would want to do in a situation. The scripture gives us this hope and comfort "...If we ask anything according to His will..." 1 John 5:14; 3:18-24

2. Desperate prayers are effective prayers.

- The scripture is full of other examples of such desperate prayers such as Hannah (1 Sam 1:8-20), Job and Elijah.
- It is in desperation that God sees how serious we are about what we are asking.
- You can't just produce desperation. Some prayers grow more desperate over time and these are usually the ones that meet with the success that Hannah had. The desperate prayer pays a great price but produces a great fruit.

3. The effective prayer is enduring.

- The effective prayer does not give up when there seems to be zero results but continues to pray and believe for an answer no matter how much time it takes. Jesus told a parable specifically designed to encourage people to keep on asking until the results come in. It's called "The Parable of the Persistent Widow" in Lk 18:1-8

Elijah's Fervent Prayer

1 Kings 17-18

To fully understand the kind of prayer-dynamics mentioned in James 5:13-18 we must understand Elijah's life and prayer.

Here is what we learn...

A. A Nature Like Ours

- Elijah was no different than you or I. Jam 5:17
- Behind a great prayer came failure. 1 Kings 19
- Disciples sought to use Elijah's power for the wrong purpose! Luke 9:54-56

B. Specific Request

1 Kin 18:41; Jam 5:17-18

Ineffective prayer is mostly nonspecific.

...bless my family

...be with me today

C. He was Confident! He was confident in the drought and confident when he told Ahab to get ready for the rain. 18:41

D. Pray Priority While Ahab ate and drank, Elijah prayed. 18:42-44

E. Fervent Pray He bowed on the ground with his head between his legs. 18:42

F. Enduring Prayer He did not stop until there were clouds on the way. :43-44

G. He Acted in Expectation

All the servant saw was a small cloud but that was enough to announce to Ahab to prepare to get away from the rain. 18:44

*"Effective prayer is prayer
that attains what it seeks.
It is prayer that moves God,
effecting its end."*

Charles Finney