

# Effective Prayer Starts with Repentance

One of my favorite passages I like to use when I speak or preach is James 5:13-17. Most believe the book of James was written by Jesus' brother James, who because a primary leader of the church in Jerusalem. His nickname was "Camel Knees" because his knees were stiff from all the time he spent on them praying.

This passage offers some powerful truths about prayer he was trying to get his constituents to understand.

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops."

Several interesting things stand out to me in this passage.

First, I am intrigued that even in the first century, so close to the time Jesus walked the earth, that James had to remind people to pray. He even explained when you should use it. This should be a reminder to leaders today that we need to coax people, encourage people, challenge people and inspire people to pray. They do not naturally remember to do it! Church leaders need to be continually encouraging and equipping their

people to pray!

Second, he explains how important having a clean, pure, heart is if you want to expect results from prayer. He ties confession of sins to asking for healing. Then as the bridge to the incredible story of Elijah's experience where his prayers ended a drought, he says these famous words we often quote: it is "the prayer of a *righteous* person" that is "powerful and effective."

According to prayer warrior James, the key to powerful, effective prayer is righteousness, being clean and pure before God when you pray.

We modern believers need to learn and remember that truth. Living a holy life before God, hugely affects our prayer life. If we want to be effective in prayer, then we need to have hearts of surrender and humility. We need to be continually asking the Holy Spirit if there are any blockages between us and Him! We need to make confession and repentance a regular practice in prayer!

—Jonathan Graf is the publisher of Prayer Connect magazine and the president of the Church Prayer Leaders Network.