

Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. A teacher will teach from the Bible that a disciple of Jesus prays. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Jesus says, "Ask and it will be given to you" (Matthew 7:7). Paul says, "Pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). And James says, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). The Bible teaches much about prayer.

The third series of 6 teachings is about "The prayers of people in the Bible". We will learn from the prayers of different kind of followers of the Living God and the topics are: "Prayers in the Psalms", "Prayers of the prophets in the Bible" and "Prayers of the statesmen in the Bible". Every topic will be in two parts. Today we will learn about "A DISCIPLE USES THE PRAYERS OF THE PROPHETS IN THE BIBLE - PART 1". In Israel, the prophets generally represented God before the people. They spoke God's words to the people. Let us consider the prayers and struggles of the prophets as they were doing their task on earth. In part 1 we will learn from the prayers of the prophets Samuel, Elijah, Elisha and Isaiah.

### **POINT 1. PRAYERS OF THE PROPHET SAMUEL**

The prophet Samuel lived more than 3000 years ago. He was in fact the last judge of Israel, before Israel had a king.

#### **First. Pray about your problems to God.**

In 1 Samuel 8:6-22 we read that when the people of Israel wanted a king, just like the nations around them, it displeased the prophet Samuel very much and he prayed about this problem to God. And God answered Samuel's prayer and told him exactly what to do. God said that by asking for a king, the Israelites were rejecting God as the only king over them. God decided to teach Israel a very difficult lesson. He told Samuel to allow them to have a king, but at the same time to warn them that the earthly king would be very demanding. The earthly king would take their sons to serve in the army and many would be killed during battles. He would take their daughters to serve in his palace. He would take the best of their fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his officers. He would take a tenth of all their possessions as tax to pay his servants. In short, they would become *the slaves of the earthly king*. They would become the slaves of the political leaders of this world. The prophet Samuel had to warn the people, that when they suffer under the hard rule of their king, they would cry to God for relief, but God would not answer them in that day. In spite of Samuel's prayer and God's warning, the people still refused to listen. They said, "We want a king over us. *Then we will be like all the other nations.*" Later in the Old Testament we read that it happened exactly as God said it would.

#### **Second. Pray that people may experience the reality and presence of God.**

In 1 Samuel 12:16-18 we read how Samuel in his farewell speech reminded the Israelites of their sin by asking for a king instead of God. It was the harvest time, when there usually was no rain and people did not want rain. But Samuel said to the people that God would show them a sign to show his displeasure. Samuel then prayed to God to show the Israelites that, even though the Israelites have rejected God as their king, God is still real and very present. God sent thunder and rain during the harvest time! And the people stood in awe of God and God's prophet.

#### **Three. Pray for people with compassion and concern.**

Samuel was a prophet who was very concerned with God's people. In 1 Samuel 12:23 we read that in spite of the fact that the Israelites were a rebellious people, the prophet Samuel promised to pray for them. He said, "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right." In 1 Samuel 15:10-11 we read that Samuel heard that God grieved that he had made Saul king, because Saul had turned away from God and had not carried out God's instructions. Yet, Samuel prayed for king Saul all through that night! Christians should pray for their rebellious political leaders and nation!

### **POINT 2. PRAYERS OF THE PROPHET ELIJAH**

The prophet Elijah lived 2875 years ago. He was a prophet during the reign of the wicked king Ahab, a king of the northern kingdom of Israel. We read about him in 1 Kings 17-19.

**First. Prayer can have an effect on the powers of nature.**

God gave the prophet Elijah a message to king Ahab that there would be no rain or even dew in the next few years except at the prophet's word. And there was a terrible drought for three and a half years! During the drought, a widow cared for Elijah. When her son died, Elijah took the boy to his upper room and prayed to God, asking God to avert this tragedy. And God heard Elijah's prayer and gave life to the dead boy! Prayer can stop the rain, but prayer can also raise the dead.

**Second. Prayer can show the reality and power of God to people who worship idols.**

For many years king Ahab and his wife Jezebel promoted the idolatry of Baal and Asherah. They killed the prophets of God and looked for Elijah in all the neighbouring countries in order to kill him too. They appointed 450 prophets for Baal and 400 prophets for Asherah. Baal and Asherah are the names of the Canaanite male and female gods of fertility. God sent Elijah to challenge Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab had to call all his 850 prophets as well as all the people of Israel together for a confrontation between the Baal's and Asherah's on the one side and the living God on the other side. The prophet Elijah rebuked the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is god, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). He then challenged the prophets of Baal to build an altar, to cut a bull to pieces and put it on the wood on the altar, but not to set fire to it. He would do the same. Then they would call on the name of their god to light the fire. The god who answers by fire - he is God! They agreed. The whole morning, the prophets of Baal called on the name of Baal, but there was no response. Then the whole afternoon, they danced around the altar, shouted aloud to Baal and cut themselves with swords in order to get the attention of Baal. The whole day passed and no one answered, no one paid attention. The prophets of Baal had failed! Then Elijah called all Israel and the false prophets to witness what he was going to do. He rebuilt the broken altar of the Lord and dug a trench around it. Then he put the wood on it, cut a bull in pieces and put the pieces on the altar and then ordered the people to pour many jars of water over everything until the water filled the trench. After this, Elijah prayed and said, "God... let it be known today that you are God ... and that I have done all these things at your command. Answer me, so that these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and you are turning their hearts back again" (verse 36-37). Immediately the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the water and even the stones of the altar with the soil around it! When the people saw this, they fell on their faces and acknowledged that the Lord is God. The people then killed all the 850 false prophets of Baal and Asherah. Through prayer, people will come to know the reality of God. God is not an invention of man. God is not a religious myth. The God of the Bible is the only real God!

**Third. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.**

After that, Elijah told Ahab that there would be rain. Elijah climbed to the top of mount Carmel, bent down to the ground with his face between his knees and prayed. Every time he sent his servant to go and look if there were any clouds visible. After praying for seven times, a small cloud appeared and it grew to a storm. The sky turned black, the winds rose and a heavy rain came upon Israel. In James 5:17-18 we read about this prayer. "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. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops." Likewise, the prayer of a righteous Christian will be powerful and effective!

**Fourth. Prayer can strengthen you physically and emotionally.**

After that, queen Jezebel planned to kill Elijah. Elijah became afraid and fled into the desert. After a day's journey in the scorching sun, he came to a broom tree, sat under it and prayed to the Lord. He said to the Lord that he had enough and that he wanted to die. He fell asleep and then an angel brought him food and water. Elijah was strengthened by the Lord and was able to travel for forty days and nights until he reached his destination.

**POINT 3. PRAYERS OF THE PROPHET ELISHA**

The prophet Elisha succeeded Elijah as prophet in Israel and lived about 2800 years ago. We read about Elisha in 2 Kings chapters 2 to 7.

**First. Prayer can open the spiritual eyes of people in order to show them the work of God.**

At that time, the king of Aram was waging a war against Israel. He pursued the army of Israel to this place and that place, but was never able to catch them, because the prophet Elisha advised the king of Israel. The king of Aram was told, "Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom" (2 Kings 6:12). The king of Aram therefore wanted to capture Elisha. He sent an army with horses and chariots and they surrounded the town where Elisha was. The servant of the prophet Elisha saw the army and exclaimed, "What shall we do?" Then Elisha said, "Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those

who are with them” (verse 16). Then Elisha prayed that the Lord would open his servant’s eyes so that he may see. The Lord opened his eyes and he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha to protect Elisha (verse 17)! The God of the Bible can protect Christians in the same way!

**Second. Prayer can blind the physical eyes of enemies so that they cannot continue to do evil.**

Then Elisha again prayed to the Lord, “Strike these people with blindness.” And the Lord struck all the Aramean soldiers with blindness. They were groping around, not able to find any way. Then Elisha led them to Samaria and the king of Israel. Again Elisha prayed that their eyes might be opened so that they could see. And the Lord opened their eyes and they realised that they were in the hands of the king of Israel. Elisha did not permit the king of Israel to kill them, but instead ordered that food and water be set before them before they were sent back. The Israelites prepared a great feast for their enemies and then sent them back. Since that time, the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory.

**POINT 4. PRAYERS OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH**

Isaiah lived 2700 years ago. He was a prophet of the southern kingdom of Judah and one of the greatest prophets who ever lived. He prophesied prophecies about nations and they were all fulfilled! He prophesied prophecies about the coming Messiah and they were all fulfilled 700 years later! Isaiah prayed himself and he taught truths about prayer.

**First. Sin hinders prayers.**

In Isaiah 1:13-15 God says to his people Israel, “Stop bringing meaningless offerings. Your incense is detestable. ... Your festivals my soul hates. ... When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen.” And in Isaiah 29:13 God says, “These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.” Why will God not even listen to the prayers of his own people? Because in verse 3-4 he says, “Israel is a sinful nation, ... a brood of evildoers, given to corruption. They have forsaken the Lord!” In Isaiah 59:1-2 he says the same thing, “Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear to dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” Doing evil in any form hinders prayers! God is a holy and righteous God and he will simply refuse to listen to prayers when people live in sin. Examples of sin are spiritual corruption and economic corruption. Spiritual corruption is not knowing the God of the Bible personally, turning your back to God and refusing to listen when the God of the Bible speaks. Economic corruption is doing evil like receiving and giving bribes, evading to pay tax and revenue, extortion and industrial espionage, etc.

**Second. Prayer of confession restores the relationship with God.**

In Isaiah 6:1-8, we read how the holy God appeared to Isaiah. He was seated on a high throne surrounded by magnificent angels. These angels called to one another, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices, the heavenly temple shook and was filled with the smoke of God’s glory. When Isaiah saw and heard all this, he was terrified and cried, “Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!” It is terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the holy God when one is unclean or rebellious against God.

However, because Isaiah had cried out a prayer of confession to God, acknowledging his guilt and unworthiness, God sent an angel to make atonement for Isaiah’s sin. Only after confession of sin and atonement of his sin, *could* God use Isaiah in his service and *did* God use Isaiah in his service. God cannot and will not use an unclean or rebellious person in his service!

**Third. Repentance promotes prayer.**

However, in Isaiah 55:6-7 he says, “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.” Many times, God calls you to repent. If you listen and turn away from your way of evil and pray to the God of the Bible, he will listen to your prayers. Then you will seek him and find him. Would that not be a wonderful experience?

**ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. If you are a spiritual leader in your church or country, then what do you pray for your people and leaders?

Second. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www. Etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.