

'Hear Our Prayer'
Lent Course 2025 Session 2
Elijah – Ambitious Prayer

LEADER'S NOTES

Gathering (5 minutes)

Welcome members to the group and ensure they all know each other.

Ask group members if they made any changes to their pattern of prayer following last week's session.

Opening Prayer

You may like to pray by name for every member of the group.

Then lead this or another prayer:

Lord Jesus as you taught your disciples,
so teach us to pray.
Give us honesty in our confession,
ambition in our intercession,
eloquence in our praise and
humility in our thanksgiving.
Help us to trust in the power of prayer,
and as we pray,
give us renewed joy in the hope of your salvation.
For you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit
one God for ever and ever.
Amen.

Introduction

Use these or other words:

Welcome back to our Lent Course, 'Hear our Prayer.' The aim of the Course is to deepen our lives of prayer in the company of some characters from the Old Testament.

This week, in our second session, we will reflect on the life of Elijah the prophet in 1 Kings and think about how we can pray with greater ambition. Let's start by hearing some of Elijah's story.

Biblical Reflection (15 minutes)

Give some background

In the midst of a terrible drought Elijah has been led by God to the home of a widow in Zarephath. One day her child is taken terribly ill. Here is what happens next, as written in 1 Kings 17 verses 17 to 24.

Read the passage slowly and clearly.

¹⁷ After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸ She then said to Elijah, 'What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!' ¹⁹ But he said to her, 'Give me your son.' He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging, and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰ He cried out to the Lord, 'O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?' ²¹ Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the Lord, 'O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again.' ²² The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³ Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, 'See, your son is alive.' ²⁴ So the woman said to Elijah, 'Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.'

Leave a time of silence.

Ask the following or similar question:

- The widow turns to Elijah in despair. What does that tell us about how we can deal with pain in our own lives?
- Elijah prays for the child to come back to life. What does that teach us about how we should pray in a time of crisis?
- After her son is healed, the widow acknowledges the truth of God's word in Elijah's mouth. What does that teach us about the role of prayer in sharing our faith?

Talk (15 minutes)

Watch the Video. It can be seen on the Blackburn Diocesan Website or on the Fruitful app.

Discussion (20 minutes)

Lead a time of conversation. The following questions will help but feel free to choose just a few of them or ask your own.

This week there is less time for conversation so that we can spend more time praying or preparing for prayer.

- Can you think of individuals who have inspired you in your own life of prayer? Who was it and what did they teach you?
- How do you relate to Elijah as a teacher of prayer? What inspires you? What challenges you?
- Do you think it is fair to say that in the west, our prayer can be timid? What prevents us from praying with ambition?
- Have there been any occasions in your life when you feel that you are being prevented from praying or held back from asking God? Try and share them.
- Do you ever find prayer, or your relationship with God, challenging or exhausting? Share some experiences.

Prayer (20 minutes)

In this exercise the group will be asked to write three short, ambitious prayers. You can either work together on these or split into three groups, each writing one prayer each.

In prayer we are going to listen to God's plan for his world and then pray ambitiously for that plan to be fulfilled.

First think about your local church. What is God's plan for your church?

Leave some silence to pray about that, then have a discussion together.

Now as a group or in twos and threes, write a short but ambitious prayer asking for that plan to be fulfilled.

Second, think about your local community. What is God's plan for the place where you live? What needs to change?

Leave some silence to pray about that, then have a discussion together.

Now as a group or in twos and threes, write a short but ambitious prayer for that plan to be fulfilled.

Third, think about our world. What is God's plan for the world he made? What needs to change?

Leave some silence to pray about that, then have a discussion together.

Now as a group or in twos and threes, write a short but ambitious prayer for that plan to be fulfilled.

Now move into a time of prayer:

Ask someone to pray aloud each of the three prayers you have written. Leave a silence after it in which members of the group may wish to add another extempore prayer.

Then pray the most ambitious prayer of all, the Lord's prayer:

Let's pray together in the words that Jesus taught us:

Our Father...

God of Mission

who alone brings growth to your Church,

send your Holy Spirit to give

vision to our planning,

wisdom to our actions,

joy to our worship,

and power to our witness.

Help our church to grow in numbers,

in spiritual commitment to you,

and in service to our local community,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

May the Lord bless us

and keep us from all evil
and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

If there is time, ask people to share how they felt about that sort of ambitious praying.

Then send them on their way:

Next we will be looking at Ezekiel and thinking about what we do when we pray and how prayer unleashes the power of God's salvation.