	Faithful Prayer
 **BIG IDEA**	James ends his whole letter on prayer, because faith that works is faith that prays. Prayer is not what we do when we run out of options, prayer is the work. God invites ordinary people like us to pray expectantly, persistently, and earnestly, and to pray together.
 **ICE BREAKER**	1. When life gets hard, what is your first instinct: work harder, fix it yourself, ask someone for help, or pray? 2. Who is someone you know who prays in a way that inspires you? 3. Have you ever been in a group where everyone prayed out loud at the same time? What was that like?
 **MAIN POINTS**	Faith that works is faith that prays. Pastor Shan shared how, on a recent trip to Kenya with Missions of Hope, worship turned into prayer without anyone announcing it, with people praying bold, faith-filled prayers out loud, all at once. He realized it was not a bigger God they were praying to, it was the same God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit, but they prayed like they actually expected Him to show up. James lands his letter in the same place: "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them" (James 5:13-14). Bad day, good day, or sick day, the answer is prayer. James is not giving us a technique, he is telling us to pray every day, no matter the circumstances. Prayer is the work, not a last resort. Pastor Shan admitted that when life gets hard, he works harder instead of praying harder. In a room of about 25 pastors, he finally said, "I'm dry," and realized he was leading out of effort instead of out of the overflow of time with Jesus. Half the room said, "Same here." There are some obstacles more effort won't fix. The question is whether we are a praying person or a person who prays: a praying mom, dad, student, or leader starts on their knees and then puts their shoulder into the direction God gives, while a person who prays works first and asks God to bless it at the end. One uses prayer like a spare tire, only when something goes flat, and the other runs on it. As the saying goes, "Pray like it depends on God. Work like it depends on you." Pray like Elijah, an ordinary person with a powerful prayer life. James says, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective," and points to Elijah, "a human being, even as we are" (James 5:16-17). Elijah saw fire fall from heaven and then, the very next chapter, ran in fear and asked God to take his life, so righteous does not mean perfect. Elijah prayed expectantly (he prayed for the rain God had already promised in 1 Kings 18:1), persistently (his servant looked toward the sea six times and saw nothing, and on the seventh a cloud

	appeared), and earnestly (he prayed with his heart, not just religious words). Expectant prayers include asking God to glorify Himself in us, forgive us, show us more of Himself, give us wisdom, help us obey, and send us to the lost, prayers He always answers. Jesus says to ask, so "ask Him something." Pray bigger prayers, and pray them together. Pastor Shan asked, "If God answered every prayer you prayed last week, what would change?" Most of our prayers are self-focused, short-term, and immediate, about the commute, the meeting, or the game, and those are not bad prayers, but they are small. Elijah prayed big, bold, faith-filled, eternity-changing prayers, like our friends at Missions of Hope, who prayed for 19 years for a special needs hospital that opened much bigger than they imagined. Pastor Shan even shared how, after praying for opportunities to meet his neighbors, a broken sprinkler line led a neighbor to knock on his door at 4:50 in the morning. And James never pictures us praying alone: confess to each other, pray for each other, celebrate together.
DISCUSS	1. When life gets hard, do you tend to work harder or pray harder? Why? 2. Are you more of a praying person or a person who prays? What would change if you started with prayer? 3. Elijah was "a human being, even as we are." How does that change the way you think about your own prayers? 4. Which of Elijah's three ways of praying (expectantly, persistently, earnestly) is hardest for you? What would you be willing to pray about for 19 years? 5. If every prayer you prayed last week were answered, what would change? Would anyone outside your home notice?
NEXT STEP	Jesus First: Pray expectantly, persistently, and earnestly every day for the next seven days, like Elijah's seven. Start with the prayers God always answers: glorify Yourself in me, forgive me, show me more of You, give me wisdom, help me obey, and send me to the lost. People Always: Pray with someone this week, a spouse, a friend, or your Group. James says to confess, celebrate, and pray for each other, because nobody was meant to carry prayer alone. Made for More: Write down three prayers you want God to answer, bold "bring the rain" prayers. One can be about you, and the others should be about God's agenda and other people. Tell your Group when God answers.
SCRIPTURE	James 5:13-18 1 Kings 18:1
NEXT WEEK SNEAK PEAK	Join us next weekend as we kick off a brand-new series on Money, walking through Matthew 19-24. Pastor Shan will be preaching "He Owns It: Lordship = Ownership." Invite someone to join you and don't miss the journey ahead!

Questions or Feedback? Email Groups@CentralAZ.com