

Available

Elijah: Part 1

Discussion Questions

1. Elijah's name means "The Lord is my God." How does making that same confession shape your identity and choices when living in a culture with competing values?
2. The sermon noted that God works through available people rather than people who "have it all together." What excuses (e.g., lack of knowledge, past mistakes) do you tend to make when feeling prompted to step out in faith?
3. Elijah repeatedly obeyed God, even when the command was difficult or required stepping into hiding. Is there a specific area of your life where God is asking you to take a clear next step of obedience right now?
4. At the Brook Cherith, Elijah couldn't stockpile food; he had to rely on morning and evening provision. How comfortable are you relying on God's daily grace versus needing long-term security and control?
5. Jesus taught us to pray for "daily bread," and Lamentations speaks of mercies that are "new every morning." What specific worry or responsibility are you carrying right now that requires trusting God for *today's* strength rather than worrying about tomorrow?
6. God used ravens—birds considered unclean in Jewish law—to feed Elijah. Looking back on your life, what unexpected person, setback, or circumstance has God used to support or direct you?
7. The message highlighted that deep spiritual growth often comes through struggles (e.g., loss, diagnosis, disappointment) rather than ease. How has a difficult season in your past deepened your relationship with God?
8. King Ahab was passive and drifted toward compromise under external pressure. Where do you feel the subtle temptation to drift or compromise spiritually in your daily routine?
9. Before Elijah stood boldly on Mount Carmel, God sent him into hiding at a secluded ravine. Why is quiet, personal preparation away from the spotlight necessary before being used publicly by God?
10. What is one practical step you can take this week to move from simply acquiring biblical knowledge to actively putting your faith into practice through service, prayer, or encouragement?

Summary

If you could sit down for dinner with any Old Testament figure, who would you choose? While David, Moses, or Abraham often come to mind, few biblical figures are as compelling or dynamic as the prophet Elijah. Bursting onto the scene with a wild appearance—clad in a garment of camel or goat hair with a leather belt around his waist—Elijah was a man unconcerned with fashion but completely devoted to God. He stood before wicked kings, prayed bold prayers, called down fire from heaven, and was ultimately taken up to heaven in a whirlwind with a chariot of fire.

Yet, as the New Testament letter of James reminds us, Elijah was a human being with a nature just like ours. He was not a superhero; he experienced fear, exhaustion, loneliness, and deep discouragement to the point of wanting to give up. His life reassures us that God uses ordinary people who choose to trust and obey Him. Furthermore, the culture Elijah ministered in closely mirrors our own today: a society marked by spiritual compromise, moral confusion, and growing opposition to the things of God.

Setting the Stage: A Divided Kingdom and a Wicked King

To understand Elijah's calling, we must look at the historical backdrop of 1 Kings 17. For roughly 120 years, Israel stood as a united kingdom under Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. Following Solomon's reign, however, the kingdom divided into two:

11. **Judah:** The southern kingdom, comprised of two tribes.

12. **Israel:** The northern kingdom, comprised of ten tribes.

Elijah's ministry takes place in the northern kingdom, which was plagued by a continuous line of wicked rulers leading the people away from the Lord. None was more wicked than King Ahab. As recorded in 1 Kings 16:29–33, Ahab reigned in Samaria over Israel for twenty-two years and did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than all who were before him. He treated sin lightly, erected an altar and temple for Baal, made an Asherah pole, and married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians.

While Ahab was a wicked yet passive leader who drifted with public influence, Jezebel was aggressive, relentless, and determined. She sought to systematically replace the worship of the one true God with the worship of Baal, promoting idolatry and persecuting God's prophets across the nation.

The Bold Proclamation and the Hideout (1 Kings 17:1–6)

Elijah suddenly enters the narrative in 1 Kings 17:1 from Tishbe in Gilead—a rugged, mountainous wilderness. Though scripture discloses no family background, Elijah's name carries a powerful message: *Elijah* means "My God is Yahweh" or "The Lord is my God". Before he even spoke, his name declared who he belonged to.

Standing directly before King Ahab, Elijah delivers a staggering decree: there will be neither

dew nor rain in the coming years except at his word. This announcement was not Elijah's personal opinion. It was the direct fulfillment of God's covenant warning in Deuteronomy 11, which stated that if the people turned to false gods, the heavens would be shut. Moreover, it was a direct challenge to Baal, who was falsely worshipped as the god of rain, storm, and fertility.

Immediately after this announcement, the word of the Lord came to Elijah, commanding him to turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. God's command to hide served three distinct purposes:

1. **Judgment:** God removed His prophet as the drought and judgment began to unfold.
2. **Protection:** Shielding Elijah from King Ahab, who would view the prophet as Public Enemy Number One as the drought intensified.
3. **Lessons in Dependence:** Guarding Elijah against pride after such a bold proclamation, teaching him to rely on the Lord rather than his own strength.

Elijah obeyed and went to the Kerith Ravine. There, God provided for him day by day: he drank water from the brook, and ravens brought him bread and meat every morning and evening.

Three Practical Takeaways for Following God Today

Elijah's journey in 1 Kings 17 offers three essential principles for every follower of Jesus asking, *"Lord, how do You want to use me to make a difference?"*

1. God Works Through Available People

Elijah came from an obscure location, but his defining trait was a willingness to obey God. Whether commanded to stand before Ahab, hide at the Brook Cherith, travel into enemy territory in Sidon, or confront false prophets on Mount Carmel, Elijah repeatedly obeyed.

Many people disqualify themselves from being used by God due to common excuses:

- Thinking they do not know enough about the Bible.
- Believing their faith or spiritual gifts are insufficient.
- Assuming past mistakes prevent God from using them.

While growing in knowledge and maturity is essential, God does not wait for perfection. He works through individuals who are willing to obey what they do know right now. Often, new believers exhibit this eager spirit by sharing their faith, serving, and inviting friends to church. Mature believers must guard against losing that eagerness, ensuring that increased biblical knowledge is matched by a continuous willingness to take uncomfortable steps of obedience.

2. God Works Through Those Who Depend on Him Daily

At the Kerith Ravine, Elijah was not given a pantry full of food for a month; he was given daily provision. Morning and evening, he relied on God for his sustenance.

To remain effective for God's kingdom, believers must live in daily dependence upon Him. As Lamentations notes, His mercies are new every morning, and Jesus taught His disciples to pray for "daily bread". Relying on self leads to failure when facing life's pressures.

When answering a high school student's question regarding sexual purity and temptation, a

panelist wisely noted: *"Remember that God's mercies are new every morning."* Overcoming temptation, anxiety, grief, loneliness, or heavy responsibilities does not come from human willpower, but from receiving God's fresh grace and strength for each day.

3. God Works and Grows Us Through Unexpected Ways

One of the most surprising details of Elijah's retreat is that God commanded ravens to supply his food. According to Old Testament laws in Leviticus, ravens were classified as unclean animals. They were not beautiful or revered birds, yet God selected them to sustain His prophet.

God frequently uses unexpected people, uncomfortable roles, or difficult seasons to shape us and deepen our faith:

- Ministry passion often begins in unlikely places, such as leading a group of middle school students.
- Key spiritual direction can come from unexpected mentors who see potential in us before we see it in ourselves.
- The greatest spiritual growth often comes through struggles—such as a difficult diagnosis, job loss, addiction, or a broken relationship—that force us to rely on God in a deeper way.

Responding to the Call: The Lord Is Our God

The name *Elijah* was a constant declaration: "The Lord is my God". For every follower of Jesus, this same confession offers confidence amidst an opposing culture. Because the Lord is our God, we do not have to live in fear or rely on our own strength.

As you step into new routines and opportunities, take time to reflect on these questions:

- Are you willing to make yourself fully available to God, even when the assignment feels uncomfortable?
- Is there a specific step of obedience God has been prompting you to take that you have been putting off?
- Are you trying to carry life's burdens in your own strength rather than resting in His daily grace?

The same God who sustained Elijah one day at a time is the God who strengthens believers today. He delights to work through available, obedient, and dependent people to accomplish His purposes and help others find and follow Him.