

Small Group Guide

28 Days of Prayer - Immanuel Baptist Church

Week 2 - August 25, 2024

Passage: 1 Kings 18:1-19

Study Authors: Clark and Aaryn Whitney

Introduction/Background Building:

- Why study Elijah? We study Elijah to learn about:
 - God's faithfulness to His people in a godless society.
 - How we can stay faithful to God in a darkening world.
 - How we can face discouragement, oppression, and depression through faith in God.
- These small group lessons complement other parts of Elijah's story, which we'll study in Sunday morning worship services, Wednesday night prayer services, and in our weekly devotionals. You'll have to be a part of each of these incredible times of spiritual growth to get the full picture!
- Key verses for 28 Days of Prayer:
- James 5:16-18 NLT
 - 16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.
 - 17 Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years!
 - 18 Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops.

Last week we studied how Elijah went into the wicked King Ahab's court and pronounced God's judgment on Israel for their idolatry. God then sent Elijah to the wilderness, where he was fed

supernaturally by ravens and was given water through a brook. After the brook dried up, the Lord sent Elijah to stay with a widow and her son. We learned several big truths:

- Big Truth #1: Idolatry is putting something else “first place” instead of God.
- Big Truth #2: When the world seems darkest, God raises up people to worship and serve Him.
- Big Truth #3: Sometimes, God takes us to the wilderness to draw us close to Him and prepare us for His purposes.
- Big Truth #4: God will move heaven and earth to provide for His people.”

Big Truth #1. Waiting for God’s timing is just as important as knowing God’s will.

18 After many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying,

- Don’t miss the long time of prayer and waiting between last week’s passage and this week’s passage.
- The Bible says “after many days.” Elijah had been waiting for over three years for God to act and show him the next step!
- A wise Christian once said “God’s delays aren’t His denials.”
- We live in an “instant” world. We can order groceries or take-out and have them delivered right to our door. We can find out pretty much any piece of information from the palms of our hands. Yet, God often chooses to put us in His “waiting room.”
- God puts us in the “waiting room” because He wants us to trust Him and eliminate any self-sufficiency in our lives.

- He uses the times of waiting to make us into the men and women He wants us to be — to conform us into the image of Christ.
- “Joseph waited 13 Years. Abraham waited 25 years. Moses waited 40 years. If God is making you wait, you're in good company!”

Discussion Questions:

1. Has there ever been a time you had to wait on God? How did you feel as you were waiting for Him to act or answer your prayers?
2. What do you think Elijah did during his three years of waiting?

“Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth.”

- For three years, there was no rain. No rain meant no crops. No crops meant the people were starving! They were desperate, hungry and thirsty.
- Even throughout this time, the people of Israel didn't repent and turn to God. They still worshipped their false gods and idols and rejected the One True God.
- In spite of their unwillingness to repent, God graciously sent an end to the drought.
- In Matthew 6:45, Jesus said that the Father “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (NKJV).

Big Truth #2. Sometimes obeying God's will leads us directly into danger.

2 So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria.

- Elijah was a holy outlaw. After three years of no rain, King Ahab was undoubtedly after Elijah's head.
- Nevertheless, Elijah was called to go directly into danger.
- Sometimes, we misunderstand comfort and ease as being part of God's will. After all, if God is our Father, wouldn't He want us to be safe and taken care of?
- God is our Father, and He provides and protects us, but we should never think that following Him will be easy.
- God's Word says "Everyone who wants to live the way God wants, in Christ Jesus, will be persecuted." 2 Tim. 3:12 ICB
- The Bible tells us that the "famine was severe" in Israel. For all their worship of Baal and Asherah, for all their sacrifices to idols and prayers to their gods for rain, only the One True God could bring an end to their misery.
- We may not lack food or water, but we do live in a land of great need.
- We have political polarization, economic uncertainty, racial tension, and a complete breakdown of morals.
- We have sexual perversion and gender confusion.
- We have epidemics of anxiety, depression, and mental health issues.
- Only God can meet our needs!

Discussion Questions:

- Has following God ever cost you anything or gotten you into trouble?

- What are some spiritual needs you see in the world around you?
- Why is it important to remember that only God can meet those needs? How does this change how we pray and cry out to Him?

Big Truth #3. God wants us to serve Him as we work in ungodly environments.

3 And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household.

Obadiah was a powerful and influential follower of God who was placed in King Ahab's court. Obadiah (different from the prophet who has a book of the Bible named after him), had a special place in God's plan.

Obadiah was over the royal palace. He was an administrator for the king's duties and oversaw the king's property. He personally answered to the king.

Even though he worked for the wicked King Ahab, Ahab served a higher authority — the One True God. God was the one who put him into his position.

Daniel 2:21 says **"He changes the times and seasons; he removes kings and establishes kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding"** (CSB).

The Bible makes it clear that God is the one who puts us in positions to serve and honor Him. Often, Christian men and women are put in business places, nonprofit organizations, schools, and government positions to serve and honor God.

Discussion Questions

- Is it easy or hard to follow God where you work, study, or volunteer? Why or why not?
- How is remembering that God is in control help you be “salt and light” in a worldly environment?

Big Truth #4. Satan will do anything to cut off Bible teaching.

(Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly, 4 and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.)

Jezebel, Ahab’s wicked wife, thought she could stop worship of the LORD by killing all of the prophets of God. So, she went on a slaughtering rampage to wipe the Bible teachers off the face of the earth. She then replaced God’s prophets with 850 false and demonic prophets of Baal.

When persecution comes, Satan often begins by attacking pastors, church leaders, and Bible teachers. He wants to silence anyone speaking the truth.

Pastors in America may not be killed for teaching the truth of the Bible, but there is pressure to compromise or replace the message of the Bible with false teaching that is more socially acceptable.

Because Obadiah feared God more than Jezebel, he risked his life to protect and provide for the prophets of the Lord. He hid them in caves and gave them food and water, protecting them from a certain death at Jezebel’s hands.

It's a beautiful thing when a church cares for their pastor, and their pastor loves them, serves them, and teaches them the truth without compromise.

Galatians 6:6 says "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches."

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 says: "We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work."

Big Truth #5. It's always better to obey God rather than man.

5 And Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals."

The famine was so severe that even the king was struggling to find food. King Ahab sent his trusted servant, Obadiah into the fields to find food for his royal livestock.

6 So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself.

7 And as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him. And Obadiah recognized him and fell on his face and said, “Is it you, my lord Elijah?”

At this point, God intervenes and interrupts Obadiah’s assignment. God had sovereignly ordered events so that Obadiah and Israel’s Most Wanted, Elijah, would cross paths.

8 And he answered him, “It is I. Go, tell your lord, ‘Behold, Elijah is here.’”

9 And he said, “How have I sinned, that you would give your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?”

Obadiah knew that Elijah’s request was a big ask. King Ahab wanted to get rid of Elijah more than anyone else, because it was Elijah who announced the drought to begin with. For Obadiah to tell Ahab that Elijah was coming was to put his own life on the line.

At this point, Obadiah misunderstands God’s plan as punishment for some sort of sin in his life.

10 As the Lord your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. And when they would say, ‘He is not here,’ he would take an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you.

11 And now you say, ‘Go, tell your lord, “Behold, Elijah is here.”’

12 And as soon as I have gone from you, the Spirit of the Lord will carry you I know not where. And so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the Lord from my youth.

Obadiah allows fear to take hold and keep him from accepting God's assignment.

13 Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord, how I hid a hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water?

Obadiah felt he had done enough for God and God's people. Surely he wouldn't be asked to put his life on the line this time.

Often, we compare what we do for God with other people and think we've done more than enough. Or, like Obadiah, we think one sacrifice for God excuses us from doing something even more risky. The truth is, when we obey God, we never lose.

Missionary C.T. Studd once said, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." That should be all of our attitudes!

14 And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Behold, Elijah is here"; and he will kill me.'

15 And Elijah said, "As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today."

Even though Obadiah feared for his life, Elijah reassured him and encouraged him to follow God's plan.

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah.

Discussion Questions

1. What would you have done if you were Obadiah?

2. Why is it sometimes hard to obey God's plan?

Big Truth #6. Expect misunderstanding, opposition, and persecution when you're following God's plan.

17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?"

The man of God and the wicked king were reunited. Satan had deceived Ahab into believing that Elijah was the troublemaker bringing the drought and famine upon Israel.

Sometimes, people blame others for the consequences of their own poor decisions. Sometimes, the truth gets so warped that the one speaking it is labeled as a "troublemaker."

18 And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals.

Elijah spoke the truth. He didn't compromise the truth. He didn't change the truth. He shared the truth.

Ahab and Jezebel's wicked worship of Baal and rejection of God, coupled with their refusal to repent, was the real reason the land was dry and people were starving.

Remember, Baal was the most popular Caananite god. Idols to Baal were usually made to look like a bull, which represented power, fertility, and lust for sexual pleasure.¹

¹ NLT Life Application Study Bible, 3rd Edition, p. 735.

Big Truth #7. One with God is a majority.

19 Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.”

Billy Graham once said “Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are stiffened.”

Elijah called forth 850 false prophets for a supernatural showdown of epic proportions. Where human eyes see insurmountable odds, God sees a way to show His sufficiency and supremacy. We should never be afraid to stand up to evil, even if it looks like the world is against us. When we obey what God has called us to do and take a stand for truth, we'll never go wrong.

Discussion Questions

1. What did you learn about God's character this week?
2. Which big truth stuck out the most to you? Why?
3. What is one way you can practice tomorrow what you learned today?

Note: For the sake of time and clarity, sources are not included. For a list of resources used in this study, email cwhitney@ibceldorado.com.