

## **Small Group Guide**

### **28 Days of Prayer - Immanuel Baptist Church**

Week 1 - August 18, 2024

Passage: 1 Kings 16:29-17:7

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#### **Introduction/Background Building:**

- Here's the scene. There is a corrupt and godless government. People are scared to talk about the Bible in public. The culture is worshipping pleasure, power, sex, and money. Everyone just does whatever they think is right.
- The scene is not America in 2024; it's Israel in the days of Elijah.
- Elijah was one of the greatest figures in the Bible. He shows up several times throughout the Bible, but 1 and 2 Kings give us the most information about him.
- Elijah lived in a day much like our own: everyone doing whatever they wanted to do, lawlessness, corrupt government, child sacrifice (abortion), persecution of God's people, worship of sex, power and money.
- 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 apart 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.

Small Group Lesson  
Week 1

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you define idolatry? Read Exodus 20:3-6.
2. What were some idols that people in this time period were worshiping?

## **Big Truth #1: Idolatry is putting something else “first place” instead of God.**

### **1. Idolatry is a serious sin in God’s sight.**

- God called for Himself a people (Israel) out of slavery in Egypt.
- They were s to obey Him, worship Him, and live in the Promised Land as a light to the nations around them.
- Satan tried to corrupt and counterfeit God’s kingdom by leading Israel to worship idols instead of God.

- God was clear from the beginning that He alone should be worshipped.
- Throughout the Old Testament, time and time again, God's people turned from Him to worship satanic idols.

### **Read 1 Kings 16:29-34**

29 And in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty- two years.

- King Solomon built a temple for the worship of God, but then turned to take many wives who didn't worship God. So, Solomon's heart was divided and he worshipped idols. Some of the false worship he encouraged as king in Israel included child sacrifice, similar to modern-day abortion.
- After Solomon died, the kingdom was divided into two parts: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. This divided kingdom saw many kings, mostly bad.
- Asa was one of these bad kings in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Ahab's father was evil, but Ahab was even more wicked.

30 And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him.

31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat,

It was a light thing for Ahab to sin. He didn't see the weight of his sin before God and flippantly defied God's authority.

that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

Jezebel's father's name means "with Baal" and "enjoying Baal's favor and protection." The name is also possibly derived from a Phoenician name that means "Baal is the prince."

Jezebel's name means "un-husbanded" or "unmarried." She usurped spiritual authority, rebelled against God, and served as the head of her household in the place of her passive husband.

**32 And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.**

Ahab and Jezebel raised up a temple to worship Baal. Baal is the king of demons.

They also raised up a temple for worship of Ashtoreth, who was the mother/queen of demons.

**33 And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him. 34 In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.**

### **Discussion Questions:**

#### **1. Why does idolatry make the Lord angry?**

Read Exodus 20:4-5

**"You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. 5 You must**

not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods."

**2. Ahab married Jezebel which led to more idolatry and sin. (v.31) Why should it have been important that he marry a person with like faith?**

**3. What does it mean that God is a *jealous* God? What does it mean that we are to *fear* God?**

Read Jonah 2:8.

All who worship worthless idols turn from the God who offers them mercy. Jonah 2:8 CEV

- Often, we turn to idols because we think we'll benefit from them. However, idolatry always has a payday. When we embrace idols, we pay the price of turning from the God who loves us and gives us mercy (Jonah 2:8).

**4. What are we supposed to do when it comes to idols?**

Read 1 Corinthians 10:14

So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. NLT

- **Flee from idols (run away when they are close).**

Read 1 John 5:21

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. KJV

Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.

NLT

- Stay far away from idols (stay away when they're far off).

## **Big Truth #2. When the world seems darkest, God raises up people to worship and serve Him.**

### **Read 1 Kings 17:1**

#### **1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead,**

- In Bible times, a person's name often lined up with their character or calling. In other words, the meaning of their name meant something. Elijah means "The Lord is My God." *El* = God. *I* = my. *Jah* = Yahweh. Elijah served the One True God. Elijah's name can also mean "The Lord is my strength."
- Many scholars think Elijah was a shepherd. A mountain man.
- Gilead was hill country. The name Gilead means "rocky" or "rugged." It was a remote, rural area.
- Elijah was a common man. He didn't have a cultured upbringing or a long list of credentials. He came from a hard and rocky place.
- 2 Kings 1:8 describes Elijah as "a hairy man" who "wore a leather belt around his waist." He was a rugged, common man who was well acquainted with the outdoors.

**1. Have you ever misjudged something or someone based on how they looked on the outside? Why is it important to know that man sees the outer appearance, but God sees the heart?**

1 said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

- Talk about a mic-drop moment! Elijah marched into the royal court, looked the wicked king dead in the eye, and proclaimed that there was a greater King and authority whom he served.
- I think Elijah didn't say anything before or after this — he just walked in, shared the short but powerful message, and walked out.
- God had already warned the Israelites that, if they turned to serve idols, there would be no rain in the land (Deut. 11:16-17, Lev. 26:19-20, Deut. 28:23-24).
- The demon gods that Ahab and Jezebel had led Israel to worship represented fertility, dew, rain, and abundance of crops. So, the One True God would now show His superiority over the false gods that Israel worshipped.

“how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God”  
1 Thess. 1:9

Consider these two quotes about Elijah:

- “Elijah demonstrates that God always has a man to match the hour.” J. Sidlow Baxter
- “The greatest prophet is reserved for the worst age. Israel never had such an impious king as Ahab, nor such a miraculous prophet as Elijah.” Bishop Hall

**2. What would it look like for us to position ourselves to be used by God in mighty ways?**

## **Big Truth #3. Sometimes God takes us to the wilderness to draw us close to Him and prepare us for His purposes.**

**Read 1 Kings 17:2-7**

**2** And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying,

**3** Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

- God only showed Elijah one step of the plan at a time.
- He was supposed to leave Ahab's court and go to "Cherith" which means "to cut off" or "to cut down."
- F. B. Meyer: God "only shows us one step at a time, and He bids us take it in faith. If we look up into His face and say: 'But if I take this step which is certain to involve me in difficulty, what shall I do next?' The heavens will be (silent except) with the one repeated message, 'Take it and trust me.'

**1. Have you ever been in a situation that made it hard to trust God? Why do you think God leads us step-by-step instead of showing us the big picture all at once?**

**4** And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

- More on this in the next part of the lesson, but it's apparent that when God *guided* Elijah, He also *provided* for Elijah.



5 So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

- Before the Jordan River would have reminded Elijah of God's faithfulness in bringing his people across the Jordan and into the Promised Land many years before under the leadership of Joshua. The same God that led the Israelites out of physical bondage and wilderness would also use Elijah to lead the Israelites out of spiritual bondage and wilderness.
- Elijah found himself in a solitary place. Time alone with God is never wasted. Of course we need relationships, connections, and godly community. However, there is no substitute for time alone with God. During our time in Cherith, "cut-off" from everything else but God, He heals, prepares, refines, and restores us.
- Jesus often went to the wilderness to spend time with God.

And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. Luke 5:16

- "We can be tired, weary, and emotionally distraught, but after spending time alone with God, we find that He injects into our bodies energy, power, and strength." Charles Stanley

**2. Have you ever taken an extended retreat with the Lord? If so, share the benefits of that time.**

**Big Truth #4. God will move heaven and earth to provide for His people.**

**6** And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

- The ravens were considered unclean to the Jews. God certainly used unusual and supernatural circumstances to provide for Elijah!

**7** And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

- Sometimes, the method God used to provide in the past is different than the method He'll use in the future.

Throughout Elijah's life, we'll see how God used this common man to show His power, strength, and faithfulness to His people. We'll also see how revival can come when people repent of sin, turn from their idols, and pray for God to work in their lives.

- What are you most looking forward to studying about Elijah's life?

### **Discussion Questions**

**1. What practical things did Elijah do for his physical body while at the brook of Cherith? (eat, drink, sleep, rest)**

**2. God used some unusual methods to care for Elijah. Has there ever been a time when God showed up and provided for you in an unusual way?**

**3. What is one takeaway for you from today's lesson? Why?**

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](mailto:cwhitney@ibceldorado.com).