

How to Use Sermon Resources

- READ AHEAD TOGETHER - MCG's should use the Devotional at the end of this resource as a reading plan for the week leading up to your meeting.
- SIT UNDER THE WORD - This resource is filled with scripture references. Read them aloud, together before you answer any questions.
- APPLY TRUTH - The goal is deep discussion and application, not necessarily to complete this resource. Don't squash a good discussion. If you get into something important along the way that's fine.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer [2 mins]

Use the Overview [5 mins]

- Cover any key points for people who missed parts or all of the sermon

Scripture Deep Dive [30-40 mins]

- Opening Question
- Read the scripture for each question then ask the question. Some have multiple scriptures.

Practical Applications [10 mins]

- This section is optional but there for you should you need a final thought or something to challenge your group with.

Close in Prayer

- In this extended prayer time, ask others to pray as they feel led, pray in a circle, pray over one another, pray to your left, or pray for someone specific. Whatever seems best.

Split Time (if applicable)

- Men with men, women with women
- Share in a circle. "What's one thing you want to celebrate? What do you need prayer and accountability for?"
- After everyone shares, pray in a circle for the person to your left/right.

SERMON OVERVIEW

"I want to be used by God" - 1 Kings 17

Sermon Summary: This sermon explores the life of Elijah as introduced in 1 Kings 17, examining how an ordinary man became extraordinarily useful to God. The central message emphasizes that being used by God is less about gifting and more about availability. Through Elijah's example, we learn that God desires to use ordinary believers who boldly identify with Him, prioritize prayer, obey even when circumstances don't make sense, remain ready for divine redirection, and rely on God's power rather than human persuasion. The sermon challenges believers to examine which areas of availability they need to develop, ultimately pointing to Jesus as the Son who died for our sins, unlike the widow's son who was raised but not sacrificed.

Key Points:

- Being used by God is primarily about availability, not gifting or ability
- Bold identification with God is essential, even in pluralistic or hostile environments
- Prayer demonstrates dependence on God and precedes powerful ministry
- Obedience to God's commands is required even when they don't make logical sense
- Trusting God comes from knowing God, which leads to obedience
- God's faithfulness in one assignment builds confidence for the next assignment
- Life is temporary, a trust, and a test that prepares us for greater service
- Effective ministry relies on the Holy Spirit's power, not human persuasion or eloquence
- Each test or assignment from God builds progressive confidence in His faithfulness
- We must be willing to move when God redirects, even when comfortable where we are

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Kings 17:1-24 (primary passage)
- James 5:17-18 (Elijah as an ordinary human who prayed powerfully)
- 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (relying on God's power, not persuasive wisdom)
- 1 Kings 16:29-33 (context of Ahab's evil reign)

Stories:

- Elijah's sudden introduction as "the Tishbite" with no grand entrance, boldly confronting King Ahab
- Elijah being fed by ravens and drinking from the brook at Cherith for an extended period
- The widow of Zarephath gathering sticks for one final meal before she and her son would die
- Elijah asking the starving widow to feed him first, with God's promise of endless flour and oil
- The miraculous provision of flour and oil that never ran out for three years
- The death and resurrection of the widow's son through Elijah's prayers
- The widow's declaration of faith after seeing God's power demonstrated
- Personal testimony from the pastor's recent trip to South Africa, witnessing violence and ministry in Johannesburg
- The contrast between prayer response at Family Worship Center in Johannesburg versus typical American church response

Scripture Deep Dive

Opening Question:

Reflect on your daily life and circle of influence. Can you identify moments or areas where you feel God might be encouraging you to step up and be more vocal about your faith?

Bold Identity with God:

1. **1 Kings 17:1** – Elijah begins by declaring, "As the Lord God of Israel lives," which identifies him as a follower of God. How does this introduction set the tone for Elijah's ministry? How does it compare to Peter's identification of Jesus in Matthew 16:16?
2. **Romans 1:16** – Paul declares that he is not ashamed of the gospel. How does this sentiment mirror Elijah's actions, and what does it mean for us in a culture that might not align with biblical values?

Prioritize Prayer:

3. **James 5:17** – Elijah's prayers were both fervent and persistent. How do Elijah's prayers, as mentioned in James, guide us in understanding the role of perseverance in prayer? Compare this with the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8.

Obeys When It Doesn't Make Sense:

4. **1 Kings 17:5-6** – Elijah obeyed God by relying on ravens and a brook. How does his obedience despite unusual circumstances compare to Abraham's obedience in Hebrews 11:8 when he was called to an unknown land?
5. **Acts 5:29** – Peter and the other apostles obey God rather than human authority. In what ways does Elijah's obedience, regardless of the confusing circumstances, reflect this commitment to God's authority?

Be Ready When God Redirects:

6. **1 Kings 17:7-10** – When the brook dried up, Elijah moved to the next assignment. How does his adaptability exemplify a readiness to follow God's redirection? How does Isaiah 30:21 help us understand how God communicates such redirections?
7. **Acts 16:6-10** – Paul's journey is redirected by the Holy Spirit. In what ways can Paul's experience with divine redirection enlighten our understanding of Elijah's shift from the brook to the widow's house?

Relying on God's Power, Not Your Persuasion:

8. **1 Kings 17:21-22** – Elijah relies on God's power to revive the widow's son. How does this story compare to Moses' reliance on God at the Red Sea in Exodus 14:13-14, where Moses had to trust in God's power rather than his own?
9. **1 Corinthians 2:4-5** – Paul emphasizes reliance on spiritual power over persuasive words. How can this encouragement to depend on God's power over personal ability impact the way we approach influencing others for Christ?

Practical Applications:

1. How can we cultivate a bold identity with God in our daily interactions with others, following Elijah's example in 1 Kings 17:1?

Suggested Answer: To cultivate a bold identity with God, we can first ensure that our actions align with biblical principles, allowing our faith to be evident through our behavior. Sharing personal testimonies and discussing our faith openly during appropriate conversations can help reinforce our identity as followers of Christ, as seen in how Elijah boldly proclaimed the living God to Ahab without hesitation.

2. Elijah prioritized prayer and sought God's guidance before acting. What practical steps can we take to ensure prayer is a priority in our busy lives?

Suggested Answer: Setting aside specific times each day for prayer, beginning or ending with gratitude and specific petitions, can help integrate prayer into our daily routine. Utilizing technology, such as prayer reminder apps, and creating a designated prayer space at home can also facilitate a more consistent prayer life, helping us focus on God's guidance as Elijah did.

3. What's an area of your life where obedience to God seems challenging or illogical? How can Elijah's response inspire you to trust and obey God anyway?

Suggested Answer: Reflect on areas such as career decisions, financial giving, or relationship issues where obedience might feel unwarranted or difficult. Elijah's obedience, even when directed to rely on ravens and a widow for sustenance, can inspire us by showing that God often uses unconventional means to fulfill His promises. Trusting in His greater plan can help us follow through with obedience despite personal reservations.

4. How do we respond when God redirects our path, like when the brook dried up for Elijah (1 Kings 17:7)?

Suggested Answer: We can respond to divine redirection by remaining flexible, continuously seeking God's will through prayer, and trusting that His plans ultimately work for our good. Being open to change and viewing it as an opportunity for growth rather than a setback can cultivate a heart willing to follow wherever God leads, as Elijah did when he moved from the brook to the widow's home.

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: 1 Kings 17:1-6, James 5:17-18

Devotional: Elijah suddenly appears in the narrative of Israel's history, boldly proclaiming a drought to Ahab. This boldness underscores a deep trust and obedience to God's command. Elijah's confidence to stand before Ahab came from his faith in God's living word. As believers, we are called to represent God's truth with courage, rooted in faith and obedience.

Reflection Question: Consider a situation in your life where you need to step out in faith. How can Elijah's example inspire you to trust and act on God's directives today?

Day 2: 1 Kings 17:7-10, Isaiah 30:21

Devotional: When the brook dries up, God directs Elijah to a widow at Zarephath for provision. This moment teaches us about God's mysterious providence and His ability to sustain us through unexpected means. Elijah's obedience to God's redirection is a testament to his reliance on God's wisdom rather than his own understanding.

Prayer Suggestion: Ask God to open your heart to His guidance, especially when faced with unexpected changes. Pray for the faith to trust His provision and direction.

Day 3: 1 Kings 17:10-16, Matthew 6:31-33

Devotional: The widow's faith is tested when Elijah asks her to use her last resources to feed him. Her willingness to trust God's promise results in a miraculous provision of flour and oil. This story reminds us of God's continual provision when we prioritize His will, reflecting Jesus' teaching on seeking God's kingdom first.

Reflection Question: In what areas of your life do you struggle to trust God for provision? How can the widow's faith encourage you to depend on God in those areas?

Day 4: 1 Kings 17:17-24, John 11:41-42

Devotional: When the widow's son falls ill and dies, Elijah responds with fervent prayer, and God restores the boy to life. This resurrection power foreshadows the miracles of Jesus and reassures us of God's authority over life and death. The widow's final recognition of God's truth through Elijah's actions highlights the profound impact of God's power in our witness to others.

Prayer Suggestion: Pray for God to reveal His power in situations that appear hopeless. Ask Him to strengthen your faith and use your testimony to lead others to Him.

Day 5: James 5:16-18, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5

Devotional Message: James emphasizes the power of prayer and highlights Elijah as an example of earnest prayer yielding miraculous results. This passage reminds us of the importance of fervent and righteous prayer in our spiritual lives. Elijah's story exemplifies that God desires to work through us when we fully rely on His power rather than our own abilities.

Reflection Question: Reflect on your prayer life. How can you cultivate a more fervent and effective prayer practice that aligns with God's will and purposes?