

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.
- You do not need to ask ALL the questions. Choose questions that are most helpful to your group.

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

"Real Faith in a Real God" 2 Kings 3-4

Sermon Summary: This sermon examines the authenticity of faith through the lens of 2 Kings chapters 3 and 4, challenging listeners to evaluate whether their faith is genuine or merely superficial. The sermon contrasts the faithless King Jehoram with the faithful King Jehoshaphat, showing how their responses to crisis differed based on the object of their faith. The core message emphasizes that real faith must be placed in God alone, demonstrated through obedience, developed in private devotion, and devoted to God's glory rather than human approval.

Key Points:

- Real faith depends on having the right object—God Himself, not our own abilities, resources, or circumstances
- Real faith is demonstrated through obedience—it's not enough to talk about faith, encourage others' faith, or admire faithful people; we must take our own steps of obedience
- Faith is developed behind closed doors through private spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible reading, and fasting—not just in public religious activities
- Authentic faith is devoted to God's glory, recognizing that God accomplishes for us what we cannot do for ourselves
- True salvation comes through recognizing we cannot save ourselves and surrendering our lives to Christ

Scripture Reference:

- 2 Kings 3:1-27 (The campaign against Moab, water provided in the desert)
- 2 Kings 4:1-44 (Multiple miracles: widow's oil multiplied, Shunammite woman's son raised, deadly stew made safe, feeding 100 people with 20 loaves)
- Matthew 6 (Referenced regarding spiritual disciplines done in secret: giving, praying, fasting)

Stories:

- The "Is It Cake?" Analogy: Modern TV show where judges try to distinguish real objects from realistic-looking cakes.
- Pastor Matt's story about his sons running cross-country and how he loves encouraging and yelling instructions but would never actually run himself.

- The Airbag Illustration: How we never think about airbags until we crash our car.

Scripture Deep Dive

Opening Question:

Describe a time when a difficult circumstance “cut into” your life and exposed what you were really trusting in (you don’t have to share details, just the dynamic). Looking back, what did that situation reveal about the object of your faith?

I. Real faith is dependent on the right object

2 Kings 3:9–12, Psalm 46:1–3, and James 1:2–5:

- Based on Jehoram’s reaction (“the Lord has summoned these three kings, only to hand them over to Moab”) and Jehoshaphat’s reaction (“Isn’t there a prophet of the Lord here?”), identify specifically what each king is believing about God’s character in that moment. How do those beliefs line up—or clash—with what Psalm 46:1–3 and James 1:2–5 say about God and trials?

2 Kings 3:13–15, Jeremiah 2:11–13, and Hebrews 11:6.

- Compare Jehoram’s relationship to God (and to false prophets) with what Jeremiah 2:11–13 says about “broken cisterns” and Hebrews 11:6 about true faith. According to these passages, list at least two clear indicators that someone’s “faith” is actually in the wrong object, even if they still use God-language like Jehoram does.

II. Real faith is demonstrated through obedience

2 Kings 3:16–20, James 2:17–22.

- In what specific ways did the command to “dig ditch after ditch” test whether the kings and their armies truly believed God’s word through Elisha? Using James 2:17–22, explain how this scene illustrates the difference between merely agreeing that God can act and actually exercising faith that is alive.

2 Kings 4:1–7, Luke 6:46–49

- Identify at least two concrete actions the widow takes that reveal genuine obedience to God’s word through Elisha, even before she sees any miracle. According to Luke 6:46–49, which “house-builder” (wise or foolish) does her behavior most resemble, and why?

III. Real faith is developed behind closed doors

2 Kings 4:4–5, Matthew 6:5–6.

- Compare the repeated phrase “shut the door” in 2 Kings 4:4–5 with Jesus’ command in Matthew 6:5–6. According to these passages, what is the spiritual value of obedience and dependence on God that happens in hidden, private settings, as opposed to only public, visible expressions of faith?

2 Kings 4:32–35, Mark 1:35, Colossians 4:2.

- Elisha “closed the door” and prayed before acting; Jesus in Mark 1:35 withdraws to a deserted place to pray. Using these passages together, identify at least two reasons why a private, “behind closed doors” life with God is essential for being useful and effective in public ministry or service.

IV. Real faith is devoted to the glory of God

2 Kings 4:38–41, John 15:5.

- In the story of the deadly stew, identify what the men can and cannot do in their own strength, and what only God can do through Elisha. According to John 15:5, how does this miracle highlight that real faith credits God—not human skill or ingenuity—with the outcome and therefore directs glory to Him?

2 Kings 4:42–44, John 6:5–13, 1 Corinthians 10:31.

- Compare Elisha’s feeding miracle with Jesus’ feeding of the crowd in John 6:5–13. In both accounts, what pattern do you see regarding (1) human resources, (2) God’s promise, and (3) the final result? According to 1 Corinthians 10:31, how does this pattern teach us what it practically looks like to live with a faith that is devoted to the glory of God rather than to our own adequacy or reputation?

5 Day Devotional

Day 1 – When Trouble Reveals Your Object of Faith

Reading: 2 Kings 3:1–12, James 1:2–5

Devotional: Jehoram and Jehoshaphat face the same crisis—no water in the wilderness—but interpret it very differently. Jehoram assumes God has brought them out simply to destroy them, while Jehoshaphat asks, “Isn’t there a prophet of the Lord here?” The same hardship exposes two different objects of faith: one sees God as an enemy to fear, the other sees God as a helper to seek. Trials often function like a knife that slices into our lives and reveals whether we see God as distant and punitive or near and generous with wisdom. James 1 tells us that trials are not proof of God’s hatred, but opportunities to grow in endurance and to ask Him for wisdom.

Reflection / Prayer: Ask God to show you how you instinctively interpret hardship: “Lord, when things go wrong, do I assume you are against me, or do I run to you for help?” Pray through James 1:2–5 and ask the Lord to reshape your reflex so that trouble drives you toward Him instead of away from Him.

Day 2 – Digging Ditches: Obedience Before Sight

Reading: 2 Kings 3:13–27, James 2:17–22

Devotional: God’s instruction through Elisha—“Dig ditch after ditch in the wadi”—must have sounded unreasonable to thirsty, exhausted soldiers. Yet the ditches became the very channels God used to bring water and victory. Their obedience did not cause the miracle, but it positioned them to receive it. In a similar way, James 2 reminds us that genuine faith is always accompanied by concrete steps of obedience, even when we cannot yet see how God will act. Obedience is faith with a shovel in its hands.

Reflection / Prayer: Identify one area where you know what God’s word calls you to do, but you have been waiting to “see more” before obeying. Pray: “Lord, show me the ‘ditch’ you are asking me to dig today, and give me grace to obey you even before I see the rain.”

Day 3 – Behind Closed Doors: Quiet Dependence

Reading: 2 Kings 4:1–17, Matthew 6:5–6

Devotional: The widow is told to go in, “shut the door” and pour out her small jar of oil into as many containers as she can borrow. The miracle happens in hiddenness, not on a public stage. Likewise, the Shunammite’s generosity toward Elisha flows from quiet faith lived out in her home, and God honors her with the gift of a son. Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6 affirms that the Father sees what is done in secret and rewards those who seek Him there. Real faith is not built primarily through public moments, but in the closed-door spaces of prayer, trust, and ordinary obedience.

Reflection / Prayer: Consider your private life with God. Is there a regular “shut the door” time where you pour out your need and trust before Him? Ask God to deepen your desire for hidden fellowship with Him, and commit to one specific, consistent private practice this week (e.g., 10–15 minutes of Scripture and prayer in a quiet place).

Day 4 – Trusting God with What Seems Dead

Reading: 2 Kings 4:18–37, John 11:21–27

Devotional: The Shunammite woman's promised son dies in her arms, yet she lays him on Elisha's bed and urgently seeks the man of God instead of arranging a funeral. She refuses to leave Elisha, even when Gehazi is sent ahead, because her hope is fixed not on appearances but on God's promise. God uses Elisha to raise the boy, showing that He can reverse what looks final and hopeless. In John 11, Martha meets Jesus at Lazarus' tomb, grieving but still confessing, "I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." Faith brings what seems irreversibly "dead" to the One who is the Resurrection and the Life.

Reflection / Prayer: What situation, relationship, or hope in your life feels "dead" or beyond repair? Bring it honestly to Jesus in prayer today, saying: "Lord, this looks finished to me, but I confess you are the Resurrection and the Life. Help me to trust you with this, whether you restore it now, later, or in a different way than I expect."

Day 5 – God's Power, God's Glory

Reading: 2 Kings 4:38–44, John 6:5–13

Devotional: A deadly stew is made edible, and twenty small loaves feed a hundred men with leftovers. In both stories, the resources are clearly insufficient, and yet God supplies more than enough through Elisha's simple obedience. John 6 echoes this pattern as Jesus multiplies a boy's small lunch to feed thousands. These miracles remind us that God often chooses inadequate means so that His sufficiency—not our cleverness or strength—receives the glory. Real faith expects God to work in ways that make it obvious He did it.

Reflection / Prayer: Look at an area where your resources (time, money, energy, ability) feel too small for the need in front of you. Pray: "Lord, take my 'small loaves' and use them however you desire. Let the outcome clearly point to your power and not to my adequacy, so that you receive all the glory."