

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

"The People Will Know" - 1 Kings 18

Sermon Summary:

This sermon examines 1 Kings 18, the dramatic showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Pastor Matt addresses the pluralistic problem of divided worship—attempting to serve both God and idols simultaneously. Through Elijah's confrontation with Ahab and the prophets of Baal, the message challenges believers to examine the idols in their own lives (success, pleasure, control, personal beauty) that compete for their devotion to God. The sermon emphasizes that true worship requires wholehearted commitment rather than wavering between two opinions. God's demonstration of power through fire consuming the sacrifice proves His supremacy and leads to confession and repentance. The message concludes by pointing to Christ as our ultimate sacrifice, who was consumed in our place, offering forgiveness for our idolatry and calling us to full devotion.

Key Points:

- Elijah calls out the people's divided hearts, asking "How long will you waver between two opinions?"
- The pluralistic problem: people weren't abandoning God entirely but trying to add Baal worship alongside worshipping Yahweh.
- Modern idols include success, pleasure, personal beauty, and control—things we give our time, affection, and money to that cannot answer prayer or satisfy our souls.
- Standing for God's truth in a world that rejects it will label you as a "troubler" just as Ahab labeled Elijah.
- Elijah's prayer was motivated by God's glory and the people's salvation, not personal vindication.
- False gods cannot answer because they don't exist—they have no power to respond to their worshipers.
- Idolatry leads to self-harm and irrational behavior (acting "crazy") when our idols fail us
- God demonstrated His supremacy by consuming the sacrifice with fire, leading to confession: "The Lord, He is God".
- True spiritual leadership draws people to decisions, not allowing them to remain in spiritual limbo.
- The sacrifice was consumed so the people could live—pointing to Christ's sacrifice on the cross for us.

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Kings 18:1-46 (primary focus)
- 1 Kings 17 (referenced as background)
- Deuteronomy 30 (choosing life or death)
- Joshua 24:15 (choose whom you will serve)
- Deuteronomy 13 (response to false prophets)

Stories:

- Mike Tyson versus Jake Paul boxing match as an illustration of an underwhelming showdown compared to the dramatic confrontation on Mount Carmel
- The widow who had only enough for one final meal but God provided continually (1 Kings 17)
- The confrontation on Mount Carmel between Elijah and 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18)
- Elijah mocking the prophets of Baal, suggesting their god might be sleeping or on a journey
- The prophets of Baal cutting themselves and raving but receiving no answer
- Fire falling from heaven and consuming the sacrifice, stones, dust, and water
- Vanderbilt Divinity School's 1993 dedication of an all-faith chapel with cupboards containing symbols for multiple religions
- Personal anecdote about getting frustrated talking to automated phone systems

Scripture Deep Dive

Opening Question:

In today's world, what are some modern-day equivalents to the idols worshipped in ancient times, and how do they affect our relationship with God?

Decision and Pluralism (1 Kings 18:21-24):

1. **1 Kings 18:21** - Elijah challenges the people to decide between the one true God and Baal. What does it mean to waver between two opinions in your personal faith journey, and how does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6:24, "No one can serve two masters," relate to this passage?
2. **1 Kings 18:22-24** - Elijah sets up a challenge to show who the true God is. How does this challenge reveal the nature of faith as seen in Hebrews 11:1, and how does this apply to the choices you make in your daily life?

Demonstration of God's Power (1 Kings 18:30-39):

3. **1 Kings 18:30-35** - Why does Elijah take the time to rebuild the altar and drench the offering with water before calling on God, and what does this demonstrate about God's power versus human ability? Consider 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
4. **1 Kings 18:36-39** - After the display of God's power, the people's response is one of worship. How does this compare to Romans 1:20-21 in terms of recognizing and responding to God's attributes? How can we foster a similar response in our lives when witnessing God's power?

Renewal and Repentance (1 Kings 18:39-40):

5. **1 Kings 18:39** - The people's proclamation, "The Lord, he is God!" signifies a turning point. How does this moment parallel the call to repentance in **Acts 3:19**, and what does true repentance look like in our lives today?
6. **1 Kings 18:40** - Elijah's actions against the prophets of Baal are drastic. How can **Deuteronomy 13:1-5** help us understand the seriousness of leading others away from God? How do we apply this principle of dealing with spiritual idolatry in our modern lives in a different context?

Identifying Idols (1 Kings 18:26-29, 37):

7. **1 Kings 18:26-29** - The prophets of Baal go to extreme measures to get a response. Can you identify areas in your life where you might be exerting undue effort or placing hope in "idols" that cannot save? How does Psalm 115:4-8 describe the nature of idols in contrast to God?
8. **1 Kings 18:37** - Elijah's prayer focuses on the glory of God and turning people's hearts back to Him. Compare this with James 5:16-18. How does earnest and righteous prayer play a role in combating the idols in our lives and the lives of others?

Practical Applications:

1. How can we identify and confront the "idols" or distractions in our lives that keep us from fully committing to God, similar to Elijah addressing the Israelites about wavering between two opinions?

Suggested Answer: Start by examining where you spend most of your time and energy. Are there activities or possessions that take away your focus from God? Regular self-reflection, prayer, and seeking accountability from trusted friends can help identify these idols. Confront them by reprioritizing your commitments and putting God first, using Colossians 3:2 as a guide to "set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."

2. How can we use moments of God's evident work in our lives to inspire others to turn to Him, similar to how Elijah sought God's glory on Mount Carmel?

Suggested Answer: Share personal testimonies of how God has worked in specific situations. Create environments, like small groups or social gatherings, where sharing God's work can encourage others. Use these testimonies to focus not on personal triumphs but on how God's hand and timing were evident, reflecting Psalm 71:15-16 where the psalmist talks about God's righteousness and salvation.

3. What practical steps can we take to ensure that our prayers align with seeking God's glory and not just our personal desires, similar to Elijah's prayer for the people's hearts to return to God?

Suggested Answer: Start each prayer session by praising God for His attributes and expressing the desire for His will to be done (Matthew 6:10). Set aside dedicated time to listen and meditate on scripture, allowing it to shape your prayer requests. Ask God to align your desires with His will, focusing prayers on community healing, spiritual growth, and other-centered concerns that bring Him glory.

4. How can we respond like the Israelites in proclaiming "The Lord, he is God" after witnessing His power in our lives, and ensure this proclamation leads to lasting change?

Suggested Answer: Publicly declare God's goodness in your communities, be it through verbal testimonies, social media, or volunteering in ministry. Let this proclamation be a commitment to daily actions and decisions that reflect God's lordship in your life. Engage in regular spiritual disciplines, such as Bible study and fellowship, which reinforce this truth and support continued growth and alignment with God's will (Hebrews 10:24-25).

5 Day Devotional

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

Devotional: Elijah receives instructions from God to confront Ahab, marking the beginning of a significant showdown. His obedience, even in daunting circumstances, sets the stage for God's work. Like Elijah, we are often called to step forward in faith, trusting God to lead us through uncertain situations.

Reflection Question: How can you demonstrate obedience to God's directions, even when the path ahead is unclear?

Prayer Suggestion: Ask God to increase your faith and courage to act upon His instructions without hesitation.

Day 2: 1 Kings 18:7-15, Proverbs 29:25

Devotional: In his encounter with Obadiah, Elijah shows determination to see Ahab, despite the risks. Obadiah's dilemma reflects the tension between fear and faith. Trust in God must overcome the fear of human consequences, a reminder that God's plans are trustworthy.

Reflection Question: Is fear preventing you from pursuing God's will in your life? How can you surrender that fear to Him?

Prayer Suggestion: Pray for God to replace your fears with faith, embracing His plans over human expectations.

Day 3: 1 Kings 18:16-24, Matthew 6:24

Devotional: Elijah challenges the people of Israel to choose whom they will serve, illustrating the impossibility of dual allegiance. This call to decision prompts us to evaluate our commitments and eliminate any competing allegiances to God in our hearts.

Reflection Question: What "altars" in your life need to be torn down to reaffirm your commitment to God alone?

Prayer Suggestion: Ask God for wisdom and strength to discern and dismantle any idols taking His place in your heart.

Day 4: 1 Kings 18:25-39, Hebrews 12:28-29

Devotional: Elijah's prayer and demonstration on Mount Carmel highlight God's power and faithfulness. This passage emphasizes that true worship stems from recognizing God's rightful place as Lord and our response to His greatness through sincere devotion.

Reflection Question: How can experiences of God's power in your life renew your commitment to Him and bolster your worship?

Prayer Suggestion: Praise God for His mighty acts in your life, and pray for a heart that continually acknowledges His sovereignty.

Day 5: 1 Kings 18:40-46, Philippians 1:6

Devotional:

The conclusion of this encounter reaffirms God's faithfulness and Elijah's unwavering commitment to God's mission. Even after the confrontation, Elijah seeks further obedience, showing that our journey with God involves ongoing faithfulness beyond victory moments.

Reflection Question:

How can you continue to walk in faithfulness to God beyond answered prayers and spiritual victories?

Prayer Suggestion: Thank God for His enduring faithfulness and ask for strength to maintain your commitment to His will every day.