

January 22, 2025

January 25, 2025

Dr. John Welborn

Uncommon: Different on Purpose

Uncommon Faith

1 Kings 18:17-39

God calls us to be different on purpose! Last week we saw Uncommon Wisdom from King Solomon and today we will consider prophet Elijah and his Uncommon Faith.

“Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word. And the word of the LORD came to him” 1 Kings 17:1-2

Three years later, the drought and famine have wrecked the nation. One day, at God’s command, Elijah approached Ahab.

“When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, ‘Is it you, you troubler of Israel?’ 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. 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.’ So, Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. And Elijah came near to all the people and said, ‘How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.’ And the people did not answer him a word. Then Elijah said to the people, ‘I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men. Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.’ And all the people answered, ‘It is well spoken.’ Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, ‘Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it.’ And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, ‘O Baal, answer us!’ But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, ‘Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.’ And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering

of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, ‘Come near to me.’ And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down. Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, ‘Israel shall be your name,’ and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, ‘Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.’ And he said, ‘Do it a second time.’ And they did it a second time. And he said, ‘Do it a third time.’ And they did it a third time. And the water ran around the altar and filled the trench also with water. And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.’ Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, ‘The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God.’” 1 Kings 18:17-39

Main Idea: God Gives Uncommon Faith when His People Trust Him

I. Uncommon Faith Tells the Truth Despite the Risk

Observation: Elijah was accused of being a troublemaker for Israel by King Ahab. But Elijah responds...

“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.” 1 Kings 18:18

“King Ahab had integrated idolatry into a system that was supposed to be run on God’s agenda because the Israelites were his people. Israel was suffering because of failed leadership.” Tony Evans

“Do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” Luke 12:11-12

Application: Our enemy is a deceiver and an accuser. Understand that you may be put in situations where you are misunderstood, misrepresented, and accused. It’s okay!

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II. Uncommon Faith Stands Firm Despite the Opposition

Observation: Elijah sets up a showdown on Mt. Carmel to prove God's power.

"Then Elijah said to the people, 'I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.'" **1 Kings 18:22-24a**

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." **Matthew 6:24**

Application: It may feel like we are always on the defensive trying to follow Jesus in this city. The enemy seems to have such strongholds all around us. We cannot waver!

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III. Uncommon Faith Prays Simply, Despite the Pressure

Observation: There is such a distinct contrast in the way the prophets of Ba'al attempt (unsuccessfully) to get the attention of their God, and the way Elijah prays.

"...(they) called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, 'O Baal, answer us!' But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made...And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords & lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention." **1 Kings 18:26b, 28-30**

"Elijah the prophet came near and said, 'O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.'" **1 Kings 18:36b-37**

"Religion says, 'I obey; therefore, I am accepted.' Christianity says, 'I'm accepted; therefore, I obey.'" **Timothy Keller (The Reason for God)**

Application: Uncommon faith resists the temptations of the idols and false gods, and instead leans into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior!

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IV. Uncommon Faith Trusts the Lord, Despite the Circumstances

Observation: While this story finishes with the people declaring the greatness of the Lord God, there is no evidence that the spiritual condition of the nation changed for the better in the days ahead.

"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, 'It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.'" **1 Kings 19:4**

Application: We have all, or will all, feel like Elijah felt. Being a person of Uncommon Faith does not guarantee that circumstances will turn out exactly as we hope they would. In fact, they rarely do! Uncommon Faith, at times, can be a very weak faith. But that is okay! Elijah isn't the hero, and neither are we.

"It is not the strength of your faith but the object of your faith that actually saves you. Strong faith in a weak branch is fatally inferior to weak faith in a strong branch." **Timothy Keller (The Reason for God)**

Uncommon Faith is placed in Christ Jesus and it Changes Lives!

Where have you placed your faith today?

Sources and Further Reading Opportunities

- **Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the OT** – Warren Wiersbe (1993)
- **CSB Study Bible** – Trevin Wax, Ed. (2017)
- **New American Commentary: 1-2 Kings** – Paul R. House (1995)
- **One God or Many?** – J.D. Greear (2013)
- **Exalting Jesus in 1&2 Kings** – Tony Merida (2015)
- **Tony Evans Study Bible** – Tony Evans (2019)
- **Spurgeon Study Bible** – Charles Haddon Spurgeon (2017)
- **Daily Bible Study Series: 1&2 Kings** – A. G. Auld (1986)

- **The Reason for God** – Timothy Keller (2008)