

True Strength in Turbulent Times
“Shutting Down the Idol Factory”
Growth Group Discussion
1 Kings 18

Opening Questions (get everyone involved in discussion):

- Begin with prayer. Take at least 30 seconds to be silent, clearing your minds of distractions and preparing to hear from God’s word.
- What were some of the keys to your ability to weather the challenges of the last year and a half?
- Has this period revealed anything to you about yourself?

When we first hear about God’s prophet Elijah, in the beginning of Ch. 17, he comes to King Ahab and he says that God is going to send a drought that will last several years. It ends up producing a severe famine in the region. God is trying to break Ahab and Israel’s worship of the rain god, Baal. In spite of the drought, the leaders and the people haven’t turned to God. Even this extreme crisis hasn’t awakened them to their need for change. In fact, Ahab searches for Elijah in order to kill him. A confrontation is necessary to catalyze change. So, God tells Elijah to “present himself” to Ahab.

TAKE TURNS READING 1 Kings 18:16-21.

1. God ordered Elijah to go meet with the person who had been hunting him down to kill him.
 - a. How would you feel if you were Elijah?
 - b. What in this passage (or in ch. 17, if you know the story) do you learn about Elijah’s relationship with God that might enable him to have the faith to obey this command?
2. Why does Elijah “call the question” in v. 21?
3. Pastor Josh stated that **our hearts are idol factories**. We are inclined to worship all kinds of created things instead of the Creator.
 - a. What does it mean, in your opinion, that our hearts are idol factories? What does this look like?
 - b. In your life, what comes closest to fighting with God for supremacy in your heart (success, family, desire for a family or for a spouse, recognition, control, beauty, etc.)? Discuss.
4. Someone once said, “You’ll never find the true God until you recognize your false gods.”
 - a. Why is it so difficult to acknowledge that we have elevated false gods in our hearts?
 - b. How did God use this competition between himself and Ahab’s/Israel’s idols to expose their false gods?

READ vv. 22-35

5. Notice how the Baal prophets cut themselves when their idol did not come through for them. How might we become progressively and destructively more attached to our idols when they repeatedly fail us? Have you ever experienced that yourself?

READ vv. 36-46.

6. Note Elijah's prayer in verse 37. What does this prayer show us about God's objective in this confrontation? Why does he not want to just obliterate the people?
7. How does the fire from heaven—which consumes the sacrifice, the wood, the altar, the soil, and the water—turn the people's hearts back again?
8. What do these verses reveal about how your heart can be changed, if you have given some idol too much power in your life? (Pastor Josh said, "By seeing the sacrifice which was consumed for your sin.")
9. Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes..." (Romans 1.16). How does Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and the power of his resurrection enable our hearts to be released from our idols?
10. The Scottish writer Thomas Chalmers, in his essay "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection," said that to break the power of idols over our hearts, we can either

"Withdraw its regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or, [set] forth another object...as more worthy of its attachment, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon not to resign an old affection, which shall have nothing to succeed it, but to exchange an old affection for a new one.... We must address to the eye of [the] mind another object, with a charm powerful enough to dispossess the first of its influences.

What is he saying about how to change the object of worship (idol) in our hearts? How is Jesus' affection an expulsive power?

11. **Share and Pray:** Among our prayer requests, let's pray that God will reveal our idols, expunge them, and replace them with a greater affection for him.