

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION

1

Have you been put to the test? What adversities or challenges have you faced, and how did the divine hand of God help you in overcoming them?

2

A.W. Tozer said, "It is doubtful that God can use any man greatly until he has hurt him deeply." Are you willing for God to suddenly redirect your steps, especially if that redirection leads you in a way you did not plan to go? Share your thoughts with the group.

3

The sermon says, "You will never get to the miracle side unless you go through the command and the obedience first. What is/was the hardest thing that God wants/wanted you to do or give up for Him?"

WE DO LIFE TOGETHER!

If you haven't been involved in a LIFE Group yet, send us a message us thru Fb, and we will get you connected to a small group.



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SUNDAY WORD

AUG. 6, 2023

ELIJAH

PART 1 PROVISIONS IN
UNEXPECTED PLACES

1 Kings 17:1-6 "1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word. 2 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: 3 "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. 4 You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there." 5 So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook." (NIV)

Let's follow Elijah's journey like this: God calls him from the mountains to the king's palace. Then he goes across the Jordan River and finds a hiding place in a ravine called Kerith. He's supposed to stay there until further instructions. As I read this story, I wonder why God would do this. Elijah might have been disappointed with this decision. It's a bit puzzling when you think about it. First, there are seven evil kings causing trouble in the nation, and then suddenly Elijah appears. But just as quickly as he comes, he disappears into a place of unknown, silence, and isolation.

A.W. Tozer said, "It is doubtful that God can use any man greatly until he has hurt him deeply." Are you willing for God to suddenly redirect your steps, especially if that redirection leads you in a way you did not plan to go? Are you willing to follow the Lord not just through green

pastures by still waters, but are you willing to follow the Lord if the path leads down to a ravine where you must hide yourself? So as I look at this text I ask myself, “What is God doing here? And WHAT ARE THE LESSONS THAT WE SHOULD LEARN FROM ELIJAH?”

1. God’s will is revealed to us one step at a time.

God’s instructions to Elijah are clear, precise, and unmistakable. “Elijah, I have called you from the mountains and brought you before the king. You think your public ministry is just beginning, but you have spoken exactly one sentence to the king. Now turn around. Leave this place. Go across the Jordan River. Go to the Kerith Ravine and hide yourself there.” You can imagine Elijah saying, “Lord, You don’t understand? I’m called to speak the truth in power. I’ve just gotten through the introduction of message number one.” And God says, “No. Your work is done. One sentence was enough for the king. Leave this place. Go and hide yourself in the ravine.” That must have been a disappointing word. So we must learn the lesson that Elijah had to learn: God’s will is revealed to us one step at a time.

When God told him to go hide himself in the ravine, what exactly did Elijah know? Elijah knew one thing: he was to go and hide himself in the ravine and that’s all he knew. You can’t get around the ravines or hillsides of life. You can’t bypass that part of your spiritual journey. But if you want to get to the mountaintop, you have to go by way of the ravine. You have to spend a few years in obscurity, being unrecognized, a nobody to polish your character, and to train you in humility and long-suffering until God says, “You are now ready.”

2. God’s provisions come in unexpected things and places.

1 Kings 17:4 - “You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there (NIV).” Of all the birds, why the ravens? Ravens are large black birds closely related to crows. They are unclean, scavenger birds. They eat anything from birds, rabbits, rats, to dead animals, so it is no surprise that ravens have gained a reputation. When you describe a person so hungry that he will eat anything, he is said to be ravenous.

God has this attachment for the ravens. In Genesis 8, Noah sent out a raven in search of dry land. In the New Testament, Jesus mentioned the ravens to His disciples in Luke 12:24 - “Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them.” (NIV)

How much food does it take to sustain your family each week? Maybe, you have lost count because it would take some detailed calculations to figure out how much you’ve spent on food over the years. But God knows the exact amount because He keeps track of what we need. He knows your name. He knows your address. God knows what you need today and He knows what you will need tomorrow. It’s all written in His heart because God watches over you even when you think He has forgotten you. God knows what you need, when you need it, and He will make sure you have it in time. As He sent the ravens to Elijah, He can command the heaven to come to your aid.

3. God’s sufficiency teaches us to trust Him in new ways.

1 Kings 17:6 - “The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.” (NIV)

God is teaching us in the Old Testament the same thing He is trying to teach us in the New Testament. This is what Jesus meant when He taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” in Matthew 6:11. He is willing to supply our needs on a day to day to day basis. Sometimes, we mumble our prayers instead of saying them from the heart because we already know we aren’t going to go hungry. We don’t want to live day to day. If we had our way, we would pray, “Give us this year our yearly bread. Just give it to us all at once and we’ll be alright. Then, we’ll trust You.” That is not how Jesus taught us to pray, and such a prayer would not be good for us. We do better when we are forced to depend on God every day.

4. God’s blessings come after we obey, not before.

1 Kings 17:5 - “So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there (NIV).” What’s the most important word in that verse? The most important word is the last word: “There”. God’s command was tied to a place and to a specific act of obedience. In order to obey God, Elijah had to do some “ravine time.” Why? Because there is where the brook is. That’s where the water is. That’s where the ravens are. God is saying, “If you want my blessings, you’re going to have to go there and stay there.” Why? Because God’s blessings come after our obedience not before. You’re going to have to go there and stay there because that’s where God wants you to be.

Let’s put it all together this way. First, there is God’s command. Then there is Elijah’s obedience. Then there is the miracle of the daily feeding by the ravens. Command, obedience, miracle. I want to say it again. Command, obedience, miracle. We all like the miracle part. We all like the blessing part. We all like answered prayers. We all like the victory. But you will never get to the miracle side unless you go through the command and the obedience first. J. Hudson Taylor, a pioneer missionary to China said: “In every great work attempted for God, there are always three stages: impossible, difficult, done.” The hardest step is always the first one, the impossible part. Eventually the impossible becomes difficult, and then the difficult becomes done.

5. God’s guidance comes through the changing circumstances of life.

1 Kings 17:7 - “Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land (NIV).” Verse 7 tells us the brook dried up. Why did that happen? Because it was an answer to Elijah’s own prayer. He had prayed that it would not rain, and the answer to that prayer brought the drought that would eventually lead the nation to repentance. Sometimes we suffer because our prayers have been answered. And so Elijah waited. What do you do when the brook dries up? You pray and you stay and you wait.

We all have to stay by a drying brook sooner or later. It may be the drying brook of popularity and power, the drying brook of failing health, of a sick loved one or a failing career, or the drying brook of a friendship that is slowly fading away. In some ways, it is harder to sit by a drying brook than to face something that God wants you to do in your life. Something that will take you out of your comfort zone. Something that needs huge faith in God. Why does God allow the brook to dry up? God wants to teach us not to trust in His gifts but in Himself. He wants to drain us of self. He wants to loosen our roots before He removes us to some other sphere of God’s plans for us.