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## Elijah (Part I) - The Power of Courage!

**1 Kings 18:21:** (NASB) *Elijah came near to all the people and said, how long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him. But the people did not answer him a word.*



Courage is perhaps the most underrated, underappreciated and invisible virtue of our time. We are so busy complying with the status quo, with watching our words and with following what others say and do on social media that we seem to have forgotten the simple, yet powerful virtue of courage. Courage is stepping up, stepping out and standing against the tide of darkness. Courage is being what you know you should be when it is unpopular with others. Courage is having the guts to listen when others only want to argue; it is reaching out to give when others are focused on taking, and courage is leading by example when following in anonymity would be so much easier. Courage, when observed, insights others to stand, it provokes others to act and it plants hope where there previously was none. Yes, we need courage, but how do we find it and how do we learn to be truly courageous?

Our focus will be on Elijah, a prophet of God and one of the most courageous examples in all of Scripture. The reasons for his great courage will be revealed as we see the context of his life. This is the first of a three-part series on the life of Elijah.



### Courage defined, *What is Courage, Eric Kaufmann*

Eric Kaufmann’s definition helps give the average person hope to be courageous. We all have the makings of real courage. Courage is not an absence of fear, it is simply “walking towards what you would rather run away from.” While looking at the life of Elijah, we will be going through thirteen lessons on courage. We will state the lesson first and then go through the section of Scriptures that brings the lesson to life for Elijah.

#### LESSON #1: COURAGE IS SUMMONED WHEN THERE IS A GREAT NEED.

Prophets were sent to Israel when the rulership strayed away from God and they needed someone to stand up and say, “Stop, look up and reset.”

**What was the problem that required courage to be summoned?** 1 Kings 16:29-33: Ahab was evil and married Jezebel who was from a severely pagan background. She was the daughter of Ethbaal. Great evil existed from the union of Ahab, who reigned over the ten tribes for 22 years, and his wife Jezebel.

God was patient for 22 years and allowed this evil to take place before he dealt with it. He allows free will and evil to come to its fruition throughout all generations, which will be dealt with in the future in His kingdom.

There is a lot of emotionalism, sensuality, and dramatic actions in the worship of Baal and humanity loves these things.

1 Kings 17:1: (NASB) *Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab...*

“Elijah” means “My God is Jehovah.” Courage had arrived, and he is named “Loyalty.” Elijah stood for loyalty to God Almighty! The God of Israel had been misrepresented and the people were worshipping something that was causing them to degrade dramatically. Idolatry poisoned the people.

#### LESSON #2: COURAGE STANDS ON SPECIFICS, CLARITY AND PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY.

This lesson is important because courage is not raw emotion.

1 Kings 17:1: (NASB) *Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.*

In this verse, there is very clear direction on how to implement courage.

Specifics: The Lord God lives; despite all you have done to disavow Him.

Clarity: I represent the Lord God and no other and here is His message of your punishment.



Accountability: My word as God's prophet can release this punishment. Elijah was given the power to implement God's will. This took great courage.

**LESSON #3: COURAGE IS PATIENT. IT IS NOT DRIVEN BY EMOTION OR CIRCUMSTANCE; RATHER, IT IS DRIVE BY THE CLEAR COMMANDS OF OBJECTIVES OF ITS PURPOSE.**

**1 Kings 17:2-7:** (NASB) <sup>2</sup>*The word of the LORD came to him, saying,* <sup>3</sup>*Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.*

Elijah was told to run and hide; how is this courageous? To hide was God's will for a time to protect Elijah in a natural way until God's punishment could fully develop. Time was needed for the drought to come and have its full effect.

<sup>4</sup>*It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.* <sup>5</sup>*So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan.* <sup>6</sup>*The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook.*

Elijah was provided for miraculously as he hid naturally. No one would have seen these provisions, but they strengthened him both physically and spiritually. He was courageously and patiently waiting for God's purposes.

<sup>7</sup>*It happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.*

Elijah personally felt the effects of the drought and therefore personally saw God's purpose unfold. He was standing courageously.

Stand: When you can do no more, stand. "Having done all things, stand." But beware how and where you stand. "Stand fast in the faith." Stand on covenant ground. Stand with face to foe. Stand watching, waiting, victorious. "Stand still and see the salvation of God." Stand not in your own caprice, or by human order. Even though Red Sea barriers lie across your way it may be the will of God that you go forward without a halt. It is easier to march than to stand. It is easier to rush forward to the charge than to stand still and receive the fiery assault. The good soldier must be ready for both. They serve well who march and fight for their king. But "they also serve who only stand and wait." Patience and fortitude are precious in the sight of God, and "to obey is better than sacrifice." Where patience can have her perfect work, whether in the stress and strain of conflict, or in the trial of waiting, there it is good to be.

Without courage, all the other virtues will go unpracticed. Unless you stand, you cannot show what it is you stand for. It was courageous for Elijah to stand and hide. That was God's will at the time.

**LESSON #4: COURAGE IS CONFIDENT, EVEN AS THE ROAD OF GOD'S PURPOSE IS WINDING AND UNSURE.**

Courage has an internal confidence when standing up to something.

**1 Kings 17:8-16:** The widow was willing to serve him because she realized Elijah was God's prophet. She showed courage in the face of death.

Reward for courage: The widows was given just enough *miraculous provision* until she was again capable of providing for herself. God gives just enough to get us by when we cannot do it for ourselves.

**LESSON #5: COURAGE RESPONDS TO UNANTICIPATED HARDSHIPS WITH BOLD HUMILITY, PRAYER AND ACTION.**

Elijah had to hold his courage for a long period through unanticipated events.

**Things were going along well for Elijah until...** **1 Kings 17:17-24:** (NASB) <sup>17</sup>*Now it came about after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him.* <sup>18</sup>*So she said to Elijah, what do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!*

This Gentile woman was stricken with grief and immediately blames Elijah, the prophet who was in fact responsible for her family being alive about a year before this event. Harsh loss makes our memories short.



**Elijah was upset also. He wasn't forewarned by God. It took bold humility, prayer and action to go to God with questioning:** <sup>19</sup>He said to her, Give me your son. Then he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was living, and laid him on his own bed. <sup>20</sup>He called to the LORD and said, O LORD my God, have You also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?

Elijah expressed confusion. This woman showed faith, hospitality and courage and now this? Surely God's hand would not be short here. It took courage and bold humility to take his concern before God.

Three times: This sequence usually shows us the *completeness* of an experience. Examples: Jesus was tempted with three different temptations by Satan, Jesus called the Apostle Peter three different times to follow him, he also asked him three times, "do you love me?" Peter denied Jesus three times.

*Perhaps* it signified Elijah's complete willingness to: 1. Be humble before God. 2. Ask boldly for a miracle. 3. Act boldly to receive it. He laid himself over the child three times.

The result is a grounded faith in God and His prophet. Just like King Nebuchadnezzar, the woman had an appreciation for God at first, which developed into a deep faith in God.

#### LESSON #6: COURAGE DOES NOT FORGET ITS MISSION DURING PERIODS OF WAITING.

1 Kings 18:1-2: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Now it happened after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying,

*After many days* - gives the idea God just let Elijah wait and survive, just like the rest of the people for *three years*. Again, the symbol of a complete experience. Sometimes just standing takes the greatest courage. If we stand, we can prepare ourselves to be ultimately courageous when we must charge forward.

*Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth.*

God is specific: go find the King who would see you dead in an instant.

<sup>2</sup>So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria.

It is instant and unambiguous obedience. There is no discussion, no questioning how it is to work, just a simple acquiescence to God's command. He followed the will of God!

#### LESSON #7: COURAGE CAN BE EXPRESSED IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS.

1 Kings 18:3-6: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>Ahab called Obadiah who was over the household. Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly; <sup>4</sup>for when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.

Obadiah was a trusted servant of King Ahab and his courage was to fly under the deadly radar of Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab and Jezebel were distracted by searching for Elijah. This covert operation of Obadiah's required exceptional courage, planning, secrecy, energy, wisdom and perseverance. He was driven by his loyalty to God and the sacredness of life.

<sup>5</sup>Then Ahab said to Obadiah, go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle. <sup>6</sup>So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.

Obadiah had Ahab's trust as Ahab undoubtedly recognized the strength of his character and the zealotry of his actions as he was a protector of life.

#### LESSON #8: COURAGE FINDS STRENGTH, RESOLVE AND REASSURANCE IN THOSE WHO MAY PLAY A DIFFERENT YET STILL COURAGEOUS ROLE IN THE PURPOSE TO WHICH IT IS DEDICATED.

1 Kings 18:7-15: Obadiah was courageous in his humility for he knew the power of God that flowed through Elijah. Ahab's frantic and fearful search for Elijah is here revealed as Ahab would stop at nothing to find Elijah. Obadiah was afraid, was concerned and needed reassurance as he witnessed Ahab's evil firsthand. Sometimes our courage needs reassurance as well.



**LESSON #9: COURAGE WILL EVENTUALLY BRING US FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE ENEMY TO DELIVER GOD'S WORD.**

Obadiah did wonderful work for God by preserving life. He was a hero.

1 Kings 18:16-19: Obadiah and Elijah risked their lives with the messages they bore as Elijah laid out a serious challenge.

**LESSON #10: COURAGE STANDS BOLDLY - AND SEEMINGLY FOOLISHLY - AS IT FULFILLS GOD'S PLAN.**

Often true courage can look foolish to the people around you.

1 Kings 18:20-25: This incredible challenge played into the emotions of the pagans, for they were in control of the nation, had all but eliminated any resistance and *outnumbered Elijah 450 to one*. He is speaking with belief, boldness, power, passion and conviction. Elijah is controlling this entire experience.

1 Kings 18:26-29: *Elijah fed the frenzy*, for all pagan worship survives and thrives on emotion. Pagan Christian worship also thrives on pure emotionalism as well. Without the principles of righteousness and truth, we're missing the boat. Paganism is missing the boat here. Courage allows events to unfold and reveal truth!

**LESSON #11: COURAGE HONORS THE SACREDNESS OF SACRIFICE TO GOD FIRST AND FOREMOST.**

1 Kings 18:30-32: Elijah calls the people to come near to him. He rebuilds the altar that was used to make legitimate sacrifices to God with twelve stones to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel was broken into two pieces here and he is using twelve stones to send a message and represent the unity of Israel under the rule of God Almighty. Elijah is so powerful in his courage to stand that the crowd was afraid.

**LESSON #12: COURAGE BOLDLY PROCLAIMS THE MIGHTY POWER OF GOD BEFORE ALL.**

1 Kings 18:33-39: The purpose of the water was to show there was nothing hidden. He used the precious commodity of water and again we see three times, perhaps indicating this experience would be a complete proclamation of God's sovereign authority over Israel.

Elijah speaks out loud to God to create a "no doubt about it" experience that God would be revealed. The drama of the moment cannot be overstated. God consumed everything! One man stood against hundreds and proved to all that God is God and He is mighty and is to be praised.

1 Kings 18:40-46: Evil had to be destroyed, the King had to be taught and the rain had to come - all proofs of the sovereignty of God and all came to pass through the courageous acts of one man.

**LESSON #13: COURAGE IS NOT PERFECT AND SOMETIMES FALLS PREY TO FEAR.**

1 Kings 19:1-3: Elijah's life is threatened by Jezebel and he runs. How is that possible that Elijah is afraid? We are not perfect and none of us can overcome all the fear inside of us and it is okay. In Part II of our series on Elijah we will walk through some of his fearful and depressed times and see how God blessed him, so we can get to the third part of the story of Elijah in which he creates an incredible legacy.

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For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*