

Boldness

BOLDNESS TO STAND COURAGEOUSLY IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Focal Verses • 1 KINGS 18:5-18

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will COMPARE Elijah's response to speak to Ahab to that of Obadiah's response to report back to Ahab; SENSE the authenticity of Obadiah's concerns when reporting Elijah's message to Ahab; and ACT in boldness when speaking the Word of God.

In Focus

Denise separated from her adulterous husband, Greg, after their children left for college because he started physically abusing her. When she left, Denise vowed never to depend on another human. She packed her bags and drove across the country to a new job.

Denise worked hard, and tried to relax at the end of the day. She went to church, but the closest she ever got to anyone was to Cheryl, another woman living in the same apartment complex. Denise would nod at Cheryl as they passed each other in the halls and didn't speak because she had to turn away to cough politely.

As the weeks passed, the slight cough became severe. After a series of discouraging doctor visits, Denise slowly returned to her apartment, and her solitary life started falling into disarray. Cheryl met her one day as she was catching her breath on the stairs. "Hey Denise! Want a hand with those groceries?"

"No, thanks." But after thinking about it for a second, Denise said, "Actually... yes." She accepted Cheryl's help with the groceries but hesitated to welcome her in. Cheryl boldly proclaimed, "It's okay. I'm here to help!" Denise let her in and went to rest on the couch while Cheryl put the groceries away and cooked dinner.

"I see where you're coming from," said Cheryl after hearing Denise's story, "but shutting yourself off from other people isn't the best way to go. God places us in a community so that we can share our struggles with other people and listen to their advice." Denise nodded. "I can see that now. I thought I'd be safer alone, but that isn't God's best for me."

Who could you reach out to for advice and help?

Keep in Mind

"And [Elijah] answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim"
(1 Kings 18:18, KJV).



Focal Verses

KJV 1 Kings 18:5 And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.

6 So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7 And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah?

8 And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

9 And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?

10 As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not.

11 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.

12 And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth.

13 Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?

14 And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me.

15 And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day.

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

The People, Places, and Times

Obadiah. The Obadiah found in 1 Kings 18 is not the prophet and author of the book of Obadiah. This Obadiah worked in King Ahab's administration as a governor, mayor, and one of the top officials. Obadiah held this high position assisting one of Israel's most disobedient kings. However, Obadiah maintained his belief in Jehovah, the true and living God. The Scriptures identify him as a worshiper, one who feared God greatly (1 Kings 18:3). Scholars disagree concerning Obadiah's character. Some call him a hero, while others criticize his timidity, saying he

compromised and was afraid to speak out on God's behalf.

Elijah. Little is known about Elijah's birth or family, other than that he came from Tishbeh in Gilead. God called Elijah to prophesy, speaking out against Baal worship in Israel and to actively take part in ending this abomination among God's people. Initially, God kept him secluded near the brook of Cherith where he was fed by ravens for six months. As the drought progressed, God connected Him with a widow and her son. God miraculously provided food for them for the next three years (1 Kings 17:8-16). Just before the end of the

drought, Elijah called out the prophets of Baal for a showdown on Mt. Carmel. He challenged the people of Israel to serve the winner of the contest. Baal and the prophets of the false gods were destroyed in the showdown (1 Kings 18:17–40). The people were able to see that the LORD alone is God.

Ahab. This king was one of the most rebellious in Israel's history (1 Kings 16:30). He married Jezebel, a Baal worshiper who hated God's people (1 Kings 18:4). She encouraged his worship of the false gods Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 16:31–33). God sent the prophets Elijah and Elisha to warn him, but he refused to listen. His ultimate downfall came when he made an agreement with a foreign king he was supposed to kill and did nothing when his wife had an innocent Israelite murdered (1 Kings 20–21). Both Ahab and Jezebel died gruesome, tragic deaths.

How does God protect His followers when leaders are unjust?

Background

God's Law clearly commanded never to worship false gods (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7), not to invoke their names (Exodus 23:13), not to marry their adherents or practice any of their customs (Leviticus 20:23; 2 Kings 17:15). King Ahab violated each one of these laws during his 22-year reign in Israel. He married Jezebel, a Phoenician Baal worshiper who had altars and a temple built for Baal. This false god of rain and dew was the supreme male deity of the ancient Phoenicians and Canaanites. Their rituals included illicit sex, ritual prostitution, and child sacrifice. God's prophet Elijah confronted King Ahab. The first time Scripture mentioned him, he appeared before King Ahab announcing a drought to come upon the whole land because of the people's sin (1 Kings 17:1–7). This one verbal threat by a lone prophet of God challenged the worship of Baal, who was supposed to control the rain. Instead of Ahab

and Jezebel acknowledging God and repenting, they were furious. They desperately sent out soldiers to hunt for Elijah to force him to reverse this curse.

How have you pushed back against God instead of acknowledging Him and repenting?

At-A-Glance

1. God's Providence (1 Kings 18:5–8)
2. God's Servant, Obadiah (vv. 9–16)
3. God's Prophet, Elijah (vv. 17–18)

In Depth

1. God's Providence (1 Kings 18:5–8)

Feeling the effects of the drought, King Ahab and his chief servant Obadiah discussed trying to find grass for the royal horses. Ahab and Obadiah agree to search the area in different directions.

As Obadiah combed the area, Elijah, the missing prophet, walked toward him. King Ahab had looked diligently for Elijah for three and a half years, determined to force him to reverse the drought. The leaders in the surrounding countries joined in the massive hunt for the prophet. No one located him. They swore to the king that no individual had laid eyes on Elijah. However, by the providence of God, Obadiah and Elijah traveled down the same path. Obadiah recognized him, then bowed with his face to the ground, in fear, reverence, and respect for God's messenger.

When has God caused you to have an unexpected encounter?

2. God's Servant, Obadiah (vv. 9–16)

Elijah asks Obadiah to deliver a message. He wants a face to face meeting with King Ahab. Obadiah responds with excuses. He thought his master might be suspicious, assuming

he knew the prophet's hiding place all this time. Obadiah imagined an upset king, angry enough to kill. He also raised another reason for his reluctance. Elijah had a reputation of being in one place, and then the Holy Spirit whisking him away to another. Obadiah lacked confidence in Elijah being in this location for a meeting with the king.

Obadiah continued giving reasons for refusing Elijah's request. He called himself one who truly worshiped Yahweh, since his youth. When Jezebel tried to kill all of God's prophets, Obadiah hid one hundred of them in caves, supplying them with food and water. The king's servant urges Elijah to realize how much he'd done already and withdraw his demand.

When one's leader is a tyrant, is it better to covertly honor God as Obadiah did or overtly as Elijah did?

3. God's Prophet, Elijah (vv. 17–18)

Elijah refrained from addressing Obadiah's fears and hesitations. Instead, he spoke about the Mighty God they serve. Elijah walked in the assurance of God's presence, his shield of protection. He boldly intended to challenge King Ahab, resting in the sovereignty of God. He promised Obadiah that when King Ahab arrives, he will be in that very spot. Obadiah never said another word to Elijah but proceeded to go and arrange the meeting.

Finally, Ahab and Elijah faced each other. The King accused Elijah of being the one that disturbed and destroyed his kingdom with the drought. He spoke correctly. Elijah had made the "no rain" declaration. However, Elijah placed the responsibility right back on Ahab's shoulders. He told the king about his deliberate ignoring and violating God's Law. Elijah calls for a showdown on Mt. Carmel that will prove the superiority of Jehovah over Baal.

When have you spoken boldly in the presence of fear?

Search the Scriptures

1. What was Elijah requesting of Obadiah and what was his response? (1 Kings 18:9–16)
2. What did Ahab accuse Elijah of doing? How did Elijah respond? (vv. 17–18)

Discuss the Meaning

1. Use the Focus Scriptures to point out words that describe Obadiah and Elijah. Contrast the two men.
2. In what ways were both men instruments in the hand of God?

Liberating Lesson

Speaking the truth today, especially to those who disagree with Christian beliefs, is not always easy. Elijah walked in such confidence. He struggled at times with negative thinking and depression, but he also listened to God and followed His instructions. Think of Christians that you know who are bold like Elijah. If possible, have a conversation with them about their journey and glean from their experience.

Application for Activation

Take some time this week to examine your circles of influence, in your family, church, job, or community. Have you spoken up about Christ or have you kept your faith private? Pray about how God may want you to change. Ask the Holy Spirit to point out Scriptures this week to give you more wisdom and understanding. Surrender to the Lord and allow Him to do the transforming.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

Keil, C.F. and F. Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition*. Electronic Database. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 1996.
Strong, James. *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003.

Say It Correctly

Jezebel. JEH-zuh-bell
Obadiah. oh-buh-DIE-uh
Asheroth. AH-sure-oth

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 57

Deuteronomy 5-7

Psalms 27:1-3

DAY 58

Deuteronomy 8-10

Psalms 27:4-6

DAY 59

Deuteronomy 11-13

Psalms 27:7-12

DAY 60

Deuteronomy 14-16

Psalms 27:13-14

DAY 61

Deuteronomy 17-20

Psalms 28

DAY 62

Deuteronomy 21-23

Psalms 29

DAY 63

Deuteronomy 24-27

Psalms 30

Notes
