

Joke: An elderly couple, a priest, and a doctor walk into a bar

As they are sitting down and drinking, they eventually start talking about the question “of when does life begin”.

The priest said in the Bible it states that life begins at conception Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you”. This is God’s word so it is true.

The doctor looked at the priest funny and said, “You cannot be serious, I have been in practice for years and life begins at birth when you breath your first breath of air.”

The priest and doctor continue arguing their point as others began to shift their attention to their conversation, finally the old man spoke up. “My wife and I have been listening in on your argument and you are both wrong, we have been discussing at as well and we both concluded that life begins when your kids finally move out of the house.”

Elijah - Week 1

Today I’m starting a new series on a person in the Bible I’m sure most of you have heard about. He’s found in 1 Kings, and his name is Elijah.

Let me give you the context of the time period that we will be looking at. When Elijah was alive, the Northern Kingdom had experienced some nineteen consecutive evil kings, spanning about a two hundred year time period.

Think about that for a minute. Imagine, not just nineteen ineffective leaders, but nineteen consecutive evil leaders. This was the time in which Elijah lived.

In fact, there was a king named Ahab, who was married to a wicked woman named Jezebel.

And under their reign, the Bible says. ..

1 Kings 16:30 (NIV): Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him.

And just in case your wondering. That's probably not the kind of legacy you should try for.

Now, during these times there was much idolatry, when these evil kings would turn peoples' hearts away from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would turn them to false gods, the god of Baal and the god of Asherah, as a matter of fact, some people would even sacrifice their children to these false gods.

They also would go into the temples and engage in sexual activities with prostitutes and call it worship.

1 Kings 16:33 (NIV): Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to arouse the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him.

So, as you can imagine this is a very dark time of wickedness and corruption.

There were major scandals, idol worship, the unthinkable going on and God said, "Enough is enough!"

God finally sent an army to bring about justice.

No, actually God didn't raise up an army to take a stand against the evil king. Instead, He raised up one person to take a stand, one man. Elijah.

And church, God may want to do something very similar as well today.

God may raise up one teenage girl to take a stand in their class against all the others for righteousness, purity, and truth.

God may raise up a young business leader to take a stand for integrity in a business that's lacking integrity.

God may raise up one person to go into politics to take a stand for that which is right.

God will often times raise up one person to make a difference. Don't you dare underestimate what God can do through you if you are willing to walk in righteousness, and obedience.

David conquered Goliath. Samson pulled down walls. And I truly believe God is raising up men and women to make a difference in our culture today.

As we get started I would like to call today's message, "The making of a man of God," or the making of a woman of God.

Let me begin with the name Elijah. What does it mean? It comes from three root words, El, i and j-a-h; and "el" stands for Elohim, or God. "I" is the personal pronoun for my or mine. "Jah" comes from Jehovah, and so put together, it very literally means My God is Jehovah.

And so immediately, when God raises up this prophet to stand down the king, by his very name alone, he's making the statement, "The Lord God is the one true God."

So, with that foundation set let's pick up the story. The first time we see Elijah in all of scripture, is in verse 1 of 1 Kings, chapter 17. At the very beginning of this story, we have very little background on the prophet.

The only information we have of him is where he's from. That's how he is identified.

1 Kings 17:1 (NIV): Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead. . .

It's like saying George Kantz from Michigan. That's all we know about him.

Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, He's identified by where's he's from.

And I want you to remember that because in a little bit I'm going to share something more about him but you need to remember how he was identified when we are first introduced.

1 Kings 17:1 (NIV): 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."

Now you need to to understand that is was a drop the mic moment. What he just said was one of the most strategic, prophetic judgments against the land that you could imagine. He said, "For the next few years, no rain and no dew."

Now, to put that into context, this would have been an economic shutdown. In this agriculturally driven economy, no rain would shut everything down.

And let's be honest, that took a tremendous amount of faith to make that kind of proclamation. That kind of message if it comes to pass is going to cause some issues.

And I don't know about you but I think if that was me, I'd be like got ya king. Check mate.

And what God does is He takes Elijah into a season of hiding, and it was partly because there was going to be some backlash from his proclamation. As a matter of fact the king had put sort of a bounty on his head. And this isn't a short season of hiding either it occurs over quite a long period of time.

But God takes Elijah into this season not just to protect him from the uprising but also because God wants to do so much more in him. Because there's so much more God wants to do through him.

And we are going to watch as God shapes this man through this season of preparation, it's almost as if God's saying, "There's so much more I need to do in you, because there's so much more I want to do through you."

And church hear this there are times that God will allow us to go through seasons we don't understand or like so that He can prepare us for what He has called us to do.

And I want to share three seasons of preparations that He does with Elijah and with us as well. I'm sure there are more, but let me just share three. The first one is God takes him through what I would call a season of isolation, where he is very much alone.

He's got no one else to call out to. He is privately in a season of hiding.

And let me just say this there are times God wants to get us alone with no distractions where it's just us and Him. Jesus often times went into a solitary place. But my fear is that all too often when God does get us there we leave a lot sooner than we should.

So, God takes Elijah to this place where there is no one but him and God.

Let's pick up our story beginning with verse 2. . .

1 Kings 17:2–3 (NIV): Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah:
3 “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan.

Now, this word in the Hebrew for Kerith means, “cut off,” or to “cut down.” It means to be cut off from the source, to be cut off from the blessings, or very literally, it means to cut down like you would chop down a tree.

God is saying I need to cut you off from whatever your source is, so that I can teach you to be totally dependent on me. So I need to send you to a place privately so that I can use you even more publicly.

And so God takes Elijah into hiding and in doing so He's saying to him, “I'm going to do something in you so later you I can do more through you I want to do more that you ever thought possible.”

And maybe some of you feel like your in your own Kerith Ravine. That season where we're going, “Where is God?”

If that is you I came to tell you don't be discouraged in that season because it just may be that God is right there doing a deep work in you. So you can come out even stronger.

And hear this church, I know that season can be painful. It's like being cut down. Those things that you used to depend on, that you now can no longer depend on.

But it's in the Karith Ravine, that you've got to understand. It's where God just might be saying to, "I'm doing something in you. There's a preparatory work going on. I'm teaching you something that you couldn't learn any other way. I'm doing this work in you, so I can do even more through you."

Proverbs 3:5 (NIV): Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

You may not see Him working, or even feel Him working but that doesn't mean He's not working. Trust in Lord. I promise you He has something good in it.

1 Peter 1:6–7 (NLT): So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. 7 These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

James 1:2–4 (NLT): Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. 3 For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. 4 So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

And church I understand how difficult it is in that season. I've been through the Karith Ravine. I've been where God was cutting and chipping away some of the things in my life that was getting in the way of Him being able to work through me as He intended?

He did something in me in that isolated pain, when no one really understood?

Some of you, you're there and you could be there on purpose. You're in the Karith Ravine. You're in that period. . .Elijah was there for months, all alone, nobody to talk to. No one understood the Karith Ravine, where God was chipping away at him.

Listen, truth is God can't always bless a man until He has him go through some things to become the man or woman of God that He has called them to be.

So often we want the name without the pain. Ministry without the sacrifice.

So, those of you who are in the Karith Ravine, be encouraged. The more that God chips away the more God is preparing you.

The second thing, and it really is more of an extension of the first, but the second thing we see God take Elijah through as He's shaping him, and molding him into a man of God in power, is that He takes him through a season of total dependence, where Elijah cannot depend on anything or anyone at all, only God, and God alone. It's there in that Ravine where he learns that.

Let's pick up in verse 4. . .

1 Kings 17:4–6 (NIV): 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.

Here we see Elijah's all by himself, and God does this miracle. In the middle of a drought, there's no water, no rain, nor dew, but this brook springs up.

In the middle of the drought, no rain, there's this brook that he gets to drink from. Then, we've got God's Heavenly catering service where birds go out and find bread and meat, and every morning and every evening they deliver them straight to the prophet.

No call to Papa John's. Just every morning and evening they would show up with food. And you thought your Amazon prime delivered.

God was saying no matter what, "I will be faithful. You can count on Me to provide for you."

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV): For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Some of you right now, you are in a season where there was something you used to trust in for your security, and it's been taken away. And you don't have anything else to trust in, but the giver of life and of all good things. And you are having to learn that when everything else that you used to believe in fades away, God will forever and always be faithful to you.

Let me illustrate with a story, I've shared it before but I think it's applicable here as well. There was a widow who would pray everyday. . .not just pray but pray loudly in her apartment. She

would pray to God and worship and thank Him for His provision, but she lived next door to an atheist, who hated hearing her prayers through the thin walls of their complex. But she would worship God anyway, and then one day the atheist came over and said, "Lady, you're a fool. There is no God."

And then it happened one week, there was more month left than money, and she was crying out to God, "God, You've always provided for me. You've always been faithful. I know You'll come through again. God, please provide food for me and my children."

And the atheist had had enough, he took off and went to the grocery store, bought a few bags of food, brought it back over to the woman's apartment, put all of it right by the front door, knocked on the door, ran and hid in his apartment.

When she came to the door and saw the food, she immediately began to thank God that once again He had provided. In the middle of her worship the neighbor jumped out and said, "You fool! There is no God. God didn't do that. I brought those groceries just to prove to you that there is no God," and she worshipped God all the more.

Confused he reminded her who bought all those groceries to which is said, "Thank you God, You provided for my needs, and You made the devil pay for them!"

Forever and always, God says, "I will be your provider. When you can't depend on what you used to be able to depend on, I will deliver what you need.

Philippians 4:19 (NLT): And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

Here's the thing you need to notice about in this story, God didn't give him two days worth of food. God didn't give him a weeks worth of food. God didn't give him a three-month supply.

What did God give him? Enough for the day.

Some of you, you need to learn that. Because you are in a season where you're hurting and you're alone and you're afraid, but guess what? God delivers enough for the day.

You're uncomfortable, and you're afraid, but God says, "I will be your comfort for today." You don't have much, but God says, "I will be your provision for today. You feel weak, but God says, "I will be your strength for today." Your friends leave you, but God says, "I will be your friend for the day."

And God is saying, "I may not bring more than you need, but I will bring exactly what you need. I will be your daily bread."

And Elijah learns to depend on God for that day. God is teaching him, He's chipping away at him. He's teaching him total dependence. When he has no ability to provide for himself, God is teaching him, "I will always be your provider."

And the third thing that God does is, God takes him through a season of unconditional obedience.

There's the season of isolated pain and then a season where he needs to have total dependence, and then along comes a season where Elijah because of what he learned in the ravine learns to have unconditional obedience to God.

1 Kings 17:7–9 (NIV): Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. 8 Then the word of the Lord came to him: 9 "Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon

and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.”

Let me pause here for a moment and I want you to put yourself in the prophet’s sandals for a minute. It’s been months that he’s been by this ravine, and it’s been giving him daily water. And God told him to go there, and then the brook dries up, and God says to move on.

And in my mind, if I’m being honest I would be thinking, “Okay, God, where are You? I don’t understand. You gave me water from the brook. And now, the water dried up. Did I do something wrong? You’re telling me to move on. Did I miss You the first time? Am I hearing You right, God? I don’t get it. The brook dried up. Why would the source of what used to feed me dry up?”

And not just did the brook dry up, but of all the places available Your sending me, it’s off to see a widow?

Romans 5:3–5 (NIV): Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Elijah has learned to glory in his sufferings and because of that ravine experience he’s learned perseverance which gave him character and hope.

And listen church the God who gave the brook may cause the brook to dry up to give us the courage to leave where we are and to go where we are supposed to be. To learn to step out in our faith so that He can use us for His glory.

Too many in the body of Christ are still clinging unto something we depended on more than the God who supplies.

Some of you right now, you may be going, "My brook is drying up. I used to be able to trust in my job, but I'm not so sure I can trust in my job, anymore. I used to have a 401K. Now, it's a 401 not OK. My brook's drying up. I used to be able to trust, and I had all these good friends and then they turned on me and my friendship brook is drying up. I used to believe that I had a good marriage that would last a long time, but it seems like the brook in my marriage is drying up. I used to be really close to God, but now I don't feel near as close and it's like the brook's drying up."

And the same God who gives water, may cause the brook to dry up to give us the courage to take a step of total obedience and reliance on Him.

The brook dried up, and it gave Elijah the courage to be obedient, even when it didn't make sense. God said, "Go to Zerephath." "But God. . .I don't understand.

Did anybody ever see the Karate Kid? The original not remake. There's a scene where Mr. Miyagi, says to Daniel son, Daniel who wants to learn to fight, so he goes to Mr. Miyagi and says, "Teach me to fight." And Mr. Miyagi says, "Okay, first, paint the fence." And so, Daniel goes out there and he's painting the fence, and, "No, no, no, Daniel," like this up and down all in the wrists up and down. Daniel's like "This is stupid." Then, Mr. Miyagi says, "Daniel, son, wash my car." And he's, "No, no, no, Daniel. doing it wrong like this. Wax on. Wax off." Circle on circle off. And then, he'd go, "Sand, the floor," and he gets down and begins to sand the floor, but again is interrupted and hears "No, no, no, no, Daniel, son like this." Much like the movements on wax off lesson. Daniel comes back next day to a note that said paint the house. Mad when Mr. Miyagi returns he storms off I thought you

were going to teach me to fight, and I come over here, and you're ..." but Mr. Miyagi calls out Daniel son come here. And then finally, Mr. Miyagi walks through all the lessons. Illustrate moves. Paint the fence, wax on wax off, paint the house, and sand the floor. And he throws a punch, and Daniel son moved away and Mr. Miyagi says, "No, no, no. Wax on wax off," punch ... whoa... and he blocks it. And it all comes together.

And God says to the prophet Elijah, "Go to the Karith Ravine." "Huh? What's that?" "And be fed by the ravens." "What?" And the brook dried up. "Huh?" And God causes him to go into this new place, and I can't read it all but let me hit the high points.

But we get to see how it all comes together.

He moves, and then he travels to this place, maybe a hundred miles or so, across the barren land. And he comes and sees this widow, who God says is going to provide for him. And he says, "I'm really thirsty. Could you give me some water to drink and maybe a little snack, 'cause I'm kind of hungry?"

And the widow looks at him and goes, "really are you, the only guy that doesn't know, it hasn't rained! We're dying. There's a drought here. I'm a widow. I've got one son. He's back at the hut. I came out here to get some sticks. I'm going to go make the last meal. I've got a little bit of flour left, and I've got a little oil in the jug. That's all I've got left, enough for one last meal. We are going to eat, and then we are going to die."

And Elijah begins to think. Great God thanks did I miss it again. I thought you told me to come, but the least you could have done was told this widow as well. After all that's what you said you were going to do.

Is that what he does, no.

Instead of complaining because of what God is doing in Elijah's life, he says, "No, you're not." And he looks at an impossible situation and speaks faith into it. And he says, "The flour that you have will not run out. And the jar of oil will not run dry. Go back and bake some biscuits, but feed me first."

And she does, and they ate the biscuits, and the flour did not run out and the oil did not run dry.

And they ate, and they ate for weeks and months. And once again God supernaturally provided for Elijah in his unconditional obedience to God.

Listen church, sometimes God's provision can come from the most unlikely of sources.

Then one day, tragedy struck, and the son died mysteriously. Mom freaked out, she's thinking, Is this God's judgment on me because I turned against the one true god, to these false gods?

Elijah, did you come here so this would happen?"

And Elijah, because of all that had happened in the ravine because God was shaping him, did something that to the best of my knowledge had never happened before in history. There's no record of this in the Bible before this occurrence. He takes the dead boy, carries him up to the upper room, puts his body on top of him, looks up to Heaven and says, "God, I think You could heal this kid. I'm asking You to do it," and God raises that dead boy to life.

Why? Because God took him to the Karith Ravine, where God taught him total dependence, where he couldn't depend on anything at all but God, and God alone. Then, God dried up the brook, so that he would leave where he was, to go to where God

ultimately wanted him to be, so that once again, God could perform a miracle and raise the dead back to life. All because of the prophet's obedience and dependence on God.

God used those things to shape him into the man of God He had called him to be.

Next week we'll see, as God gives him the faith and courage this one man to stand down four hundred and fifty false prophets, as he asks God to send fire from Heaven to prove God's goodness.

Why could Elijah have such faith? Because he had been through the Karith Ravine.

Some of you right now, you are in a season of pain, and God just may be telling you, "I'm doing something in you, because one day, I'm going to do more through you."

Remember I told you in Verse 1 that Elijah was described as Elijah the Tishbite. He was known by where's he's from.

Well here we are twenty-three verses later, and he's no longer known for where he's from, but instead, for Whom he's from.

Look at how the story changes.

Verse 24, the end of the story.

1 Kings 17:24 (NLT): Then the woman told Elijah, "Now I know for sure that you are a man of God, and that the Lord truly speaks through you."

Now I know that you are a what? "Now I know for sure that you are a man of God, and that the Lord truly speaks through you."

God may allow you to go through the Karith Ravine, so one day, someone could look at you, say, “Now, I know. I see it. I see that you are a woman of God. Now, I see it. You are child of God. Now, I see it. You are a man of God.”

And, I’ll tell you right now, I praise God for all the pain and all the shaping experienced, all the hurt, all the brokenness, and all the supernatural provision in my life, and I pray that when people look at me today they don’t just say, “Oh, yeah, there’s George Kantz that guy from Michigan.”

But instead, they would say, “Oh, there’s George Kantz . We know he is a man of God. And that the Lord truly speaks through him.”

The making of a man or a woman of God, they often need to go through the Karith Ravine, so God can do in them what He needs to do before He does more through them.

So, God, would You do a supernatural work in all of us.

I know some of you right now you’re going, “I’m in the ravine right now, and it’s hurting and it’s difficult.”

Maybe there are those of you saying, “You know, the things I used to trust in, they’re not there anymore.”

If that’s you and you’ve got nowhere else to go but God. Then I want to encourage you to trust in Him. My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory.

Some of you, you’re going to say, “Oh, the brook dried up and I can no longer stay where I was comfortable. Could it be God is moving you out of your comfort zone so that He can do in you what He wants.

Pray

God, I pray that You would be enough comfort for today. enough peace for today, enough strength for today. I thank You, God, that You provide our daily bread. You provide what we need every day.

And God, when the brook dries up, I pray that we would be faithful to hear Your voice. When what made us comfortable is no longer there, encourage us to go to where you are calling us to go, and may we be obedient to follow. Not worried about what some might say to us, just being obedient to Your voice. And God, I thank You that in the obedience, we will see Your supernatural work.

Papa, I thank You that You're mercies are new every morning and that Your Grace is sufficient for us. In Jesus name and the church said. . .Amen.