

# EXTRAORDINARY



ELMBROOK  
CHURCH

## **ExtraOrdinary Study Guide**

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**ELMBROOK**  
CHURCH

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# ExtraOrdinary

*Move from your ordinary to God's ExtraOrdinary*

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## INTRODUCTION

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When you look at your life, does it seem, well ... ordinary?

**Your job: ordinary.**

**Your house: ordinary.**

**Your activities: ordinary.**

**Your relationship with God: ordinary.**

**Your family: ordinary (but don't tell your kids that!).**

It's not that your life is bad. In fact, much of the time it's good. It's just that if you were to assess your life, you would say, overall, it is *ordinary*.

What if I told you that **your life was meant to be ExtraOrdinary**?

My guess is that something inside of you longs to experience more. My guess is that you have even, at some point or another, tried on your own to be extraordinary. Here's the problem: when we attempt this on our own, it doesn't work. We may be able to change for a season, but it doesn't last. We slip right back in to ordinary. Or worse.

The reason it doesn't work on our own is that we need help. We need something "extra" to add to our "ordinary." And the "extra" comes only from God.

The prophet Elijah understood this. The Bible says he was an ordinary person, "just like us," yet he experienced the ExtraOrdinary. He performed miracles, defeated an evil king and queen and gave the nation of Israel a new future. But he didn't do these things on his own; God did it THROUGH him.

Being ExtraOrdinary is not about you; it's about God. It's not about *your* power; it's about His.

Over the next five weeks, you will have a chance to discover, through Elijah's story, how ExtraOrdinary our God is:

**His ExtraOrdinary Call**  
**His ExtraOrdinary Answer**  
**His ExtraOrdinary Power**  
**His ExtraOrdinary Comfort**  
**His ExtraOrdinary Presence**



As you begin, here are a few things that will help you get the most out of this study:

- Commit to coming to your Life Group for the next five weeks.
- Bring a Bible with you. If you don't have one, you can pick one up at Elmbrook. We recommend using the New International Version (NIV).
- Commit to being at Elmbrook Church for the each of the weekend services during the **ExtraOrdinary** series. The sermons will correspond with the study guide and will provide important insight.
- Prepare in advance. While the study guide doesn't require you to do homework, it will be very helpful if you work through the questions prior to attending your Life Group. There is also an "On Your Own" section at the end of each week's lesson. Take advantage of that to dig a little deeper into the topic.
- As a group, do not feel like you need to answer every question. Focus on the questions that are the most helpful.
- Be real. You don't earn points for sounding spiritual. Everyone in your group is at a different place in his or her spiritual journey, and that is good. The more vulnerable you are, the better your experience will be and the more you can contribute to the group's experience.
- Have fun. Spend time outside of the study getting to know the people in your Life Group in a deeper way.

You were not meant to be ordinary. God created you to be ExtraOrdinary. But you can't do it on your own; you need Him. So the question remains:

**Will you move from your ordinary to God's ExtraOrdinary?**

Jason Webb

Senior Pastor, Elmbrook Church





# God's ExtraOrdinary Call

WEEK 1

God calls you to move from your ordinary to His ExtraOrdinary. He wants to use you to do great things. Yet this call is never easy. He calls us to step into something hard, something that may not even make sense on the surface. It requires trust that He will provide and patience—trust that His timing is better than yours. This is what Elijah learned in 1 Kings 17, yet he obeyed God's calling. Will you?

## CONNECT TOGETHER

1. If this is a new group, go around and introduce yourselves. What one or two words would those closest to you use to describe you? Why?
2. Describe a time as you were growing up when you were part of something extraordinary (e.g., being a part of a championship team, helping change a community in a specific way, accomplishing something significant at work, etc.). What made it extraordinary?

## GROW TOGETHER

3. Read James 5:16-17. What does this passage say about Elijah's "ordinariness" versus God's "extraordinariness"?

### Read 1 Kings 17:1-6

4. God calls Elijah seemingly from out of nowhere to confront Ahab, the king of Israel. Ahab was a king in a long line of kings who committed atrocious evils against God, each other and their people.
  - A. If King Ahab did, as 1 Kings 16:30 says, "more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him," what does this tell you about the calling God put on Elijah to confront King Ahab? How would you have felt if you were Elijah?
  - B. What does this tell you about what God may ask us to do in our lives?

**God calls you to  
move from your  
ordinary to His  
ExtraOrdinary.**

**James 5:16-17**

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

*Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.*

5. 1 Kings 17:1 says that Elijah was a “Tishbite from Tishbe,” which was a tiny, unknown place. Yet God was calling Elijah to confront the king of Israel.

A. What does this say about whom God wants to use for His purposes?

B. How does the fact that Elijah means “the Lord is my God” play into this?

**1 Kings 17:1-6**

***Elijah Announces a Great Drought***

*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.”*

***Elijah Fed by Ravens***

*Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.”*

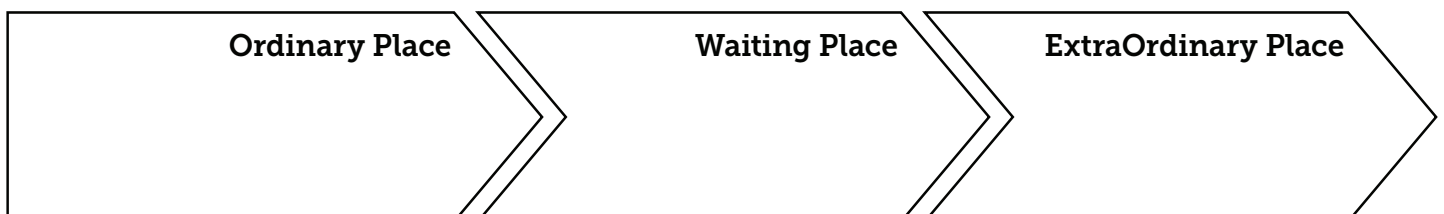
*So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.*

6. Elijah predicts a drought on the nation of Israel because of Ahab’s disobedience. In the ancient Near East, rain was seen as a blessing that only God could bring, and drought was seen as a curse. What statement do you think God is making about Baal (Ahab’s god), who was a god of rain?

7. In 1 Kings 17:2-6 God sends Elijah into hiding to wait at Kerith Ravine. It is often God’s pattern, in taking us from the ordinary place to the extraordinary place, to first make us go to the Waiting Place.

A. What do you think this was like for Elijah, knowing that he was going to have to wait in Kerith for an extended period of time?

B. On the continuum below, describe where you are right now. Why? Be specific.







C. Why do you think God brings us to the Waiting Place before the ExtraOrdinary Place?

8. While Elijah waited at Kerith Ravine, God provided food and water for him from the most unlikely of sources: a brook and ravens. The brook was an unlikely source since it was during the middle of a famine, and the ravens were deemed unclean animals according to Jewish law. Yet God used both of them.

A. What does this tell you about God?

B. When has God sent you “ravens” for provision during a difficult time of waiting?

9. Verse 5 says that Elijah “did what the Lord had told him.” In other words, he trusted God’s provision and obeyed God’s word. What does it mean for you to do what the Lord is telling you and to trust His provision in this moment?

#### PRAY TOGETHER

1. Spend time praying together for the next several weeks. Pray that your time together would bring you closer to God and to each other.
2. Ask those in the group who feel like they are in a “waiting place” to share what it is like for them right now. Spend time praying that God would provide for them (send “ravens”) as they wait.

#### ON YOUR OWN

12. Watch the sermon “God’s ExtraOrdinary Call” on RightNow Media.

A. What did you learn about God?

B. What did you learn about yourself?

C. What next step do you need to take?

13. Look up the following passages and describe the evils committed by the kings prior to Ahab.

**1 Kings 13:33 | Jeroboam**

What evil(s) did King Jeroboam commit?

**1 Kings 15:26 | Nadab**

What evil(s) did King Nadab commit?

**1 Kings 15:27-30 | Baasha**

What evil(s) did King Baasha commit?

**1 Kings 16:9-13 | Elah**

What evil(s) did King Elah commit?

**1 Kings 16:21-28 | Omri (and Tibni)**

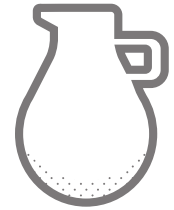
What evil(s) did Kings Omri & Tibni commit?

**1 Kings 16:21-28 | Ahab**

What evil(s) did King Ahab commit?



# God's ExtraOrdinary Answer



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## WEEK 2

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Perhaps the times we feel most ordinary are when life hits us with a problem we cannot solve on our own: a relationship we've tried to fix that is only getting worse, a financial crisis we didn't see coming, emotional struggles we can't explain, a sin struggle we can't beat, a health scare we can't control. Whatever it is, we come to a point where we are out of answers. Yet it is in those moments, especially, that God desperately wants to answer our prayers. This is what he did for Elijah at Zarephath. This is what He can do for you. You just have to ask!

### CONNECT TOGETHER

1. When you hear the word "miracle," which of the following categories best describes you? Explain.

*"I have had a miracle happen in my life."*

*"I believe miracles happen; I just haven't really experienced one."*

*"I think miracles may happen but only for other people."*

*"Miracles never really happen."*

*"I need a miracle right now!!"*

### GROW TOGETHER

#### Read 1 Kings 17:7-16

2. In verses 7-9, Elijah is out of food and water; the brook at Kerith Ravine dried up. Yet God calls Elijah to a different place in order to provide for him during the drought: Zarephath. Zarephath was in the heart of enemy territory. It was the hometown of Jezebel (King Ahab's wife), and it was full of Baal worshippers. On top of that, God tells Elijah that He is going to provide for him through a poor widow.

- A. Given the above scenario, what do you think was going through Elijah's mind when God asked him to go to Zarephath?

#### Interesting Fact

The word **Zarephath** comes from a Hebrew verb that means **to melt** or **to smelt** and in its noun form means **crucible**.





B. How do you think Elijah's experience of being fed by the ravens in Kerith Ravine (17:1-6) prepared him to follow God's call to Zarephath?

C. What does this tell you about where God calls us and how He provides for us?

3. This story is about God performing miracles for both Elijah and the widow. Widows were the most vulnerable people in society. They had to live off the generosity of others, and their only hope for survival would be through a son. Without a male in her life, a widow had no legal or social status. This widow's situation was so dire that in verse 12 she indicates that she wants to die.

A. Given her situation and the fact that she was a Baal worshipper, what does this story tell you about God's compassion for those who are far from Him and those in society who are most vulnerable?

B. What groups of people are most ignored and vulnerable in our society today? What should our response to them be?

4. Read Luke 4:18-29. Jesus' first public sermon is a powerful one about who He is, what He is all about and who He is going to reach. Why do you think He uses the widow of Zarephath as an example with the religious leaders of Israel?

### 1 Kings 17:7-16

*7 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." 10 So he went to Zarephath. When*

*he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and*

*asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" 11 As she was*

*going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread."*

*12 "As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only*

*a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take*

*home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die."*

*13 Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a*

*small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something*

*for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of*

*flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.'"*

*15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah*

*and for the woman and her family. 16 For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in*

*keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah.*

*17 The Lord said to Elijah, "Go back to the brook and drink, for the brook is dried up because there has been no rain in the land."*

*18 So Elijah went back to the brook and drank, for the brook was dried up because there had been no rain in the land."*

*19 The Lord said to Elijah, "Go back to the brook and drink, for the brook is dried up because there has been no rain in the land."*

*20 So Elijah went back to the brook and drank, for the brook was dried up because there had been no rain in the land."*

*21 The Lord said to Elijah, "Go back to the brook and drink, for the brook is dried up because there has been no rain in the land."*

*22 So Elijah went back to the brook and drank, for the brook was dried up because there had been no rain in the land."*

*23 The Lord said to Elijah, "Go back to the brook and drink, for the brook is dried up because there has been no rain in the land."*

*24 So Elijah went back to the brook and drank, for the brook was dried up because there had been no rain in the land."*

*25 The Lord said to Elijah, "Go back to the brook and drink, for the brook is dried up because there has been no rain in the land."*

*26 So Elijah went back to the brook and drank, for the brook was dried up because there had been no rain in the land."*

5. In 1 Kings 17:13-15, Elijah makes a ridiculous request of the widow: make bread for him (and for her and her son) even though she has next to nothing. Yet God promised that “the jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry.”

A. How does the widow’s obedience and God’s provision (see vss. 15-16) demonstrate the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1 – “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance of what we do not see”?

B. Where is God asking you to have this same type of faith?

6. In verse 13, Elijah tells the woman, “Don’t be afraid.” What fears get in the way of faith?

#### **Read 1 Kings 17:17-24**

7. Verse 17 says that some time later the widow’s son died. She does not hide her emotions from Elijah when she says, “What do you have against me, man of God?” Why do you think it was so easy for her to forget the miracle of the flour and oil and be completely devastated?

8. Verses 19-22 detail Elijah’s prayer to God to bring the son back to life.

A. What do you learn about the power and persistence of prayer through Elijah’s example?

B. What do you learn about God through God’s answer?



9. Resurrection is a major theme throughout Scripture. Read the following passages, and record what you learn about resurrection below.

**John 11:25-26**

**Romans 6:5-11**

**1 Corinthians 1:8-9**

**Revelation 1:17-18**

10. What feels dead in your life right now that you need to pray (or are praying) for God to bring back to life (e.g. a relationship, job, connection to God, physical health, emotional well-being)?

## ON YOUR OWN

**1. Watch the sermon “God’s ExtraOrdinary Answer” on RightNow Media.**

A. What did you learn about God?

B. What did you learn about yourself?

C. What next step do you need to take?

**2. Read Luke 7:11-17.**

A. What similarities do you notice between the stories of this widow of Nain and of the widow in 1 Kings 17? What differences?

B. What do you learn about Jesus through this story?

### **Luke 7:11-17**

*11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.”*

*14 Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.*

*16 They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” 17 This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.*

## PRAY TOGETHER

1. Take time as a group to pray “Elijah prayers” over each other. Take turns having each person or couple stand (or sit) in the middle of the room, and have the group, like Elijah, lay their hands on them. Appoint one person to pray a bold prayer for God to answer.

2. Over the next several weeks, keep praying these bold prayers, and record how God answers them. Remember that God can answer miraculously in a couple of ways:

*By changing your circumstances for you*

*By changing you so you can face your circumstances (even when they don't change)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

God's Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

God's Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

God's Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

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# God's ExtraOrdinary Power

## WEEK 3

If you are ever going to move from *your ordinary* into *God's ExtraOrdinary*, there will be moments when you will have to believe God for the impossible. Whatever the situation, you will come to a crossroads and ask yourself, "Do I actually believe God is as powerful as He says He is?" How you answer in that moment will have the potential to shape the rest of your life. This is what Elijah experienced in 1 Kings 18. He took the risk of stepping into God's ExtraOrdinary power. We can do the same.

### CONNECT TOGETHER

1. When you were a child, who did you see—real or imagined—as the most powerful person in the world? Why?
2. When (if ever) have you seen a powerful work of God in your life or in somebody else's life?

### GROW TOGETHER

#### Read 1 Kings 18:18-45

3. In verses 16-17, Elijah finally comes face to face with Ahab for an ultimate showdown. Although this was what God was asking him to do, it was scary. Ahab called Elijah the "troubler of Israel," and earlier in chapter 18 we learned that he had been searching high and low for Elijah, most likely to kill him (see verse 10).
  - A. Why do you think it is so easy to be attacked, labeled or misunderstood when you are doing what God wants you to do? How have you experienced this?

**If you are ever  
going to move  
from your  
ordinary into God's  
ExtraOrdinary,  
there will be  
moments when  
you will have to  
believe God for the  
impossible.**

#### 1 Peter 4:1-4

*1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. 2 As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 4 They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you.*

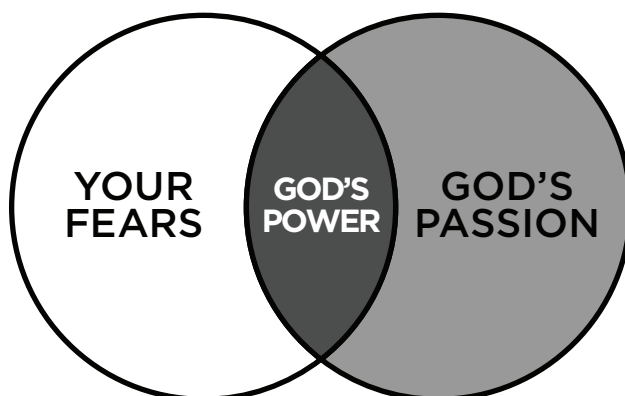
#### 1 Peter 4:12-16

*12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.*

4. Read 1 Peter 4:1-4, 12-16. How does remembering Christ's suffering in the midst of opposition help us face opposition in our own lives?

5. Read Elijah's response to Ahab in 1 Kings 18:18. How did Elijah cling to the truth when attacked? How have you clung (or how are you clinging) to the truth when dealing with tough situations and/or attack?

6. One truth seen throughout Scripture, and in this story, is that the place where you will see God's power is the place where your fears meet God's passion.



A. How was this true with Elijah in 1 Kings 18?

B How is this specifically true for you right now?



7. Read the following excerpt about Baal worship, written by Dr. John Walton of Wheaton College, from The NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible.

*With his embrace of Baal and Canaanite religion, Ahab completed the strategic program initiated by his father, Omri. The alliance with Phoenicia brought not only commercial and military ties, but also state-sponsored religious syncretism. Yet, because the prophets and Biblical authors were so consistently critical of Israel's pagan practices, it must be assumed that to some degree Ahab simply made official what had for many years been unofficial popular religious practice. ...*

*In accepting Baal, Ahab was simply bringing his kingdom closer to the mainstream of ancient Near Eastern thought and practice. In fact, most cities and kingdoms in the region had their local versions of Baal. In some cases, the deity had a different name or epithet based on local conditions but his qualities and the mode of his worship was for the most part the same. In many Syrian cities, e.g., he was named Hadad. Under Ahab, Israel became yet another Baal-worshipping state. ...*

*Through much of the judges period and revived in the more recent monarch, the worship of Baal and Asherah most likely arose to serve the people's concerns about fertility. Yahweh would have still been viewed as their national god, but the mentality in the ancient world was to posit a variety of deities in a variety of functions rather than to have a single, all-purpose deity. In this past history, then, Yahweh would not have been replaced by Baal and Asherah, but they simply would have been brought in alongside him. One possible variation with the movement led by Ahab and Jezebel is that rather than simply bringing Baal in as a second-level fertility deity in conjunction with Yahweh as national deity, they were attempting to replace Yahweh as national deity with the Baal of Samaria. Standing against this attempted transition, Elijah becomes the champion of Yahweh's kingship.*

John H. Walton in *The NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*,  
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.



### 1 Kings 18:16-21

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. 17 When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?"

18 "I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals. 19 Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

But the people said nothing.

A. Given the above context, why do you think Elijah says, in verse 21, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him"?

B. While our context is different, we still live in a syncretistic and polytheistic culture that tries to worship God alongside other gods. What are the "Baals" that we worship alongside of God? Which one(s) do you tend to worship the most?

### 1 King 18:25-30

25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire." 26 So they took the bull given them and prepared it.

Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." 28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. 29 Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me." They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had been torn down

8. Read the following verses. How does God feel about being shared with other gods? What are the practical implications for us?

### Exodus 20:1-6

### Deuteronomy 30:15-20

### Joshua 24:14-15

### Isaiah 42:8

### Matthew 6:24

9. 1 Kings 18:25-30 chronicles the attempt of the prophets of Baal to get him to respond, but there was no answer. Read the note below about pagan mythology.

*In pagan mythology, gods actually performed many human activities, including sleeping, dying, traveling and going to the bathroom. One ancient document even points out that one god's sister could not find him one day because he had gone out hunting. (He must have been a Wisconsin god!!) Dr. Tony Merida writes, "The prophetic sarcasm [expressed by Elijah in verse 27] is meant to expose the uselessness of Baal worship."*

Tony Merida, "Exalting Jesus in 1 and 2 Kings" in *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*, B&H Publishing Group, 2015.

- A. Given the context above, read Psalm 121. How does the psalmist's description of God compare to Elijah's description of Baal in 1 Kings 18:25-30?

- B. How does this comfort you? Be specific.





10. Verses 30-45 showcase God's power over Baal. How do the following details help you see God's power more fully through this story?

- *Elijah was one prophet against 850 prophets of Baal.*
- *Elijah built a trench around the altar and poured water on top of the altar and in the trench. (vss. 32-35)*
- *God's fire fell and "burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench." (vs. 38)*
- *The people cried, "The Lord—he is God!" (vs. 39)*
- *Elijah slaughtered the prophets of Baal. (Note: This admittedly is a difficult part to understand.) (vs. 40)*
- *God sent a heavy rain after three years of drought. (vs. 45)*
- *"The power of the Lord came on Elijah" and he ran ahead of Ahab to Jezreel. (vs. 46)*
- *Baal was known as the fertility god of storms. As such, he would fight with lightning (fire) and rain. In fact, one description of Baal said, "Baal (can) send his rain in due season, ... shout aloud in the clouds, ... shoot (his) lightning bolts to the earth." Yet it was Elijah's God who sent fire (lightning) from heaven and rain to the earth.*

### 1 Kings 18:36-37

36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 37 Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

11. Read Elijah's prayer in verses 36-37. Why do you think he was so bold and seemingly demanding of God in his prayer?

12. Read the following quote by Mark Batterson. What bold prayer do you need to pray?

*Bold prayers honor God and God honors bold prayers. God isn't offended by your biggest dreams or boldest prayers. He is offended by anything less. If your prayers aren't impossible to you, they are insulting to God. Why? Because they don't require divine intervention. ... The greatest moments in life are the miraculous moments when human impotence and divine omnipotence intersect—and they intersect when we draw a circle around the impossible situations in our lives and invite God to intervene.*

Mark Batterson, *The Circle Maker*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

## PRAY TOGETHER

*1. Spend time sharing where you have started to see God answer your "Elijah prayers" from week two. Spend time thanking God for those answers.*

*2. Break into groups of two or three; share a bold prayer (perhaps the same one as last week or something new) that you want to pray to see God intervene and show that He is God. Spend time praying bold prayers for each other.*

## ON YOUR OWN

13. Watch the sermon "God's ExtraOrdinary Power" on RightNow Media.

A. What did you learn about God?

B. What did you learn about yourself?

C. What next step do you need to take?

14. Read Ephesians 6:10-20. How does this passage connect with 1 Kings 18 in the following ways?

A. The battles God fights on our behalf

B. The importance of prayer

C. Our need to be bold

15. If you really want to dig in, read *The Circle Maker* by Mark Batterson.



# God's ExtraOrdinary Comfort

## WEEK 4

One of the great ironies of life is that one moment we can have a mountaintop experience, and the very next moment we can be in a dark valley. Both are to be expected. Both are a part of life. Yet it is easy, when you're in those valleys, to forget what you knew about God on the mountaintop. Soon discouragement, disappointment and even depression can set in. God often feels far away, and we often just want to give up. This is what Elijah experienced in 1 Kings 19, but he would soon discover that although he wanted to give up on God, God would not give up on him.

### CONNECT TOGETHER

1. Describe a time in your life when you felt like you were at the end of your rope, but God or another person (or both!) brought you comfort. How did this allow you to get back on your feet?

### GROW TOGETHER

#### Read 1 Kings 19:1-9

2. Elijah had just seen God do the miraculous by defeating the prophets of Baal in the showdown on Mt. Carmel and even by sending rain after three years of drought. Yet verse 3 says that when he heard Jezebel was trying to kill him, he was "afraid and ran for his life."

A. What do you think led to Elijah's fear?

B. Why do you think it is so easy to go from a mountaintop experience to a deep valley of fear and discouragement? How have you seen this in your own life?

#### 1 Kings 19:1-9

*1 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."*

*3 Elijah was afraid[a] and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.*

*All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.*

*7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 9 There he went into a cave and spent the night.*

3. Elijah does not just run away; he runs past Beersheeba (past the southern border of the kingdom) into the desert, which was extremely dangerous. It was so dangerous that he left his servant behind before going into the wilderness.

A. Have you found that running away from what God wants you to do can actually lead you into a more dangerous place without you even realizing it? If so, share your experience.

4. In verse 4, Elijah hits such a low point under the broom tree that he says, "I've had enough, Lord," and he wants to die. What do you think led him to this point of deep depression? (As you consider this, think about all of what you know about Elijah's story so far, not just chapter 19.)

5. While it is sometimes hard to talk about discouragement and depression, it is an expected part of our human journey.

A. Read the following verses, and list what led these great leaders to depression.

**Moses (Numbers 11:14-15)**

**Hannah (1 Samuel 1:5-8)**

**Job (Job 10:18-19)**

**Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:7,14)**

**Jonah (Jonah 3:10-4:3)**



B. If discouragement and depression was somewhat normal even for great Christian leaders in the Bible, why is it hard to talk about in churches and other Christian circles? How can this change?

6. There were many contributing factors to Elijah's depression. Below is a list of some of those contributing factors. Circle the ones you are currently struggling with the most (or have struggled with in the past). Explain why you marked what you did.

- *Depletion (both physically and emotionally)*
- *Disconnection (with God and others—he felt alone)*
- *Disappointment (that even after the victory on Mt. Carmel and the rain, he still had to fight)*
- *Disillusionment (thinking that Jezebel would win)*
- *Depression (wanting to give up)*

7. Read about the angel's two appearances to Elijah in 1 Kings 19:5-8.

A. What surprised you about these appearances? Be specific.

B. What does this tell you about God's compassion and comfort for us when we face depletion?

#### 1 Kings 19:5-8

*5 Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.*

*All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."*

*6 He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.*

*7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.*

### NOTE

*Forty is a significant number in the Bible. Noah was in the ark for 40 days and 40 nights.*

*The Israelites wandered the wilderness for 40 years. Moses was on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights. And Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan for 40 days.*

### PRAY TOGETHER

*1. Break into groups of three or four. Spend time sharing how God has been answering your prayers from the previous weeks. Take time to thank God for His answers.*

*2. Share with each other where in your life you feel depleted, discouraged, disconnected, disillusioned or depressed. Pray for each other.*

8. One of the key elements of God’s comfort for Elijah was to restore him physically. How do you (or can you) practically allow God to restore you physically in a world that exhaust you? What rhythms and practices do you use?

9. After restoring Elijah physically, the angel brings him on a journey of 40 days and 40 nights to the mountain of God—the same mountain where God gave Moses the 10 commandments.

A. Why do you think this is significant?

B. What hope does this give you for where God will bring you, even when life is tough?

### ON YOUR OWN

1. Watch the sermon “God’s ExtraOrdinary Comfort” on RightNow Media.

A. What did you learn about God?

B. What did you learn about yourself?

C. What next step will you take?



2. Read the following story of Charles Spurgeon. What do you take away from Spurgeon's story?

### Charles Spurgeon: The Depressed 'Prince of Preachers'

*Following his death in 1892, Charles Spurgeon was labeled the "Prince of Preachers." Spurgeon was known for his incredible humor, hearty laugh and penetrating preaching. He would preach to vast audiences of 10,000 or more (without a microphone!!), and by age 22 was the most popular preacher in England. His sermons were so in-demand that they sold for a penny a piece each week and are still among the best-selling series of writings in history. It has been estimated that he reached 10 million people during his lifetime. Even today, his commentaries, lectures, sermons and writings continue to be best sellers. In addition to all this, he started an orphanage (which is still open) and a college; created the Wordless Book, which is still used throughout the world today; and fought slavery.*

*Despite his enormous influence and success in ministry, however, Spurgeon wrestled with anxiety and deep depression that followed him until the day he died. This was accentuated by physical ailments (He had gout.), exhaustion (He rarely cut back on his demanding speaking schedule.), mental struggles and difficult circumstances. In 1856, Spurgeon was speaking at the Music Hall of the Royal Surrey Gardens, which was packed far beyond its 10,000-person seating capacity, when someone yelled, "Fire!"—resulting in seven people being trampled to death and many others injured. Spurgeon witnessed this at age 22, and those closest to him said he never fully recovered from that event. Spurgeon himself would even say it brought him to the "burning furnace of insanity." The trauma never left.*

*This battle with emotional and mental anguish continued, even as his popularity grew. At times he couldn't understand it or explain it. In his sermon "The Christian's Heaviness and Rejoicing," Spurgeon described his state of being like this: "My spirits were sunken so low that I could weep by the hour like a child, and yet I knew not what I wept for."*

*Even while dreading suffering, Spurgeon recognized that it helped his faith, to the point that he would actually long for it. "The way to stronger faith," Spurgeon wrote, "usually lies along the rough pathway of sorrow. ... I am afraid that all the grace that I have got out of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours, might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows, and pains, and griefs, is altogether incalculable. ... Affliction is the best bit of furniture in my house. It is the best book in a minister's library."*

*Adapted from Darrel W. Admundsen, "The Anguish and Agonies of Charles Spurgeon" in The Christian History Institute, Issue 29. [christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/anguish-and-agonies-of-charles-spurgeon](http://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/anguish-and-agonies-of-charles-spurgeon)*



3. Read Psalm 34 and compare it to 1 Kings 19.

- A. How do you see God demonstrating the characteristics ascribed to Him in Psalm 34 in the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:1-9?
- B. What descriptions of God in Psalm 34 bring you the most comfort right now. Why?
- C. Write out a prayer to God, thanking Him for how He has comforted you in the past and asking Him to continue to comfort you. Be specific in your prayer.



# God's ExtraOrdinary Presence

WEEK 5

## 1 King 9:9-13

*And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

*10 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."*

*11 The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."*

*Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.*

*Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

Sometimes it's easy to see God. Like Elijah, we see Him do impossible, big things in our lives. He is so close you can hear Him clearly and know what He wants for you. But sometimes you can't see God. Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, He doesn't seem to be anywhere in sight. You long to hear His voice again, but you are met with eerie silence. Yet God says, "I will never will leave you nor forsake you." So where is God in the silence? In 1 Kings 19, Elijah found out, and so can we.

## CONNECT TOGETHER

1. On the scale below, rank how much you sense God's presence in your life right now. Explain your answer. (Note: There is no right or wrong answer to this! God appreciates your honesty.)

0                      1                      2                      3                      4                      5

*Where is God?*

*I can see God clearly.*

## GROW TOGETHER

### Read 1 Kings 19:9-18

2. In verse 9 (and again in verse 13), God asks Elijah, "What are you doing here?"

A. Why do you think God asked Elijah that question?





B If God were to ask you “What are you doing here?” in regard to your life right now, how would you answer? To help you answer this question, think about:

- *How you are finding meaning in your current job (or not)*
- *The state of your key relationships and how you are intentionally investing in them (or not)*
- *How you are engaging in God's work, such as reaching out to friends (or not)*
- *Your emotional well-being and what you are doing to improve it (or not)*
- *Your daily connection with God (or not)*
- *Your engagement in your community and the world (or not)*
- *How you spend your money*

3. Read through Elijah's response to God's question in both verse 10 and verse 14.

A. What do you find inherently wrong with Elijah's response? Be specific.

B. Why do you think it is easy to develop a victim mentality like Elijah did? When have you found yourself doing that in your life?

#### 1 King 9:14-18

14 He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

15 The Lord said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. 16 Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. 17 Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. 18 Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

4. In verses 11-12, God passes by Elijah. Elijah expected to see God's presence in the big display of wind, earthquake or fire. In fact, in chapter 18 God had made His presence known by fire when He sent the fire down on the altar, and in the wind when He brought a storm on the land. Likewise, Elijah was standing on the mountain where Moses had received the 10 commandments and God had appeared in an earthquake to Moses on that mountain.

A. How have you seen God's presence in big, unmistakable ways before?

5. In verse 12, Elijah discovers that God was not in the earthquake, wind or fire but in the "gentle whisper" or, more literally, the "sound of silence."

A. What do you think it was like for Elijah to *not* find God's presence in those big ways this time?

B What does this tell you about God and how He works?

6. Read the following verses about how God's presence is there even when we can't see it, working behind the scenes in the silence. Write down what you learn about God from each of these verses—how He works and how we hear His voice.



**Philippians 1:6**

**Hebrews 11:1**

**James 5:7-8**

**Psalms 46:10**

**Psalms 139:7-10**

**Isaiah 30:15**

7. Read the following quotes from A.W. Tozer about needing silence in our lives to hear God's whisper.

*Religion has accepted the monstrous heresy that noise, size, activity and bluster make a man dear to God. But we may take heart. To a people caught in the tempest of the last great conflict God says, "Be still, and know that I am God." and still He says it as if He means to tell us that our strength and safety lie not in noise but in silence."*

A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, Hanover: Christian Publications, Inc., 1948 (2015).

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*There are truths that can never be learned except in the noise and confusion of the market place or in the tough brutality of combat. The tumult and the shouting teach their own rough lessons. No man is quite a man who has not been to the school of work and war, who has not heard the cry at birth and the sigh at life's parting. But there is another school where the soul must go to learn its best eternal lessons. It is the school of silence.*

A.W. Tozer, "God's Gentle Whisper," reprinted in *The Alliance Tozer Devotional*, November 23, 2016. <https://www.cmalliance.org/devotions/tozer?id=639>

A. What resonates with you from Tozer's words?

B. How can you (or have you) intentionally remove(d) noise from your life so that you can hear God more clearly? Be specific.

### PRAY TOGETHER

1. Take time to pray about the areas in each of your lives where it feels like God is silent but where you need to trust that He is working behind the scenes for your good.

2. Share with each other your biggest takeaway from studying the life of Elijah, and pray for each other that God would use that lesson to move you from "your ordinary" to "His ExtraOrdinary"!

8. In 1 Kings 19:16-18, God reveals to Elijah how He has been working behind the scenes for Elijah's good all along.

A. How does God's revelation that Elisha will succeed Elijah as prophet, and that there was a remnant of 7,000 Jews who had not bowed to Baal, specifically answer the doubts and anxiety Elijah expressed in verses 10 and 14?

9. Read the following verses, and write down what each tells you about God's commitment to those who follow Him.

**Romans 8:28, 37-39**

**Romans 11:1-6**

**2 Timothy 2:19**

10 1 Kings 19 teaches us that God works behind the scenes, in the silence, for our good, even when we can't see or hear Him. Eventually, however, we will see that His plan was greater than we could ever have imagined.

A. When have you seen this come true in your own life?

B. Where do you need to trust that God is still present, working behind the scenes in your life right now? Be specific.



## ON YOUR OWN

11. Watch the sermon “God’s ExtraOrdinary Presence” on RightNow Media.

A. What did you learn about God?

B. What did you learn about yourself?

C. What next step will you take?

2. Spend the next several days studying the life of Elisha in 1 Kings 19:15-21 and 2 Kings 2-13.

A. What are the similarities of Elisha’s life to Elijah’s life?

B. What are the differences?

C. What did you learn about God?

D. What did you learn about yourself?

3. Read Charles Swindoll’s *Elijah: A Man of Heroism and Humility in Great Lives Series*.

# Notes

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# Notes

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