

TAKEAWAY:

God still answers by fire when we rebuild the altar of surrender.

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

- What's something you've seen people put their hope in that ultimately let them down?
- What's something or someone you have personally put your hope in that ultimately let you down?

UNDERSTANDING:

Have a group member read 1 Kings 18:16-40

- How did this sermon help you better understand this passage of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- Why did Elijah drench the altar with water before asking God to send fire?
- What was at stake for Elijah in this showdown? What gave him such confidence?
- The prophets of Baal made noise but got silence. How do we sometimes confuse activity with authenticity in our faith?

APPLICATION:

- What does full surrender actually look like in practical terms?
- What would it mean for you to "drench your altar"—to remove all backup plans and trust God completely?
- Where do you need God's fire to fall in your life right now?

GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material.

You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of our text from this week. Here are two "Going Deeper" discussion prompts that build upon the above provided questions without repeating them:

- **Kings vs. Prophets:** Although Israel had many kings, they were not the ultimate authority in Israel. Rather, God's covenant word was the real authority. This is why God raised up the prophetic office to counterbalance the office of kingship. For every king, there was an opposing prophet or group of prophets ready to remind the king of the covenant and call him to accountability to God's word.
 - The succession of northern kings that oppose the word of the Lord reaches a climax when Ahab takes the throne. First Kings 16 says that Ahab did more evil in the sight of the Lord than

all the kings before him. Together with his Canaanite wife, Jezebel, King Ahab institutes the worship of the Canaanite god, Baal, over Israel. His kingdom was one of radical apostasy.

- In our text today, God raised up Elijah, the most prominent Old Testament prophet, to confront Ahab. He quickly becomes Ahab's greatest nemesis, and we see why in 1 Kings 18. In this famous story, Elijah challenges 450 prophets of Baal to see whose God is the best. He invites the people to give allegiance to the true God, the God who answers by fire. In a dramatic demonstration of power, God consumes Elijah's sacrifice with fire from heaven, while totally embarrassing the prophets of Baal. The people fall on their faces and declare that Yahweh is the one true God.
- Read 1 Kings 21
- Elijah confronts Ahab's injustice and announces the downfall of his house. Elijah condemns his evil practices and God doesn't allow Ahab's evil and injustice to continue. Ahab dies and his house is left desolate when the northern tribes are later taken into exile (1 Kings 22). In his ongoing confrontations with Ahab, it's clear that Elijah is a prophet of the true God and the word of the Lord is powerfully at work in him.
- Why do you think 1 and 2 Kings is really about the prophetic word of God and how it determines the course of Israel's history?
- Can you identify any other examples from 1 and 2 Kings of God raising up a prophet to counterbalance the office of kingship? (i.e. Elijah and Ahab)
- What kind of king does 1 and 2 Kings cause God's people to long for?
- How does this theme of Kings vs. Prophets prepare us for the arrival of Jesus?
- **"The Grace of God that Brings Salvation"** (Titus 2:11): Saving faith is not foremost a belief in a teaching but the assent and surrender of a person's entire being to God, who has revealed himself through the gospel. Here, a person (challenged by God's amazing self-revelation of love in Christ) believes in God's gracious forgiveness and cleansing freely available in Christ, responds to the gospel's divine call of surrender, and forsakes control of his or her life to God's love revealed through the incarnation, cross, and resurrection. Here Jesus is both Savior and Lord of a person who is born again, who becomes a new creation in Christ. This faith affects a person's mind, will, and emotions and results in one's ongoing transformation to the image of the Son (Rom 8:28-29). It consists of more than an assurance of going to heaven, as important as that is.
 - Read Eph 2:1-10; Titus 2:11-15; 3:3-8.
 - Practically, what is the difference between a person who merely agrees with the "teaching" of Christianity and one who has "surrendered their entire being" to God? How can you tell which one is operating in your own heart?
 - How does this view of salvation change surrender to God from a "have to" (obligation) to a "want to" (gratitude)? How does it inform your view that it's safe to surrender yourself to God?
 - Salvific faith does more than secure a spot in heaven for us; it also involves experiencing an ongoing relationship with God, living out the Great Commandment and Great Commission, and our *old self* being transformed to a *new self*. What are we missing when we treat salvation only as "fire insurance"? How does the above definition of faith challenge the way you view your purpose on earth right now? In what ways do you understand both the death and the resurrection of Jesus to impact your life here and now?
 - "Forsaking control" is hard to do. It doesn't necessarily mean doing nothing or being apathetic. What specific area of your life (finances, children, reputation, future plans) are hard to surrender to God? Why do we desire control in these areas rather than letting the God of "amazing love" dictate how things unfold in them? Do you primarily want your children to have a

good marriage and a good job or do you want them foremost to live a surrendered life to God?
What does it mean to surrender your children to God?

- **Quotes:**

- "When the fire of the Lord fell, the people fell on their faces and cried, 'The Lord, He is God!' This is the mark of true revival: not just emotional excitement, but a deep, overwhelming conviction of the reality of God that drives men to the ground in humility and destroys their idols." – Jonathan Edwards
- "Repentance is not just saying 'I am sorry.' It is a change of mind that leads to a change of action. It is turning from the empty altars of Baal to the consuming fire of God." – Charles Finney
- "God is ready to assume full responsibility for the life wholly yielded to Him." – Andrew Murray
- "Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who needs to lay down his arms. Laying down your arms, surrendering ..mm. that is what Christians call repentance." – C.S. Lewis
- "The danger for the Israelites—and for us—is not usually that we entirely reject God, but that we try to add Him to a collection of other functional saviors. We want God and Baal. We want heaven and the world." – Timothy Keller

PRAYER:

Pray for authentic encounters with God, for the courage to tear down false altars, and for God's fire to fall on your group and church community.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE:

Rebuild the Altar: Choose one spiritual discipline that has fallen into disrepair (daily prayer, Scripture reading, sabbath rest). Commit to rebuilding it this week with fresh surrender.