

The Confrontation

1 Kings 18:1-19

God describes King Ahab this way . . .

30 And Ahab . . . did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. 31 And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam . . . , he took for his wife Jezebel . . . , and went and served Baal and worshiped him. 32 He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.” (1 Kings 16:30–33 [ESV](#))

A long reign does not equal God’s smile. Prosperity is not always a sign of God’s pleasure.

How might we KNOW whether God is pleased with our life? We must not look to personal prosperity as the key indicator of the LORD’s pleasure upon us. Many wicked people to live in wealth and ease. Instead we are right to ask ourselves, “Am I living a life of faith in the LORD? Do I have the kind of faith that simply obeys the LORD?”

Truth: Without biblical faith it is impossible to please God.

As we think about King Ahab and his queen, Jezebel, we are right to ask, “**How did such a wicked man and woman become the rulers over God’s chosen people . . . over a nation that God created for His pleasure?**”

On a human level we explain Ahab and Jezebel’s rule by reading the fascinating story in 1 Kings 16. One military commander murders a king and slaughter’s his family. Then Ahab’s dad kills that king. And finally, Ahab takes the throne. So we can explain Ahab’s kingship by thinking about the evil conspiracies and violence that placed him on the throne.

But that explanation is VERY incomplete. **Behind the ascension of every ruler is an invisible, but real hand who moves a king into authority.**

That hand is Yahweh. If you want to know how Ahab became king over Israel, the ultimate answer is, “**The LORD places Ahab on the throne. The LORD makes Ahab king over His people.**”

Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him." (Daniel 2:20–22 [ESV](#))

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." (Romans 13:1 [ESV](#))

There is ONLY ONE GOD WHO IS LIKE THAT! Yahweh is His name. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is the God of Israel. He the God who is alive. He is the God who controls the rain. He is the God who is sovereign over everyone and everything.

Why would God put a wicked man like Ahab and Jezebel on the throne?

Ultimate answer: For His glory. The LORD is working every detail in this world to show His power, His goodness, His grace and His majesty.

As we open our Bibles to 1 Kings 18, three years have passed since Elijah told King Ahab that Yahweh is the God of Israel is going to send a drought upon the land. We can imagine the misery being experienced by the people and the nation. **Very little food. Animals dying. Children starving. The economy collapsing.**

During these three years, Ahab's fury against Elijah grows hotter by the day. **Ahab places Elijah on his FBI's most wanted list.** But no one can find Elijah because the LORD has hidden him!

The LORD first hides Elijah in the Brook Cherith and then in a widow's house. In the meantime, Jezebel is working her wrath upon the LORD's prophets. She kills as many as she can catch.

Now after three years of obscurity, the word of the LORD comes once again to Elijah to tell him that he is to face Ahab once again . . . this time to tell Ahab that the LORD is going to send rain.

Protest: Why would the LORD send rain upon Israel when King Ahab and the people are not yet repenting of the sin of idolatry?

Answer: The LORD has at least two designs:

1. The announcement of the coming rain sets the stage for a showdown between Yahweh and Baal.

2. The announcement of the coming rain brings another of God's servants into fruitful ministry.

This morning we focus on the second of these purposes. I believe that God wants to use the story of Obadiah to teach us some important truths about ministry to the LORD.

Main Idea: Ministry to the LORD is a gift from Him to us and not a gift from us to Him. When we serve the LORD, we experience God's power and glory in the most personal of ways. When we serve the LORD, we find eternal meaning to our lives.

If you are taking notes, we consider . . .

Six Encouragements for Those in Ministry

God calls every follower of Jesus into ministry to Him. The Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each born again church member and then calls each one to use those gifts in Christian ministry. For some, God gives the responsibility to be evangelists. For others God gives the responsibility to lead and to shepherd the church. For others, God gives the responsibility of caring for babies in the nursery . . . or for delivering meals to the sick . . . or for opening a home to a small group . . . or discipling young moms. All these and thousands of other ministries God ordains to strengthen Jesus' church for His glory. These six encouragements are universal to every ministry of every believer.

Encouragement #1: God directs us by His Word.

"After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying," (1 Kings 18:1 [ESV](#))

Elijah did not sit down under a tree one day and think, "Our nation is really a mess. I wonder what I could do to make a difference? I know, I think I will go and challenge King Ahab." No.

"And the word of the LORD came to him:" (1 Kings 17:2 [ESV](#))

Elijah's ministry began by God giving him His Word. Elijah is utterly dependent upon the Word of the LORD to have any ministry at all. God repeats this truth so often in this story because it is so tempting to root spiritual ministry in our own thoughts and counsel.

"Then the word of the LORD came to him," (1 Kings 17:8 [ESV](#))

God loves to give His Word to His servants for usefulness in His world.

God's ministry is never rooted in human ingenuity, creativity or insight. God uses creativity. But only the Word of the LORD **leads us into true ministry.**

Foundational Principles for ministry:

--God's Word originates all true ministry.

--God's Word directs all true ministry.

--God's Word empowers all true ministry.

For Elijah, ministry is simply a response to the WORD of the LORD.

"So he went and did according to the word of the LORD." (1 Kings 17:5 [ESV](#))

We need the Word of the LORD in order to know WHAT to say and do, HOW to say and do, WHEN to say and do, and WHY we say and do.

Truth: Any ministry that disconnects from the Word of the LORD is not of the LORD.

"But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die." (Deuteronomy 18:20 [ESV](#))

*Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. **They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.**" (Jeremiah 23:16 [ESV](#))*

Encouragement #2: God often conceals our ministry.

After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household.

(Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly, and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.)” (1 Kings 18:1–4 [ESV](#))

Hidden within King Ahab’s very close circle of advisors a Yahweh-fearing man named Obadiah. And Obadiah is quietly ministering to the LORD in King Ahab’s court. He has to do so secretly. But behind the scenes Obadiah ministers to the LORD effectively. **Obadiah does not divide his sacred life from his secular life. Worship and work are one unified cloth.**

Remember that Obadiah is not a prophet, nor a priest. He does not do ministry as his vocation. But God gives him a key ministry as he serves in a wicked king’s court. **Friend, do you know that God intends to use you in your workplace for His glory?**

Principle: God places His faithful followers in key positions in the secular and idolatrous world to accomplish His good purposes.

The ministry of many is often hidden from view, but these are ordained for God’s glory just as much as those in the spotlight.

Many commentators are rough on Obadiah, saying that he is a compromising believer, a half-hearted servant of God. But I find no warrant to condemn him sharply. Here the text tells us plainly that he feared the Lord greatly. I do not know how he survived being so close to King Ahab, but we do not have to assume that he compromised the truth in order to be in such a position. After all, Joseph was second in command in Pharaoh’s court, Daniel was an exalted official in Babylon. Esther was queen in Ahasuerus’ palace. God sovereignly set them in those strategic positions to represent Him and to do His work.

Obadiah is faithful to the Lord while he served in a wicked king’s administration. Obadiah did not compromise his spiritual convictions or his ethical standards. He did not participate in the evil of hunting down God’s prophets. In fact, he undermined that effort.

Principle: Every time in the scripture where we see a servant of God occupying a unique position in the secular world, they influence the world not by being like the world, but by obeying God and being faithful to Him.

Application: Friend, I do not know what place God has set you in this world. But it may be a strategic, hidden . . . that place might be in government, that place

might be in a large corporation, that place might be in the realm of law or medicine or commerce.

Truth: Our influence is not dependent upon our adopting the mindset of this world. Our influence is dependent upon agreeing with God in our thoughts, words and actions. Look at Obadiah as your example.

3b (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly, 4 and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.)" (1 Kings 18:3–4 [ESV](#))

God designed to use Obadiah to preserve His prophets lives. Obadiah could not sit quietly by while the atrocity of mass murder of the LORD's prophets took place.

And Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals." So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself." (1 Kings 18:5–6 [ESV](#))

How hard Ahab's heart is! God's prophet told Ahab that rain was going to stop for 3 long years because of Ahab's worship of Baal. **Yet in those three years of drought, Ahab does not say to himself, "God's word is true. The LORD, not Baal, is sovereign over the rain. God of Israel is judging me and I need to repent of my sin. I need to seek God's mercy."**

Truth: Pain and suffering in themselves do not produce repentance. Only a sovereign work of grace Gospel produces repentance. Ask the LORD to give you that grace!

As the misery from the drought intensifies, Ahab hardens his heart and resists the LORD all the more.

Perhaps you are here today and you are living in rebellion against the LORD. You are worshipping at the altar of sex or money or power or prestige or deceit.

How much pain must God bring to awaken your conscience to repentance? Ahab was a fool for not seeking God's mercy at a time when God was communicating his power to him. Do not be a fool with him.

STORY of Robbie, Jeff and Doug's car crash. They did not see God in this crash. In their deep need, they did not turn to God in humility and faith. They held onto a spirit of defiance toward God.

O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent. (Jer 5:3 ESV)

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Encouragement #3: God often places us in danger.

7 And as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him. And Obadiah recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is it you, my lord Elijah?" (Obadiah is surprised because Elijah has not been seen for three years!) 8 And he answered him, "It is I. Go, tell your lord, 'Behold, Elijah is here.'"" (1 Kings 18:7–8 [ESV](#))

9 And he said, "How have I sinned, that you would give your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? 10 As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. And when they would say, 'He is not here,' he would take an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you. 11 And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Behold, Elijah is here.'" 12 And as soon as I have gone from you, the Spirit of the LORD will carry you I know not where. And so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth." (1 Kings 18:9–12 [ESV](#))

Obadiah's argument is one of faith mixed with doubt. Obadiah believes that God is going to protect Elijah from Ahab. He is confident that God is going to continue to act to protect Elijah from Ahab. BUT Obadiah is not so sure that God is going to protect Obadiah from Ahab.

Isn't that how it often is? **We are often confident of God's ability to care for others, but we get anxious when we think about God caring for us.** Obadiah is scared spitless over this assignment.

He courageously risked his position and his life to protect God's prophets. **If Obadiah had been caught protecting God's prophets, he would likely have been executed with them.**

"The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe." (Proverbs 29:25 [ESV](#))

Truth: Faith requires courage. Fear and faith are like oil and water . . . they do not mix in the heart of a person.

Obadiah did what Cory ten Boom's family did during the Holocaust in the Netherlands in the 1940s.

One day In May of 1942, a well - dressed woman came to the ten Boom door with a [suitcase](#) in hand. Nervously, she told ten Boom that she was a Jew and that her husband had been arrested several months before, and her son had gone into hiding. Occupation authorities had recently visited her, and she was too fearful to return home. After hearing about how they had helped the another family, she asked if she might stay with them, and Casper ten Boom readily agreed. A devoted reader of the Old Testament, Casper ten Boom believed Jews were indeed "the chosen," and told the woman, **"In this household, God's people are always welcome."** From that day forward Cory ten Boom's family hid Jews in their home to protect them from the Nazi's. But in Cory's case, her family was found out and they were all sent to concentration camps because of it. Only Cory lived to see the end of that dark hour. The other members of her family perished in those awful camps. If you asked Cory's dad Casper, "Would you do it again?" He would say, "Yes. Yes, I would." After the Holocaust and all her loss **Cory ten Boom would say, "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."** And ***"The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration, but its donation."***

Question: Does your faith require courage? When was the last time you did something for God that scared you a bit? Most of us will not have the challenge of hiding God's prophets, but we are asked to be bold in our testimony for Christ and to accept ridicule for our obedience to Him. We can trust God to give us the grace and wisdom we need when the time comes for us to make commitments that require courage. **Pray, "Lord, help me to be ready to serve you in whatever way You see fit."**

God gave Obadiah an assignment and it was not a safe one.

God often sets his servants in dangerous places. **We must not shrink back when the Lord asks us to serve Him by doing hard things.** We may not face death like Obadiah, but the LORD often asks us to risk to the loss of **man's praise, of social standing, of job promotions, of academic achievement.** These are common "dangers" that God sets before believers in our world.

Obadiah is a courageous man, but he is feeling the peril breathing down his neck.

13 Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid a hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water? 14 And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Behold, Elijah is here"; and he will kill me.'" (1 Kings 18:13–14 [ESV](#))

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Encouragement #4: God gives promises to sustain us.

Notice what God does to embolden Obadiah's faith.

15 And Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today." 16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah." (1 Kings 18:15–16 [ESV](#))

Someone asks, "How will I be able to commit myself to God in such a courageous way?" Answer: By setting our eyes on God's promises.

Principle: When God commands us to do hard things, He accompanies His command with a promise. Do the commandments that God gives to you look hard and nearly impossible? They did to Obadiah. Perhaps God's commandments **to not lie, but to tell the truth** looks overwhelming. Perhaps God's commandments regarding **speaking the Gospel boldly** for Him look ominous. Perhaps God's commandments **regarding marriage look hard**.

Remember: God's commands come with God's promises.

When God told Abraham to leave his home country, God also promised him, **"I will make of you a great nation."**

When God told Moses to confront Pharaoh, He also promised, **"I will be with you mouth and teach you what to say."**

When God told Joshua to enter the Promised Land, He also promised, **"for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."**

When God told his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples, He also promised **"for I am with you always even to the end of the age."**

God's every command comes with God's strengthening promise.

APPLICATION: When you are afraid to do what God clearly direct you to do, search the scriptures to find the promise that will strengthen you for obedience.

God never lies. God always fulfills His promise to you. Obadiah was afraid. God gave him a promise. And it was on the strength of that promise that Obadiah responded:

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. (1Ki 18:16 ESV)

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Encouragement #5: God always rewards courageous faith.

17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" 18 And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. 19 Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." 20 So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel." (1 Kings 18:17–20 [ESV](#))

Question: Why would someone choose to follow Jesus if they KNOW that the path is difficult, dangerous and deadly? Answer: Because God promises that the reward of following Him is greater than any loss. Do you believe that?

We will read about the confrontation between God and Baal at Mt. Carmel next week. But for now, it is enough to know that God wins. God wins. He always does. And because God always wins, he always rewards those who are faithful to Him. This is the essence of faith.

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Heb 11:6 [ESV](#))

Obadiah had to make a choice. Elijah had a choice to make. Ahab had to make a choice. Obadiah chose to believe the LORD and risk his own life to tell King Ahab that Elijah is here. Elijah chose to believe the LORD and risk his own life to

confront King Ahab and the prophets of Baal. Ahab chose NOT to believe the Lord and continue to align with his wife in worshipping Baal. All of them chose the path that they believed would lead to the greatest reward.

Truth: No one chooses a path where the losses seem greater than the reward.

The path you choose is the path that you believe is most rewarding. Here is the conflict. Our natural senses push us to believe that our own path is more rewarding than the path that God lays out in His Word.

Do you think Obadiah or Elijah regret the choices that they made to live for the Lord? No. The Lord rewards them fully.

Do you think Ahab regrets his choice to rebel? Yes, he finds out too late that the Baal path is full of empty promises. Forever and ever and ever Ahab regrets the foolish decisions he made.

You have to make a choice. Will you believe God and follow Him? Or will you continue to follow your own path?

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Encouragement #6: God allows false accusations.

When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17 [ESV](#))

Ahab blames Elijah for the troubles in Israel. When people experience distress, they often point fingers of accusation at God's servants. Ahab blames God's messenger. But in reality King Ahab is the troubler of Israel. Ahab brings trouble to God's people by sinning against the LORD.

And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. (1 Kings 18:18 [ESV](#))

IN ministry, we should expect false accusations to be hurled in our direction. Satan intends to use these to discourage God's servants and to rob them of strength to do the will of the LORD.

Conclusion: We have been dwelling upon ministry to the LORD. We have seen Elijah who is a vocational prophet of the Yahweh and Obadiah who is a lay person working in King Ahab's palace. Both men are servants of the living God.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8–10 [ESV](#))

God calls every follower of Jesus into ministry to Him. The Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each born again church member and then calls each one to use those gifts in Christian ministry.

Question #1: Are you saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus? Salvation precedes service.

Question #2: Are you engaging the work which God prepared beforehand for you to fulfill?

Question #3: Are you being encouraged as you engage in the work of the LORD?

Main Idea: Ministry to the LORD is a gift from Him to us and not a gift from us to Him. When we serve the LORD, we experience God's power and glory in the most personal of ways. When we serve the LORD, we find eternal meaning to our lives.

Let's enter this story by starting with a warrior named Zimri. **Zimri is the commander of half of King Elah's army.** And after two years of Elah's reign as king over Israel, Zimri thinks to himself, "I would be a much better king than Elah! That man is nothing but a big drunk." So Zimri sets a plan in place to kill King Elah. He waits until Elah threw one of his alcohol-soaked parties and when King Elah became sloshed, Zimri strikes him down.

Zimri multiplies his violence as he kills every male member of Elah's house . . . the sons, the brothers, the nephews. All are slain. No male is spared.

*Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, **according to the word of the LORD**, which he spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, 13 for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and which they made Israel to sin, **provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols.**" (1 Kings 16:12–13 [ESV](#))*

Zimri is God's instrument to bring judgment upon King Elah. Now Zimri becomes king and he reigns for 7 whole days! But when Israel's army hears about King Elah's assassination, they reject Zimri and commission their army commander, Omri to become the next king. The army then marches on the royal palace and Zimri knows that he is a goner. So he commits suicide by burning down the king's house over him.

Omri becomes king and rules over Israel for 20 years. Surely, Omri learned from King Baasha and Elah not to provoke the LORD to anger by worshipping idols!

Omri did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did more evil than all who were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols." (1 Kings 16:25–26 [ESV](#))

Omri has a son whom he names Ahab. Ahab becomes the king of Israel when his dad dies. Ahab reigns for 22 years.

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How might we KNOW whether God is pleased with our life? We must not look to personal prosperity as the key indicator of the LORD’s pleasure upon us. Many wicked people to live in wealth and ease. Instead we are right to ask ourselves, “Am I living a life of faith in the LORD? Do I have the kind of faith that simply obeys the LORD?”

Truth: Without biblical faith it is impossible to please God.

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On a human level we explain Ahab and Jezebel’s rule by reading the fascinating story in 1 Kings 16. One military commander murders a king and slaughter’s his family. Then Ahab’s dad kills that king. And finally, Ahab takes the throne. So we can explain Ahab’s kingship by thinking about the evil conspiracies and violence that placed him on the throne.

But that explanation is VERY incomplete. **Behind the ascension of every ruler is an invisible, but real hand who moves a king into authority.**

That hand is Yahweh. If you want to know how Ahab became king over Israel, the ultimate answer is, “**The LORD places Ahab on the throne. The LORD makes Ahab king over His people.**”

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"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." (Romans 13:1 [ESV](#))

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Why would God put a wicked man like Ahab and Jezebel on the throne?

Ultimate answer: For His glory. The LORD is working every detail in this world to show His power, His goodness, His grace and His majesty.

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During these three years, Ahab's fury against Elijah grows hotter by the day. **Ahab places Elijah on his FBI's most wanted list.** But no one can find Elijah because the LORD has hidden him!

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Answer: The LORD has at least two designs:

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2. The announcement of the coming rain brings another of God's servants into fruitful ministry.

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Six Encouragements for Those in Ministry

God calls every follower of Jesus into ministry to Him. The Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each born again church member and then calls each one to use those gifts in Christian ministry. For some, God gives the responsibility to be evangelists. For others God gives the responsibility to lead and to shepherd the church. For others, God gives the responsibility of caring for babies in the nursery . . . or for delivering meals to the sick . . . or for opening a home to a small group . . . or discipling young moms. All these and thousands of other ministries God ordains to strengthen Jesus' church for His glory. These six encouragements are universal to every ministry of every believer.

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Elijah did not sit down under a tree one day and think, "Our nation is really a mess. I wonder what I could do to make a difference? I know, I think I will go and challenge King Ahab." No.

"And the word of the LORD came to him:" (1 Kings 17:2 [ESV](#))

Elijah's ministry began by God giving him His Word. Elijah is utterly dependent upon the Word of the LORD to have any ministry at all. God repeats this truth so often in this story because it is so tempting to root spiritual ministry in our own thoughts and counsel.

"Then the word of the LORD came to him," (1 Kings 17:8 [ESV](#))

God loves to give His Word to His servants for usefulness in His world.

God's ministry is never rooted in human ingenuity, creativity or insight. God uses creativity. But only the Word of the LORD **leads us into true ministry.**

Foundational Principles for ministry:

--God's Word originates all true ministry.

--God's Word directs all true ministry.

--God's Word empowers all true ministry.

For Elijah, ministry is simply a response to the WORD of the LORD.

"So he went and did according to the word of the LORD." (1 Kings 17:5 [ESV](#))

We need the Word of the LORD in order to know WHAT to say and do, HOW to say and do, WHEN to say and do, and WHY we say and do.

Truth: Any ministry that disconnects from the Word of the LORD is not of the LORD.

"But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die." (Deuteronomy 18:20 [ESV](#))

*Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. **They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.**" (Jeremiah 23:16 [ESV](#))*

Encouragement #2: God often conceals our ministry.

After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria. And Ahab called Obadiah, who was over the household.

(Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly, and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.)” (1 Kings 18:1–4 [ESV](#))

Hidden within King Ahab’s very close circle of advisors a Yahweh-fearing man named Obadiah. And Obadiah is quietly ministering to the LORD in King Ahab’s court. He has to do so secretly. But behind the scenes Obadiah ministers to the LORD effectively. **Obadiah does not divide his sacred life from his secular life. Worship and work are one unified cloth.**

Remember that Obadiah is not a prophet, nor a priest. He does not do ministry as his vocation. But God gives him a key ministry as he serves in a wicked king’s court. **Friend, do you know that God intends to use you in your workplace for His glory?**

Principle: God places His faithful followers in key positions in the secular and idolatrous world to accomplish His good purposes.

The ministry of many is often hidden from view, but these are ordained for God’s glory just as much as those in the spotlight.

Many commentators are rough on Obadiah, saying that he is a compromising believer, a half-hearted servant of God. But I find no warrant to condemn him sharply. Here the text tells us plainly that he feared the Lord greatly. I do not know how he survived being so close to King Ahab, but we do not have to assume that he compromised the truth in order to be in such a position. After all, Joseph was second in command in Pharaoh’s court, Daniel was an exalted official in Babylon. Esther was queen in Ahasuerus’ palace. God sovereignly set them in those strategic positions to represent Him and to do His work.

Obadiah is faithful to the Lord while he served in a wicked king’s administration. Obadiah did not compromise his spiritual convictions or his ethical standards. He did not participate in the evil of hunting down God’s prophets. In fact, he undermined that effort.

Principle: Every time in the scripture where we see a servant of God occupying a unique position in the secular world, they influence the world not by being like the world, but by obeying God and being faithful to Him.

Application: Friend, I do not know what place God has set you in this world. But it may be a strategic, hidden . . . that place might be in government, that place

might be in a large corporation, that place might be in the realm of law or medicine or commerce.

Truth: Our influence is not dependent upon our adopting the mindset of this world. Our influence is dependent upon agreeing with God in our thoughts, words and actions. Look at Obadiah as your example.

3b (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly, 4 and when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water.)" (1 Kings 18:3–4 [ESV](#))

God designed to use Obadiah to preserve His prophets lives. Obadiah could not sit quietly by while the atrocity of mass murder of the LORD's prophets took place.

And Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys. Perhaps we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, and not lose some of the animals." So they divided the land between them to pass through it. Ahab went in one direction by himself, and Obadiah went in another direction by himself." (1 Kings 18:5–6 [ESV](#))

How hard Ahab's heart is! God's prophet told Ahab that rain was going to stop for 3 long years because of Ahab's worship of Baal. **Yet in those three years of drought, Ahab does not say to himself, "God's word is true. The LORD, not Baal, is sovereign over the rain. God of Israel is judging me and I need to repent of my sin. I need to seek God's mercy."**

Truth: Pain and suffering in themselves do not produce repentance. Only a sovereign work of grace Gospel produces repentance. Ask the LORD to give you that grace!

As the misery from the drought intensifies, Ahab hardens his heart and resists the LORD all the more.

Perhaps you are here today and you are living in rebellion against the LORD. You are worshipping at the altar of sex or money or power or prestige or deceit.

How much pain must God bring to awaken your conscience to repentance? Ahab was a fool for not seeking God's mercy at a time when God was communicating his power to him. Do not be a fool with him.

STORY of Robbie, Jeff and Doug's car crash. They did not see God in this crash. In their deep need, they did not turn to God in humility and faith. They held onto a spirit of defiance toward God.

O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent. (Jer 5:3 ESV)

Encouragement #1: God directs us by His Word.

Encouragement #2: God often conceals our ministry.

Encouragement #3: God often places us in danger.

7 And as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him. And Obadiah recognized him and fell on his face and said, "Is it you, my lord Elijah?" (Obadiah is surprised because Elijah has not been seen for three years!) 8 And he answered him, "It is I. Go, tell your lord, 'Behold, Elijah is here.'"" (1 Kings 18:7–8 [ESV](#))

9 And he said, "How have I sinned, that you would give your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? 10 As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you. And when they would say, 'He is not here,' he would take an oath of the kingdom or nation, that they had not found you. 11 And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Behold, Elijah is here.'" 12 And as soon as I have gone from you, the Spirit of the LORD will carry you I know not where. And so, when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth." (1 Kings 18:9–12 [ESV](#))

Obadiah's argument is one of faith mixed with doubt. Obadiah believes that God is going to protect Elijah from Ahab. He is confident that God is going to continue to act to protect Elijah from Ahab. BUT Obadiah is not so sure that God is going to protect Obadiah from Ahab.

Isn't that how it often is? **We are often confident of God's ability to care for others, but we get anxious when we think about God caring for us.** Obadiah is scared spitless over this assignment.

He courageously risked his position and his life to protect God's prophets. **If Obadiah had been caught protecting God's prophets, he would likely have been executed with them.**

"The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe." (Proverbs 29:25 [ESV](#))

Truth: Faith requires courage. Fear and faith are like oil and water . . . they do not mix in the heart of a person.

Obadiah did what Cory ten Boom's family did during the Holocaust in the Netherlands in the 1940s.

One day In May of 1942, a well - dressed woman came to the ten Boom door with a [suitcase](#) in hand. Nervously, she told ten Boom that she was a Jew and that her husband had been arrested several months before, and her son had gone into hiding. Occupation authorities had recently visited her, and she was too fearful to return home. After hearing about how they had helped the another family, she asked if she might stay with them, and Casper ten Boom readily agreed. A devoted reader of the Old Testament, Casper ten Boom believed Jews were indeed "the chosen," and told the woman, **"In this household, God's people are always welcome."** From that day forward Cory ten Boom's family hid Jews in their home to protect them from the Nazi's. But in Cory's case, her family was found out and they were all sent to concentration camps because of it. Only Cory lived to see the end of that dark hour. The other members of her family perished in those awful camps. If you asked Cory's dad Casper, "Would you do it again?" He would say, "Yes. Yes, I would." After the Holocaust and all her loss **Cory ten Boom would say, "Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."** And ***"The measure of a life, after all, is not its duration, but its donation."***

Question: Does your faith require courage? When was the last time you did something for God that scared you a bit? Most of us will not have the challenge of hiding God's prophets, but we are asked to be bold in our testimony for Christ and to accept ridicule for our obedience to Him. We can trust God to give us the grace and wisdom we need when the time comes for us to make commitments that require courage. **Pray, "Lord, help me to be ready to serve you in whatever way You see fit."**

God gave Obadiah an assignment and it was not a safe one.

God often sets his servants in dangerous places. **We must not shrink back when the Lord asks us to serve Him by doing hard things.** We may not face death like Obadiah, but the LORD often asks us to risk to the loss of **man's praise, of social standing, of job promotions, of academic achievement.** These are common "dangers" that God sets before believers in our world.

Obadiah is a courageous man, but he is feeling the peril breathing down his neck.

13 Has it not been told my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid a hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water? 14 And now you say, 'Go, tell your lord, "Behold, Elijah is here"; and he will kill me.'" (1 Kings 18:13–14 [ESV](#))

Encouragement #1: God directs us by His Word.

Encouragement #2: God often conceals our ministry.

Encouragement #3: God often places us in danger.

Encouragement #4: God gives promises to sustain us.

Notice what God does to embolden Obadiah's faith.

15 And Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today." 16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah." (1 Kings 18:15–16 [ESV](#))

Someone asks, "How will I be able to commit myself to God in such a courageous way?" Answer: By setting our eyes on God's promises.

Principle: When God commands us to do hard things, He accompanies His command with a promise. Do the commandments that God gives to you look hard and nearly impossible? They did to Obadiah. Perhaps God's commandments **to not lie, but to tell the truth** looks overwhelming. Perhaps God's commandments regarding **speaking the Gospel boldly** for Him look ominous. Perhaps God's commandments **regarding marriage look hard**.

Remember: God's commands come with God's promises.

When God told Abraham to leave his home country, God also promised him, **"I will make of you a great nation."**

When God told Moses to confront Pharaoh, He also promised, **"I will be with you mouth and teach you what to say."**

When God told Joshua to enter the Promised Land, He also promised, **"for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."**

When God told his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples, He also promised **"for I am with you always even to the end of the age."**

God's every command comes with God's strengthening promise.

APPLICATION: When you are afraid to do what God clearly direct you to do, search the scriptures to find the promise that will strengthen you for obedience.

God never lies. God always fulfills His promise to you. Obadiah was afraid. God gave him a promise. And it was on the strength of that promise that Obadiah responded:

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. (1Ki 18:16 ESV)

Encouragement #1: God directs us by His Word.

Encouragement #2: God often conceals our ministry.

Encouragement #3: God often places us in danger.

Encouragement #4: God gives promises to sustain us.

Encouragement #5: God always rewards courageous faith.

17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" 18 And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. 19 Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." 20 So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel." (1 Kings 18:17–20 [ESV](#))

Question: Why would someone choose to follow Jesus if they KNOW that the path is difficult, dangerous and deadly? Answer: Because God promises that the reward of following Him is greater than any loss. Do you believe that?

We will read about the confrontation between God and Baal at Mt. Carmel next week. But for now, it is enough to know that God wins. God wins. He always does. And because God always wins, he always rewards those who are faithful to Him. This is the essence of faith.

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Heb 11:6 [ESV](#))

Obadiah had to make a choice. Elijah had a choice to make. Ahab had to make a choice. Obadiah chose to believe the LORD and risk his own life to tell King Ahab that Elijah is here. Elijah chose to believe the LORD and risk his own life to

confront King Ahab and the prophets of Baal. Ahab chose NOT to believe the Lord and continue to align with his wife in worshipping Baal. All of them chose the path that they believed would lead to the greatest reward.

Truth: No one chooses a path where the losses seem greater than the reward.

The path you choose is the path that you believe is most rewarding. Here is the conflict. Our natural senses push us to believe that our own path is more rewarding than the path that God lays out in His Word.

Do you think Obadiah or Elijah regret the choices that they made to live for the Lord? No. The Lord rewards them fully.

Do you think Ahab regrets his choice to rebel? Yes, he finds out too late that the Baal path is full of empty promises. Forever and ever and ever Ahab regrets the foolish decisions he made.

You have to make a choice. Will you believe God and follow Him? Or will you continue to follow your own path?

Encouragement #1: God directs us by His Word.

Encouragement #2: God often conceals our ministry.

Encouragement #3: God often places us in danger.

Encouragement #4: God gives promises to sustain us.

Encouragement #5: God always rewards courageous faith.

Encouragement #6: God allows false accusations.

When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17 [ESV](#))

Ahab blames Elijah for the troubles in Israel. When people experience distress, they often point fingers of accusation at God's servants. Ahab blames God's messenger. But in reality King Ahab is the troubler of Israel. Ahab brings trouble to God's people by sinning against the LORD.

And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. (1 Kings 18:18 [ESV](#))

IN ministry, we should expect false accusations to be hurled in our direction. Satan intends to use these to discourage God's servants and to rob them of strength to do the will of the LORD.

Conclusion: We have been dwelling upon ministry to the LORD. We have seen Elijah who is a vocational prophet of the Yahweh and Obadiah who is a lay person working in King Ahab's palace. Both men are servants of the living God.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8–10 [ESV](#))

God calls every follower of Jesus into ministry to Him. The Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each born again church member and then calls each one to use those gifts in Christian ministry.

Question #1: Are you saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus? Salvation precedes service.

Question #2: Are you engaging the work which God prepared beforehand for you to fulfill?

Question #3: Are you being encouraged as you engage in the work of the LORD?

Main Idea: Ministry to the LORD is a gift from Him to us and not a gift from us to Him. When we serve the LORD, we experience God's power and glory in the most personal of ways. When we serve the LORD, we find eternal meaning to our lives.

Let's enter this story by starting with a warrior named Zimri. **Zimri is the commander of half of King Elah's army.** And after two years of Elah's reign as king over Israel, Zimri thinks to himself, "I would be a much better king than Elah! That man is nothing but a big drunk." So Zimri sets a plan in place to kill King Elah. He waits until Elah threw one of his alcohol-soaked parties and when King Elah became sloshed, Zimri strikes him down.

Zimri multiplies his violence as he kills every male member of Elah's house . . . the sons, the brothers, the nephews. All are slain. No male is spared.

*Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, **according to the word of the LORD**, which he spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, 13 for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and which they made Israel to sin, **provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols.**" (1 Kings 16:12–13 [ESV](#))*

Zimri is God's instrument to bring judgment upon King Elah. Now Zimri becomes king and he reigns for 7 whole days! But when Israel's army hears about King Elah's assassination, they reject Zimri and commission their army commander, Omri to become the next king. The army then marches on the royal palace and Zimri knows that he is a goner. So he commits suicide by burning down the king's house over him.

Omri becomes king and rules over Israel for 20 years. Surely, Omri learned from King Baasha and Elah not to provoke the LORD to anger by worshipping idols!

Omri did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did more evil than all who were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols." (1 Kings 16:25–26 [ESV](#))

Omri has a son whom he names Ahab. Ahab becomes the king of Israel when his dad dies. Ahab reigns for 22 years.