



# Foundation of Faith

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## Elijah

Elijah, a Man Like Us

Why God Lets Us Wait

The Value of Family Devotions

Being Disciples and Making Disciples

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## FOUNDATION OF FAITH

*Editor*

Hans-Dietrich Nimz

*Editorial Team*

Niko Ernst

Harry Semenjok

Ron Taron

Hermann Vogt

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Questions and suggestions can be sent to:  
[contact@foundationoffaith.cc](mailto:contact@foundationoffaith.cc)

Please address all other correspondence and subscription requests to:  
Christian Unity Press  
5195 Exchange Drive  
Flint, MI 48507  
Tel.: (810) 732-1831  
or email us at  
[cupress@thechurchofgod.cc](mailto:cupress@thechurchofgod.cc)  
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## *Editorial*

Dear Reader,

Of all the great prophets and servants of God we read about in the Bible, this month I would like to draw your attention to Elijah. Despite not being listed as a hero of the faith in Hebrews 11, he occupies a special place in the Word of God.

Described as a Tishbite and citizen of Gilead, Elijah is mentioned dozens of times in the Bible. In Matthew 11:14, Elijah is taken to foreshadow John the Baptist, and in James 5:17–18, we read, “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”

Elijah’s family is a mystery to us, especially in contrast to the wealth of information we have about the parents and siblings of Moses and King David, for example. It is as though Elijah appears from nowhere, without any details about his age, vocation, or election by God. We read only, “And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word’” (1 Kings 17:1).

This introduction is followed by a step-by-step account of how Elijah—walking in faith, obedience, and trust in God—first hid at the brook Cherith, where God sent ravens to provide for him, before following God’s direction northward, to Sarepta near Sidon, where his encounter with a widow and her son led to a demonstration of God’s miraculous power.

Let us not forget that “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours” (James 5:17). We, too, can trust God to never leave us nor forsake us! The God who helped Elijah is the same today and will help us!

*H. D. Nimz*



# How the Rain Came

The Bemba tribe in Central Africa had been waiting for rain for over six months. The fields were prepared for sowing, but there was no rain. The land was so dry that the earth had large cracks in it. It was so hard that you could break your leg if you had the misfortune to fall into such a crack. In times of drought, people used to try to take prisoners from the enemy tribe of Vasanga, who were then sacrificed to the spirits. Now they tried to conjure up the longed-for rain by sacrificing goats, sheep, chickens, and other animals. But they were repeatedly unsuccessful. It was the same this time.

The chief, Mwashya, went to see his friend, the sorcerer, to discuss the matter with him. He told the tribesmen to bring him a few goats, sheep, or chickens. He wanted to ask the spirits to show him, by examining the animals' entrails, why the sky was not giving rain. Someone had to be at fault.

A few of the tribespeople were appointed to bring the sacrificial animals. There was no refusal. It would only invite more misfortune for the tribe. What the

sorcerer asked for happened, and a few days later he ordered the people to brew beer and invite people to the sacrificial feast. The spirits had shown him who was to blame for the lack of rain.

In Mwashya—as the village was called, after the name of the chief—we had a small group of Christians, a zealous missionary congregation. Our believing friends were also suffering greatly from the drought, which had now been going on for months. They prayed incessantly to the God of heaven and earth, whom they called their Father in Christ, to send them the much-needed rain so they could sow and reap.

The day appointed by the sorcerer approached. The whole village had gathered to witness the solemn act—albeit with inner trepidation—and to punish the culprit or culprits. Only our group of Christians stayed away.

Wearing ceremonial jewelry, his face and chest tattooed with white chalk, his whole body rubbed with oil, causing him to emanate an acrid smell, and his head covered with the fur of a leopard's head, the sor-



cerer appeared before the assembled tribe. His dance began with small jumps and contorted limbs, then the movements became wilder and faster until he finally fell like lightning in religious ecstasy and lay as if dead on the ground.

The audience knew: Now the spirit was speaking to him. Soon they would hear who was to blame for all the misery. After a while, the magician rose, called his assistant, and sat down. The assistant brought the first sacrificial animal. It was slaughtered. After the sorcerer had rummaged through the entrails for a while as if looking for something specific, he jumped up, pointed to a piece, and then gave his verdict: "It is the Christians who are stopping the rain! They neglect sacrifices and prayers to the spirits of the dead; that's why the rain doesn't come. But the spirits demand sacrifices."

Now it was getting serious for our friends. They heard the verdict. Special prayer meetings were arranged. They pleaded with God; they asked for rain—but the rain did not come. The day appointed by the council drew nearer. It arrived, but the rain still hadn't

come. Should the Christians be unfaithful to their faith and return to the old cult of sacrifice? Or should they allow themselves to be chased away and then move to the mission station, as many before them had to do?

The evening when the sentence was to be carried out arrived. The Christians were still praying for rain. They did not want to sacrifice but wanted to stay with their fellow tribesmen. The chief's warriors appeared to present them to the high council, where they would receive their sentence.

Now the moment had come for the verdict to be pronounced. Everyone rose. Suddenly—a flash and a crash! The floodgates of the heavens opened, and rain poured down on the assembled crowd, causing them to leave the square head over heels and hurry away.— Only the crowd of Christians was left alone. They had never enjoyed getting wet as much as on this day. They sang joyfully and gratefully: "Holy God, we praise Thy Name; Lord of all, we bow before Thee!"

Yes, God is a Savior in times of need! Glory to His great name! ■



# God Needs Committed People

**K**ing Ahab was one of the most prominent figures of his day. He was politically savvy, culturally tolerant, and had military success. However, his way of life was an abomination to God. So, in the name of the Lord, the prophet Elijah was sent to oppose him.

## God needs committed people in times of widespread tolerance

Ahab married Jezebel, a heathen princess from Sidonia. He himself, no doubt, believed that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was the supreme God. When Jezebel gave birth to his sons, he named them Ahaziah and Jehoram, and in the Hebrew both names show clear reference to the God of Israel. No doubt Ahab did this to show his reverence for the Lord.

Yet Jezebel served the idols. Could Ahab have prohibited her from doing so? In order for her to practice

her heathen religion, a temple to Baal with an altar, images, and dedicated priests was established in Samaria, the capital city of the king. In this way, a second state religion was tolerated or even established.

Today, we might refer to this as a cultural exchange. The cult of Baal was tolerated and promoted by the king himself. Perhaps he felt forced to be tolerant? As a result, the Baal and Asherah cult did not remain a private matter restricted to the queen, it became much too interesting and appealing.

The second deity that Jezebel honoured was Asherah, believed to be a goddess of fertility. This Asherah cult was religiously-veiled sensuality. Where would such a religious spirit not find adherents? Perhaps it was not the Israelites who were first drawn to this cult. Ahab's kingdom was a mixture of peoples. Many heathen people lived in the northern part of Israel. Because of the political division of the state, the followers of the God of Israel no longer had access to the temple of Jerusalem within their own territory. The current political climate determined whether or not they could easily make a pilgrimage to that temple.

Anyone staying away from the house of God is always in great danger. The kings preceding Ahab did not take the service of the Lord very seriously. This attitude constantly increased so that the tolerant liberal attitude of the northern part of Israel also became the norm for those whom God had chosen to be His people.

Ahab anticipated what the Prussian king, Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, declared much later, that all religions must be tolerated and that in his kingdom everyone could find salvation according to their own fashion. Certainly, it is admirable for a country to allow freedom





of conscience. Yet for Elijah and for Ahab, freedom of conscience was not the issue.

Even though the northern kingdom kept the name of Israel, it was no longer connected with the Throne of David. Nine dynasties followed one after another in the northern kingdom. Most of them came about through cruel and bloody revolutions. They all knew that Israel was to be a special and holy people. However, they not only allowed their foreign-born subjects to live out their pagan beliefs, but also encouraged the spirit of evil to spread among the people of God.

Consequently, everyone lived according to whatever they felt like, including being “a bit religious.” Years later, the Lord’s statement about Laodicea accurately describes this way of living: “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:15–16). In this time of religious apathy, something happened that should have resulted in deep reflection.

Hiel of Bethel decided to rebuild Jericho. When he laid the foundation, his son Abiram died, and when he set up its gates, his youngest son Segub perished (1 Kings 16:34). This came about “according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun” (1 Kings 16:34). After destroying Jericho, Joshua put a curse on anyone who would resurrect the city, saying, “Cursed *be* the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates” (Joshua 6:26).

### **God demonstrates His holiness through judgment and grace**

What was predicted beforehand amazingly came to pass. Yet, despite taking note of this, it was light-heartedly brushed aside, and life continued on as normal, just as it does today. Who considers the fact that the Bible predicts that in the last time there will be wars and rumors of war? When were these predictions as clear and numerous as today? Despite this revelation, people continue living as if all is normal. But God is different. He is a holy and jealous God who, through judgment and grace, tries to bring people to know Him and to serve Him.

What happened in Jericho impacted only a few people and may even have been considered a coincidence by some. In any case, it did not cause any major change in attitude or lead people to repent. So, Elijah gave them greater cause to know that God is in control. Elijah predicted a great drought. Again, today such natural catastrophes would be explained as the result of natural causes, nuclear missile testing, or even sunspots. Yet in Elijah’s day, such considerations were not options. The Lord was about to reveal Himself as the Almighty God.

### **Who is this Elijah?**

The name Elijah means “My God is Yahweh.” Elijah suddenly appeared and spoke to Ahab. He came from Tishbite, a small mountain village in the tumultuous region of east Jordan. God calls whomever He wishes. Yet those called are different from the tolerant egoistical people they are among. Elijah was sure that God had sent him. Without much ado, he got right to the point. He didn’t even give reasons for his declaration. He said, “As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word” (1 Kings 17:1).

Did Ahab truly understand Elijah’s words at the time? We know that when the drought took on catastrophic proportions, he definitely did! Even Jezebel got the message. Her tolerance quickly came to an end. She hardened her embittered heart, and displayed open enmity towards God.

Who likes to be told what to do or be admonished? Many people have shown opposition to the words of God in the past, and we see the same thing today. When unregulated tolerance is opposed, the inner emptiness and idolatry is revealed. People tend to turn away from truth when confronted and often react rudely and angrily.

Yet God needs committed people who are true to Him in all circumstances. Only they are the real salt of the earth. Without salt, this world would have been ruined long ago. Therefore, be true and committed. Stand firm. God needs a people committed to His cause no matter what others do or how they live. Serve the Lord with all your heart. ■

# Elijah, a Man Like Us

*“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.” (James 5: 17)*

James wanted to encourage the recipients of his letter when he called Elijah a man like us. But when we think of Elijah, what comes to mind are the miraculous, supernatural stories: the raising of a dead man, never-ending food supplies, heavenly fire that ignited sacrifices and judged people, and, finally, an ascension. In view of the multitude of miracles, it seems appropriate to explicitly point out once again that Elijah was also only human.

Elijah would surely have been the first to confirm this. He certainly did not feel special. When he fled into the desert after God’s judgment on Mount Carmel, he prayed, tired of life: “I *am* no better than my fathers” (1 Kings 19:4). Yet there was something that set him apart from his ancestors, because God was able to work so much more through him, and for good reason. The AMPC translation describes the verse from the letter of James as follows: “Elijah was a human being with a nature such as we have [with feelings, affections, and a constitution like ours]; and he prayed earnestly.”

Elijah had the same worries and difficulties as other people. He lived in an environment where godlessness was rampant, where, under the leadership of Queen Jezebel, new evil was constantly being devised to harm the godly, or even, if at all possible, to eradicate them. Like us, Elijah had a decision to make: to obey or to resist, to fear God or renounce his faith. What set Elijah apart from his contemporaries was a great knowledge of God and a willing submission to His ways. Elijah did not arbitrarily punish apostate Israel with drought or fire. He obediently fulfilled the will of God in the knowledge that God keeps His promises: the blessing as well as the curse that God had already proclaimed from Mount Ebal at the time of Moses (Deuteronomy 27: 13), when He threatened Israel with severe punishment if they were to forsake His ways. Elijah acted with confidence in a living God and introduced His prophecy to King Ahab with the words: “As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand” (1 Kings 17: 1).

It is not clear from the text whether Ahab initially attached any particular importance to Elijah’s prophecies. But as his despair over the drought in his land grew, his efforts to find Elijah became more and more urgent. There was not a nation or kingdom in the area that was not sent to locate this man who had prophesied disaster. But he seemed to have disappeared from the face of the earth. When he finally reappeared three years later, Ahab initially saw him as someone “who troubled Israel” and later, instigated by his godless wife, even as his enemy. It was only when Elijah urgently prophesied the downfall of his house to the king that Ahab realized his situation and humbled himself before God.

It cannot be assumed that Elijah found all his assignments pleasant. Neither the slaughter of the priests of Baal nor God’s call to appear before the king as a prophet of doom must have been easy for him. But Elijah had decided to serve God and did not allow himself to be dissuaded even by the most adverse circumstances, which filled some of his fellow men with incomprehension, others with suspicion, and Jezebel even with thoughts of murder. King Ahab was also unable to fathom the source of Elijah’s strength. Although he grew up as a descendant of Abraham, his spiritual blindness did not allow him to understand, unlike the pagan-educated widow of Zarephath, who, after Elijah had raised her son from the dead, had to confess: “Now by this I know that you *are* a man of God, *and* that the word of the LORD in your mouth *is* the truth” (1 Kings 17:24).

Elijah’s obedience and earnest prayer enabled him to stand before God in obedience throughout his life. He did not need to use long prayers. While the priests of Baal used all their powers from morning till noon and had no success, Elijah prayed an earnest but short prayer: he asked God to glorify Himself, to confess his obedience and to convert the heart of the people. It was these requests that enabled God to particularly bless his prophetic work. Elijah did not seek his own glory but the glory of God. He did not attribute the

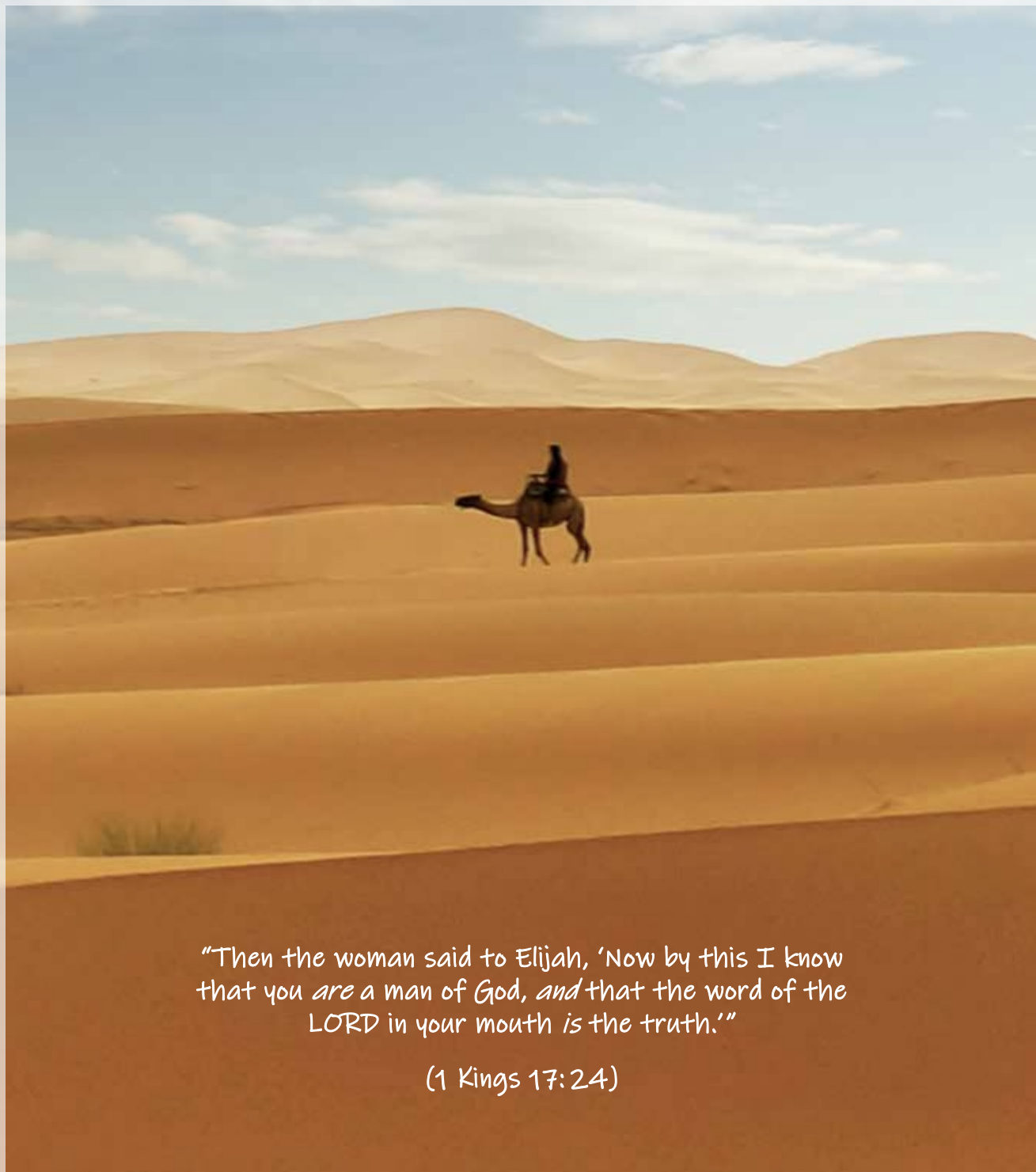


miracles and signs he performed to himself, but to the Almighty. And it was the people of Israel whose repentance was so close to his heart. That was the goal of his work and the zeal with which he served his God.

James' reference to the fact that God so clearly acknowledged the prayers of a man who was like us should be an incentive for us to seek experiences with

God—not to “command fire to come down from heaven . . . just as Elijah.” but to walk the path of obedience and earnest prayer in the spirit of Christ, so that God can also fulfill our requests.

*Corinna Schulz  
Hamm, Germany*



*“Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth.’”*

*(1 Kings 17:24)*

# Why God Lets Us Wait

*“[Elijah] said to his servant, ‘Go up now, look toward the sea.’ So he went up and looked, and said, ‘There is nothing.’ And seven times he said, ‘Go again.’ Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, ‘There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!’ So he said, ‘Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.’” (1 Kings 18: 43–44)*

**T**his scripture describes Elijah’s remarkable experience on Mount Carmel. Three and a half years earlier, he had foretold a severe punishment of prolonged drought over King Ahab and the rebellious people.

Now that Israel had returned to their God in repentance and the deceivers among the people were removed, they awaited the rain prophesied by Elijah for the land. But it was delayed.

On Mount Carmel, Elijah fervently prayed for the fulfillment of the prophecy. He had to send his servant to the lookout by the sea seven times until he spotted a small cloud and returned to his master with a glimmer of hope.

Encouraged by this, Elijah took the bold step of sending Ahab off with his chariot so that the approaching rain wouldn’t hinder him. One can only imagine what the king would have done to him if the promised rains had not come! And the miracle happened: the long-awaited rain ended the terrible drought.

Reflecting on this story, we get a vivid impression of the immense pressure Elijah must have been under. His predictions had to come true, or he risked losing credibility with the people, not to mention the king’s wrath. Repeatedly dispatching the servant could have led to impatience and eventually undermining Elijah’s confident attitude. Did Elijah’s courage, hope, and faith diminish with each negative report?

We read nothing of the sort. Instead, Elijah steadfastly held onto God’s promise until God Himself ended this test of faith. We can learn much from Elijah. Don’t we encounter similar situations in our lives? For a long time, we might bring a specific concern to God, earnestly pleading for an answer and eagerly looking for signs of divine response.

Perhaps we pray for health during times of illness, or for a much-needed job, or for a loving spouse, or for long-awaited children. Or perhaps we are particularly concerned about the salvation of loved ones

or the healing of broken relationships. Maybe we’re struggling because our spiritual life isn’t progressing, or we feel inadequate or unfit for the Lord’s service. We go through our own personal droughts, feeling like heaven is silent. The relieving rain of blessing simply doesn’t come, and our expectations and sufferings even intensify. Eventually, we don’t understand God anymore and feel disappointed somehow.

Now many questions begin to gnaw at us: Why doesn’t God answer me? What’s the reason for His silence? Has He abandoned me? Does He not realize that my community, in which I eagerly want to testify that God answers prayers, is watching critically?

## Obstacles to Prayer

It can be helpful in such cases to examine obstacles to prayer by asking ourselves the following questions:

### 1. Is there any sin between me and God or my fellow human beings that prevents His intervention?

“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden *His* face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59: 1–2).

Elijah had nothing separating him from God. He lived in close communion with his Lord and had been able to persuade the king and the people to repent through the miracles of God. All obstacles were removed. What about us? Is there something to be reconciled between us and God or with our fellow human beings?

### 2. Could we possibly be praying against His will?

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5: 14).

This obstacle to prayer could also be excluded in Elijah’s case. God wanted to give rain to His people

once again. He had already given Elijah a clear sign of His will with a “sound of abundance of rain.” The miracle of the coming rain would once again demonstrate God’s greatness and power to Israel. Do we pray like Elijah, in accordance with God’s will? It’s not always immediately clear to us what God’s will is in a particular matter. Therefore, it’s quite helpful to first pray specifically for knowledge of His will and to develop the willingness to accept and act according to this will of God. Jesus Himself was a great example to us in this, even regarding His time of suffering when He said to His Father, “Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

The revelation of His will can happen in various ways, such as through reading the Bible or a sign from God through the Holy Spirit.

### 3. Do we lack faith?

“Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*” (Mark 11:24).

Elijah had the unshakable courage of faith to persuade Ahab to leave immediately, without having seen a single drop of rain. How far does our personal faith extend?

### How times of waiting become times of growth

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20).

But what should we do when, despite prayer obstacles being removed, God’s answer is delayed? Such times of waiting are often very difficult for us humans to endure and can lead to genuine times of testing and crises of faith. Do our faith and trust in God seem to falter?

Elijah’s faith had to withstand six negative reports. With each new sending of his servant, it would have been increasingly difficult to trust God. But his faith grew through his challenges.

So, times of waiting should become times of growth for us as well. Isn’t this often the reason why God’s answer is delayed? It may be that at the moment, He has different goals for us than we do. In these times of waiting, deficiencies may become apparent to us that we were not aware of before.

But God wants to help us overcome our deficiencies. Perhaps our heavenly Father is expecting growth in faith, trust, love, patience, understanding, and surrender from us right now? Could it be that He

wants to change our inner prayer attitude so that His honor and the glorification of His name become the highest prayer goal for us, and the fulfillment of our own desires becomes secondary?

### Our Inner Prayer Attitude

The following passage from Psalm 73 is a great help in achieving a changed inner prayer attitude: “But *it* is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the LORD GOD, that I may declare all Your works” (Psalm 73:28).

My joy in the Lord is not dependent on whether God answers my prayer immediately or later, or whether the manner of His answer meets my expectations or not. I do not allow any distance to arise between me and my Lord because of these circumstances.

I place my confidence regarding the answer to my prayers solely on Him, never losing courage, but praying persistently and faithfully. I consider the waiting period for myself as a time of growth in which God works on me, changes me, and pursues His goals with me.

Instead of complaining and losing heart, I use these opportunities to continue telling of God’s goodness from the past. This honors my Lord, encourages me, and makes those around me think.

Thus, times of waiting become times of growth, and times of personal drought become times of blessing.

*Brigitte Reiß  
Herford, Germany*

*I place my confidence  
regarding the answer to  
my prayers solely on Him.*



# Elijah's Time of Rest

*“So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan.” (1 Kings 17:5)*

All of us need rest in the busyness of life. This is also true of our service as Christians. If we do not take time to rest in the Lord, which means to reflect upon His Word and pray, we risk emotional and spiritual burnout. If this happens, we are of little help to others around us.

The prophet Elijah was called to stand against the evil King Ahab and pronounce God's judgment on him. The land would not see any rain for three and a half years, and a great famine would come (v. 1). Imagine the King's anger directed against the prophet. The Lord, knowing the stresses Elijah would face, told him to go to Brook Cherith where He would supply all his needs (v. 2–4). Elijah obeyed God and found a wonderful, quiet retreat (v. 5).

During the time of famine and persecution, Elijah was secure in the will of God. He had a quiet place to pray and worship, strengthening him in the spirit. The good Lord provided for all his physical needs. In the morning and evening, God sent the ravens to bring Elijah bread and meat to eat. He was at the brook, which supplied him with fresh water to drink (v. 6). How refreshing for his

mind, body, and soul! In our walk with God, we also need times like these to sustain us.

Jesus promised us that if we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, He will provide for all our other needs as well (Matthew 6:31–33). If we hunger for more of God's Word, He will fill us, as Jesus is the living bread for our souls (Matthew 5:6; John 6:35). This allows us to mature spiritually and fight the good fight of faith. We need to take time to drink of the living waters Jesus provides so that they may flow through us into the lives of others! This is the amazing promise of our Lord, who says in John 7:38, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

Jesus taught us to take time for daily prayer. This is essential for us to lead healthy spiritual lives. We need to find a place of quiet, reflective prayer where God can meet us. In Jesus' words, “When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matthew 6:6). God met Elijah at the brook, and He will meet you today in your place of prayer!

But you may say, “I am too busy with the many important cares I face daily. My schedule with work, family, shopping, and even church activities is too full!” Look to the life of Jesus, who was sought by the multitudes for help, yet taught His disciples to rest with Him despite the urgency of the tasks at hand. “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat” (Mark 6:30–31). This is the healthy example for each child of God to be refreshed, grow spiritually, and face the challenges of each day with grace.

Eventually, the water at the Brook Cherith dried up, and Elijah needed to move on (1 Kings 17:7). He was now strengthened to help the widow at Zarephath. The widow and her son were running out of food, and Elijah arrived to provide, by God's power, flour and oil for the time of the famine (v. 8–16). When her son died, God used Elijah to revive him (v. 17–24). What blessings flowed from the life of Elijah who stayed close to the Lord

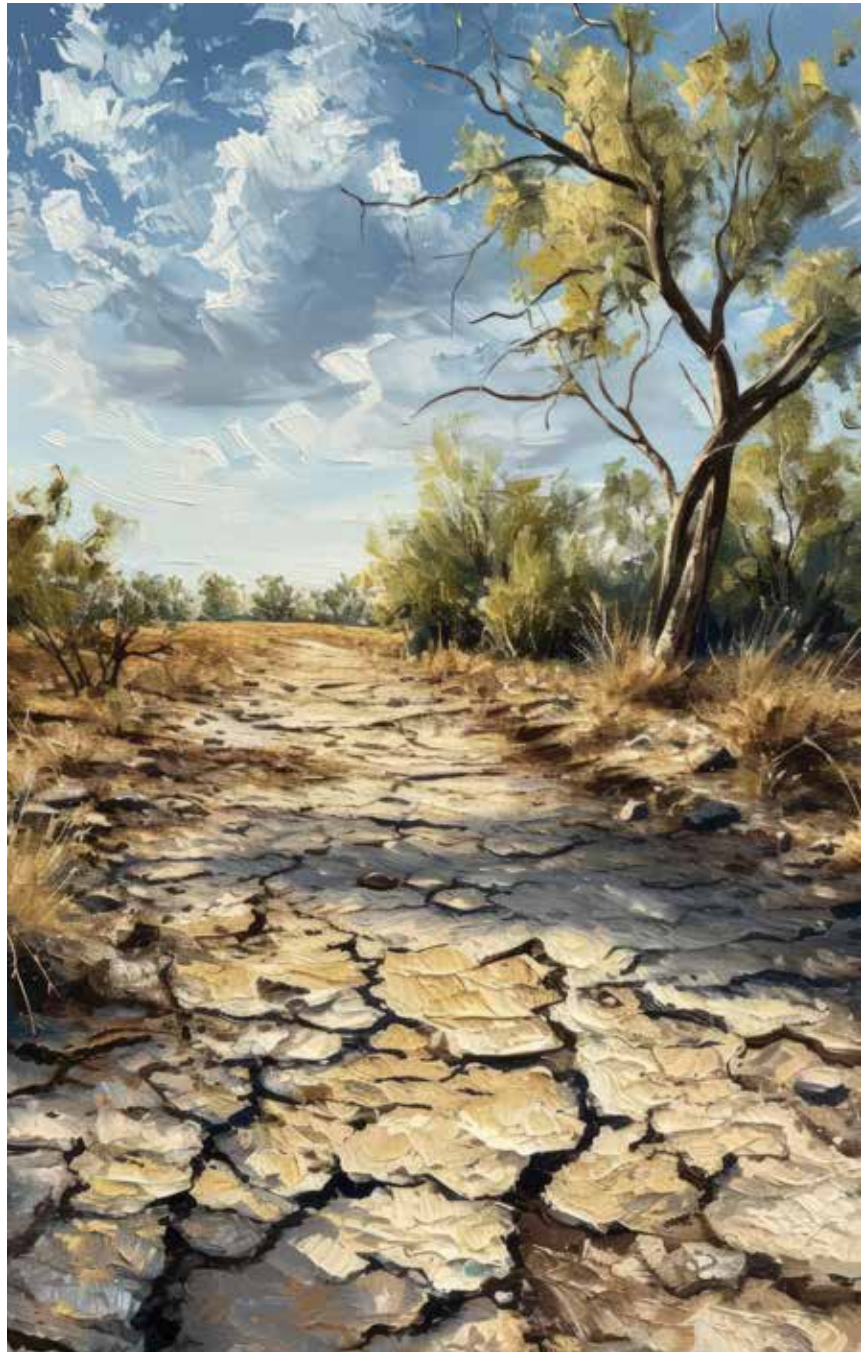
and practiced a time of refreshing with God.

In today's world, we are connected to all kinds of electronic devices and media which vie for our constant attention. If we are not wise and find our daily rest in the Lord, we will surely over time suffer physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion.

May we take time and be blessed with our Savior as noted in the song: "I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses; and the voice I hear falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses. And He walks with me and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own; and the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known."

Jesus is calling us to rest awhile with Him and His Word. This time with God is always well spent and allows the Lord to direct our steps as He did for Elijah. Later, Elijah prayed again, and the rains came (James 5: 17-18)! Do you take time to find rest for your soul? Do you take time to pray and find nourishment in God's word? Then surely you will prosper under the Lord's guidance and be a blessing for many others.

Harry Klinger  
Winnipeg, Manitoba



# Elijah—the Disheartened Man of God

When buying sunglasses, there are various colors of lenses to choose from. You have the options of gray, green, brown, black, orange, and yellow. When you put the glasses on, you see the world in the color of the lenses. It's amazing how the color of the lenses influences perception.

The prophet Elijah had a similar experience, not caused by sunglasses, but related to Queen Jezebel's outburst of anger. After a great victory on Mount Carmel and the annihilation of the Baal priests, she threatened Elijah with death (1 Kings 19:1–2). Elijah, usually courageous and trusting in God, was overwhelmed by this threat. He couldn't handle it and fled. After traveling about 160 kilometers (99 mi), he collapsed under a broom tree, exhausted and disheartened. He was at the end of his strength, physically and emotionally. Weary of life, he had only one wish: he wanted to die. Through the lens of despair, his world appeared bleak and without any hope.

Sometimes, metaphorically speaking, the devil puts the glasses of despair on us. Then our world looks very similar to Elijah's, namely gloomy and hopeless. Why? Here are some reasons:

1. Depression causes us to lose touch with the reality of life and think irrationally. It prompts us to do things we would never do under normal circumstances. Elijah could only see Jezebel and her threat to take his life. It seems he had completely lost sight of his God. Consequently, he didn't count on God and His mighty hand that was able to carry him through times of severe storms. Despair influences our entire thinking, perception, and attitude.

2. When we are depressed, we forget how God has helped us before. The fact that He has helped us in wonderful ways in the past doesn't seem to cross our mind. Especially in Elijah's life, God had revealed Himself marvelously in the last three and a half years.

While the country, plagued by a great drought, left people and animals searching for water, God faithfully provided for His servant. At the Brook Cherith, he found food and water. In Zarephath, he found shelter and food in the home of a widow. At the moment of divine intervention on Mount Carmel, fire fell from heaven in answer to his prayer. He seemed to have forgotten all these experiences. He only saw the present situation: his life was in danger.

3. Despair does not anticipate God's assistance. Like an echo, Jezebel's words reverberated in Elijah's

ears. He would never have verbalized it, but based on his behavior, it can be inferred that he no longer expected God's help. Consequently, he didn't even ask for God's intervention. The situation

seemed hopeless. Ultimately, he was the "only one" left. At least that's how he assessed the situation. His perception also contributed to his dejection.

4. Those who are disheartened forget their duties and responsibilities. Their tasks remain undone. When he heard of the death threat on his life, his duties were the last thing on his mind. As a reformer, he was needed now more than ever by the people of Israel. After the people turned away from Baal and returned to the true God of Israel, they urgently needed instruction and teaching. The laws of Moses, which had been neglected for years, needed to be re-introduced and proclaimed again. The reformation was only in its infancy and needed to be fostered. However, Elijah was nowhere to be found on the mission field. He had forsaken his place. His duties remained undone. Overwhelmed by despair, he found himself far off somewhere in the desert. All alone, he sat in the shade of a tree and wanted to die.

5. Those who are depressed lose hope, courage, and joy. Life revolves around oneself. Confronted by God, Elijah defended himself: "They seek to take my

*Sometimes, metaphorically speaking, the devil puts the glasses of despair on us.*





life.” A victim mentality where one only sees oneself leaves little room for hope, courage, and joy. Life makes no sense. You have no goal and no reason for living.

Someone claims that discouragement is the devil’s most successful weapon. Indeed, it has thrown many off track. We cannot afford to allow despair a foothold.

A troubled woman visited a seasoned pastor. She trustingly poured out her heart. Her life had been very difficult, and she didn’t know how to keep going. Wiping her tears away, she concluded with the words, “No one can help me anymore!” The pastor suggested praying together. He prayed something like this: “Lord, You have helped our dear sister so faithfully over so many years. It’s a pity that You are unable to help her now in this difficult situation.”—She interrupted his prayer: “Stop! You can’t pray like that.” The room fell silent. Suddenly, she realized that she had ruled out God’s ability to help, and no longer counted on Him.

Elijah’s story does not end in despair. God did not heed his prayer. He didn’t die. God lifted him out of

despondency by sending an angel who cared for him, bringing him nourishment and water. Then he heard the angel say, “Arise *and* eat, for the journey *is* too great for you” (1 Kings 19:7). Had he heard and understood correctly? The angel spoke of a journey. Was there still hope for him who had seen no hope? The answer is in the following verse: “So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.”

Perhaps there is a circumstance, “a Jezebel” in your life that has brought you to the point of despair? Through the lens of depression, your world seems hopeless. “This can’t continue,” was the angel’s message to Elijah. It also applies to you. God wants to help you get back on your feet. Why not discard the dark glasses of despair today? There is a future for you as well! “Turn your eyes upon Jesus.” He can change everything. Trust in His promises with renewed courage. God is there.

*Harry Semenjuk  
Wetaskiwin, Alberta*

## Elijah's Ascent Into Heaven

*"Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." (2 Kings 2: 11)*

**E**lijah's path led into heaven. Does your path in life also lead into heaven? Do the words of the song: "Heavenward our pathway tends" also apply to your life?"

In Elijah's life there was once an hour of discouragement and despondency. He lay under the juniper and begged that he might die. In despair, he cast himself before God: "Now, LORD, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19: 4).

What a foolish prayer! What if God had answered it then? Then the bones of the prophet would have lain in the desert, bleached by the sun or covered by the desert sand—a pitiful end! How good that God does not answer many a prayer of His children!

I am certain that in eternity we will thank God not only for the prayers that He has answered, but also for the prayers that He has not answered, and for these in particular. His love has often revealed and proven itself precisely in the fact that He has not answered our foolish prayers which we offered to Him in our short-sightedness.

Thank God, He doesn't make mistakes. He has better intentions for us than we do for ourselves!—Elijah experienced that. What a wonderful ending his life had!

Why did God take him into heaven as He did without letting Elijah experience death? His ascension was intended as a sermon for his contemporaries that this life is not the end, that there is a home waiting for us. Little was known about life after death at that time. God had only given isolated revelations pertaining to it. Enoch taken up before the flood had been one such sermon; but that was a long time ago, and the flood had washed away most of the human race and many of its memories. Now God preached a new sermon to the earthly-minded, apostate generation of this time

by bringing Elijah home without death. Now the question had to be asked: Where did Elijah go? The fact that he was no longer on earth was confirmed by the most detailed investigations. There must still be something to come after this life! Death cannot be the end of everything! Elijah's ascension preached such to his contemporaries with a resounding impact.

We have more revelations and testimonies that a home full of glory awaits us after death, but how many there are today who do not believe in it, for whom it is "a disproven point of view!"

Yes, there will be surprises one day, surprises of the most terrible kind! The rich man Jesus speaks of in the Gospel certainly also thought that death was the end of everything. But "being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes" (Luke 16: 23). What an awakening! In hell!

If you want to escape this dreadful awakening, if you want your life on Earth to end with ascension to heaven, then your life must turn towards heaven right here. Then you must heed the admonition of the song:

*Fix your heart beyond the skies,  
Where in eternity you would rise!*

No one will go to heaven after his death who was not already in heaven during his lifetime!—What does that mean? Paul writes to the Philippians, chapter 3 verse 20: "Our citizenship is in heaven." If we want to make such an ascension, then we must have citizenship in heaven.

That was the case with Elijah, otherwise he could not have been caught up to glory. His life was a walk with God like Enoch's. His life was a life of obedience. God had broken Elijah's own strength and made him a quiet man, a humble servant who did not seek great

deeds, or desire recognition and fame, but who had only one desire: to serve the Lord faithfully—wherever God wanted to use him.

He lived in communion with God. That is why he already experienced a piece of the kingdom of heaven on earth. This is how it should be and how it can be for you also. You can live in heaven while on this earth if you live in the presence of God.—Do you do that?

I ask this of you, not only for the sake of your death but also for the sake of your life, that your life may glorify the Lord! Your death will only glorify the Lord

if your life has already glorified Him! Your death will only take you “into heaven” if your life has gone “into heaven.”

Isn't that a glorious and blissful goal? “Into heaven!” That must become your motto and remain your motto when the enemy wants to focus your attention solely on earthly things in order to entice and ensnare you. Scribe it upon your life: “Into heaven!” Then God will scribe it at the end of your earthly life: “Into heaven!”

*Ernst Modersohn*

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## Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration

### Life Goes On . . . .

**H**ow many have declared that death is the end of everything—all is finished!

But that is not true. We read: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their works follow them’” (Revelation 14:13). Their work on earth is finished. They rest and no longer have any hardships, problems, work, or troubles. They rest from their labors and struggles.

But no—death is not the end of everything! Jesus’ words testify: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25). And again: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36).

When a child of God dies, the earthly body is placed in the grave, but the soul, the spirit of the redeemed, goes heavenwards and lives eternally with the Lord in glory.

Life goes on! What a glorious thought! We have proof of this when the Lord Jesus went up the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, John, and James. There

we read: “As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became* white *and* glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:29–31).

Moses and Elijah had a conversation with Jesus. They appeared in supernatural splendor and spoke with the Savior about His life’s end on Golgotha, where the holy Son of God was to give His blood, His life, His all for our redemption and then cry out: “It is finished!”

Moses, the representative of the Old Testament, and Elijah, the divine prophet, were both aware of the wonderful plan of salvation which the heavenly Father prepared before the foundation of the world and which He also brought to fruition.

Therefore, dear reader, life goes on! “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

*H. D. Nimz  
Kitchener, Ontario*





## God Answers Prayer

In their family devotions, the Werner family had read the biblical story of the prophet Elijah. Niklas was very impressed how God had provided for His servant through the ravens. These large, black birds brought bread and meat in the morning and evening so that Elijah was provided for in a difficult time of drought and hunger.

God then sent Elijah to a widow, a very poor woman. All she had left for herself and her young son was a little oil in a jar and some flour in a pot. The woman thought: "I will use it to bake a little bread for us and then we will die." But God said through Elijah that the little oil and the little flour would not run out until there was rain again and the people had food to eat. The woman had to first bake bread for Elijah and then for herself and her son. The woman believed the word of God spoken through Elijah. From then on, the three of them had food every day.

Shortly after, the little boy became very ill and died. Elijah prayed to God, and the boy was brought back to life. Elijah and his mother were very happy about God's help! Niklas remembered this story when he visited his friend Ben.

Ben wasn't at school, and Niklas brought him his homework. He was allowed to go into Ben's room. Ben was lying in bed with a fever; his head and hands were very hot. His throat hurt, and he could hardly speak. Niklas was sad that his friend was so ill. He believed that God could also help Ben. So he asked if he could pray for Ben. After praying, Niklas wished his friend a speedy recovery and went home. A few hours later, Mrs. Smyth called to say that her son was feeling much better and that his fever had gone down. Niklas thanked God with all his heart for the help.

*Can you remember how God answered your prayer?*

## The Outsider

**E**lijah lived in really difficult times. The wicked king Ahab and his godless wife Jezebel ruled in Israel. These two had turned against the living God and destroyed His places of worship. Instead, they worshipped the idols Baal and Asherah. There were a total of 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah who ate at the king's table.



But the prophets of the Lord were persecuted and killed. Ahab's steward Obadiah was only able to save 100 prophets in the mountains, where he had provided them with bread and water. The people of Israel were afraid to confess God publicly because Ahab and Jezebel oppressed the poor and killed the innocent.

God saw this great injustice and told King Ahab that there would be no rain or dew for the next few years. A great drought and famine were to come over the land. The king of Israel and his people were to understand that the idols could not hear them or help them.

Instead, the Lord God had everything in His hands, and He alone gave rain and increase. It would not rain again until God sent word through Elijah.

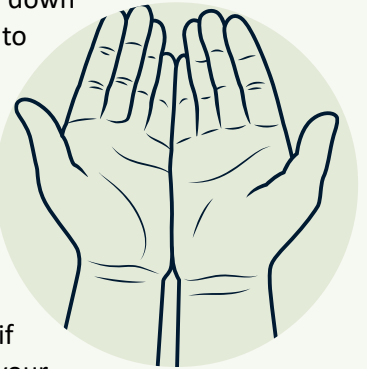
The word of God that Elijah had proclaimed was fulfilled precisely. But in the meantime, Elijah felt very, very lonely. He was an outsider and often had to hide in lonely places. The king and his wife searched everywhere for Elijah, to kill him.

The courageous man grew tired of the constant persecution and the injustice he saw everywhere. In

fact, Elijah became so discouraged that he begged God to let him die. But God specially comforted him. He said that there were still many, many people in Israel who had remained faithful during this difficult time and had not bowed down to idolatry. Elijah was able to experience God's omnipotence, wisdom, and patience all over again.

In contrast to Elijah, we have a very quiet, peaceful life without hunger or persecution. We should be very grateful for that. But if you want to follow Jesus, your faithfulness will be tested every day.

If you say no to evil, it is possible that you too will sometimes feel lonely. Just remember that Jesus is very near to you, especially in those moments!



*Helene Rotfuss*

### Infobox:

Prophet of the Lord = a proclaimer of God's messages  
 Priest of God = a servant of God with special duties in the tabernacle or temple



# Being Disciples

## AND MAKING DISCIPLES

**E**lijah is a familiar name to us as Christians. One reason why Elijah holds a special place in my heart is because of his mentoring role and how he trained up Elisha to replace him and become a mentor of others. This is similar to the mandate Christ gave us to be His disciples and to make disciples of all nations.

It was God on Mount Horeb who told Elijah to anoint Elisha as prophet in his place, and Elijah obeyed. Elijah found Elisha and placed his mantle on him, which was a symbol of prophetic office, and it was a symbol that Elisha would have understood (1 Kings 19:19). Elisha had officially been anointed by Elijah as God's future chief prophet. Scholars differ in their estimates as to how long these two prophets worked together. Some believe less than a year; others believe up to 8 years.

No matter the length of their mentoring relationship, the time eventually came when both the mentor and student recognized that Elijah's departure was nearing. Scripture outlines in 2 Kings 2:1–6 that Elijah visited three locations before his departure: he left Gilgal for Bethel, then Jericho, and, lastly, he went to the Jordan. Prior to leaving for each new location, Elijah tells his student to stay back and not follow him. Elisha responds, "As the LORD lives, and *as your soul lives*, I will not leave you!" Before Elijah would pass on his baton as prophet, he desired to see the loyalty and love of his disciple. Three times, Elisha affirmed his love and loyalty to his master. Now consider our discipleship in Christ. Before Christ can use us in the work that He's called us to, He wants us to affirm our love and loyalty to Him through our obedience to His Word and His leading in our life.

We then read in 2 Kings 2:8–9, "Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled *it* up, and struck the water; and it was



## Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations!

Matthew 28:19

divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?' Elisha said, 'Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.'" Elisha knew that the only way he could continue his master's work was if the Spirit who worked through Elijah would work through him as well. Clearly, Elisha was aware of his dependence on God's power to accomplish God's work.

Before Jesus ascended, He commanded His disciples "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' *He said*, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (Acts 1: 4b–5). Jesus had given His followers the Great Commission, a task impossible to do without God's power working through them. That's why He told them to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Before God can use us as He desires, we first need to offer ourselves to Him as living sacrifices so that He can fill us with His Spirit. We know that Elisha received God's power, because after Elijah ascended, he did the same miracle that his master had done moments earlier, dividing the Jordan with his mantle (v. 14). Likewise, Jesus promises to work through those who are filled with the Holy Spirit (John 14: 12–18).

Elisha also replaced his master in disciple-making. A disciple is a student. One of the most influential achievements of Elijah is the establishment of various schools for prophets. Scholars agree that the reason why Elijah went to Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho before

ascending by the Jordan was so that he could visit the schools he started in each of these cities and say goodbye. Elijah had a great concern for the future. He saw the need to pass on the knowledge and skills he had learned from God to the next generation. In like manner, Christ, before ascending to Heaven, commanded His followers to go and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things that He had commanded them (Matthew 28: 19–20a). After Elijah's ascent, we read numerous times how Elisha continued to work with and disciple the prophets from the schools that Elijah had started. Likewise, God calls us not just to be Christ's disciple but also to go and make disciples (Matthew 28: 19). To make disciples means that we not only help people find the Lord, but also teach them how they can grow in their walk with the Lord. Our time, talents, and resources are required to disciple others. Let's remember that this isn't just a suggestion of Christ; it's part of His Great Commission for all His followers.

I think it is easy for young people to see themselves as students, but it's harder for them to see their calling as being disciple-makers for Christ. Our Lord Jesus wants to use all His disciples to make more disciples, but before He can use us, He want us to display our love and loyalty to Him. He also wants us to ask Him for His Spirit, just as Elisha asked his master for his spirit. Only then can we carry out the work that we've been called to and make disciples of all nations.

*David Knelsen  
Hamilton, Ontario*



## *The Value of Family Devotions*

I grew up in a family where in the evening family prayers regularly ascended to the throne of grace. From an early age, I felt the value of family devotions. At the age of sixteen, I visited a family whose Christian walk was well known. In the evening, we went to bed without praying together. I was incredibly surprised and disappointed. At that time, I did not yet profess to be a born-again Christian, but in my room, I knelt down by my bed and prayed for these dear people who, in my opinion, did not have enough Christianity to call their family together to pray. Early in the morning, I was called: “Let’s have prayer!” This shamed me, and I prayed again, this time that God would forgive me for judging others so hastily. At home, we always had our devotions in the evening; this family did it in the morning. The important thing is not when family devotions are held, but that they are made a priority.

A Chinese girl attending university in a Christian country was invited to a home to spend the Christ-

mas holidays there. When she left to return to school, her kind host commented that she hoped she had had a good vacation. Imagine the kind lady’s disappointment when she was told: “In our country, we have our household gods in every home, and every day some time is devoted to their worship. I have certainly felt comfortable here and you have been truly kind to me. But I have missed the worship service in your home.”

During the time of family prayer, the entire family is taken into confidence. The wishes and needs of each individual family member are brought before the mercy seat of God. As each one speaks to the heavenly Father, all those present are silent participants in the conversation. The prayer room becomes the throne room because that is where we meet God.

When I think of my childhood home, I always remember my father’s prayers and the hours we spent on our knees: father, mother, and I with my younger siblings. When I was nine years old, my father passed

away. But our prayers didn't stop. Mother went upstairs with us, and there beside the bed she would gather us together like a hen takes her chicks under her wings. She placed her arms over us while we knelt, and she prayed. To this day, this is my fondest memory of home.

As I was writing this article about family devotions, it occurred to me to ask some people what their favorite childhood memory was. Repeatedly, I heard: "One of the most special memories of home was our time of praying together." Others replied: "Family devotions are one of my most sacred memories," or "God has always been present for me; I attribute this to the thoughts I absorbed while I was on my knees listening to my parents' prayers."—Certainly, many do not have the privilege of being brought up in a Christian home. Many a child has never had the privilege of hearing his father pray, nor does he know the blessing that flows from his mother's prayer. Such a child is to be pitied; his loss is greater than he realizes.

As I was holding meetings at a particular place, I encouraged the listeners to set up family altars at home. According to the mother of one family, the children were against it because they didn't understand what a "family altar" meant. Nevertheless, she insisted, and her husband silently gave his consent. One morning, she said: "Come children, let's sing a

song first thing this morning." Everyone joined in happily. Next, she said, "Now Father will read us a passage from the Bible," which he did. "Let's kneel down and pray." So, she began to praise the Lord, and finally everyone joined in with prayer. When they got up and went into the kitchen for breakfast, one of the children asked, "Mom, was that the family altar?" She quickly replied: "Yes, darling, this is our family altar. Did you like it?" "Yes, I like it; I hope we can do this every morning!"

Can family devotions really mean so much? Then what is the secret?—It is this: During prayer, everyone stands together in the presence of God. Everything else is put aside, hearts are open, and thoughts are focused solely on God. It is obviously essential for prayer to be genuine and honest, and this sincere worship of God inspires the children. And when God answers prayers, families can thank God and celebrate together, and the faith of the children grows and provides a solid foundation throughout their lives.

During family devotions, children observe their parents' innermost selves—not as outsiders see them, but as they really are in the inner circle of the family. Family devotions allow the children to see their parents' relationship with God. When they grow up, it is no wonder that they regard these times as their most sacred memory. ■

## Announcements

*Camp Meeting in Blaubeuren, Germany*

August 16-21, 2024

Edmonton Church of God

*Church Conference and 75-Year Anniversary*

"Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies." (Psalm 36:6, NIV)

August 31<sup>st</sup> 2024 - 2 and 6 pm

September 1<sup>st</sup> 2024 - 10 am, 2 and 6 pm





# I Will Be With You

## Part 6: My Experiences at the Mission House in Essen

*Salomon Weissburger (1887-1968)*

One day, Brother Karl Arbeiter pointed out one of the books on our distribution list and told me, “That book cannot be sent out anymore!”

We still had a lot of copies in stock, so I asked, “Why not?”

He answered, “The information this book contains is true, but it is not presented in a good spirit!” At that moment, I realized that the truth has to come from the right place, that is, a place of love. I think that will always be true!

The scripture from 1 Corinthians 13 surely applies here as well, where we read, “And though I have . . . all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing.” We know that love does not seek its own, but people are quick to cite “the truth” in pursuit of their selfish ends.

The mission house was built on faith and prayer, and God honored our faith by providing us with what we needed to survive. With so many young sisters and brothers in the mission house, romance may have seemed natural, but romantic interludes were not permitted. People who wanted to enter into a relationship with deliberation and honorable intentions first had to discuss this with the head of the mission house.

### **My spiritual work begins**

By the summer of 1908, I had largely overcome my inner struggles and was assured of my salvation and sanctification. It was at this time that I was first asked

to say something about the kingdom of God in an evening service. While I did so from where I was sitting in the pew, it was not long before I had to speak from the pulpit. However, I was not in the least thinking about preaching; I only wanted to help out.

Thanks to my good memory and all the reading I had done, I was very familiar with the Holy Scriptures and had a strong foundation in the truth. God’s Word, spiritual literature, my experiences, and doctrinal teachings all played a role. Back then, as today, my primary task was to interpret the Bible with regard to doctrine. Later, I was able to serve as a shepherd in Essen and the surrounding areas.

On January 19, 1910, I married Sister Sophie Finkbeiner, and in 1911, I began working with congregations in a practical capacity. I was sent to Tipolno in the district of Schwetz, West Prussia, where I served in the community and its surroundings. During this time, I also visited congregations in East Prussia, in and around Königsberg and in Tilsit. I still remember the camp meeting in the district of Schönsee. I spent around four weeks in the district of Ortelsburg, in Georgensgut with the Hard family, in Willenberg, and in other places.

### **We had to learn**

I would like to mention one lesson we had to learn as we came to realize that we had made a number of



*Come and hear, all you who fear God,  
And I will declare what He has done for my soul.*

*Psalm 66: 16*

mistakes in our organization. The core issue was that young, inexperienced preachers were sent abroad, or went of their own accord, without necessarily having a strong foundation in their soul and in the truth. That turned out not to be a good thing; it was unwise and caused many problems. Whether in Germany or abroad, nobody should work as an itinerant preacher or be sent into the field without having successfully served at home in at least one congregation.

Even if they have attended Bible school, young men simply going into the field lack experience and firm foundations. Not infrequently, this ends up causing damage, for example if they develop an inflated ego that gets in the way when they attempt to establish, build, or maintain congregations.

The same goes for traveling pastors and Bible school teachers. Only those who have earned the general trust of the congregations should be in these positions. The key factor is not age but practical experience. That is why the apostles and the leaders of the Early Church first had to spend so many years in Jerusalem together; otherwise, they would not have been able to properly serve as apostles and itinerant preachers.

Thanks to Timothy's good reputation in his home congregation, Paul took him along on his trips (Acts 16: 1–3). Even for the apostle Paul, around 17 years passed between his conversion and his recognition by the other apostles (Galatians 2: 9). Despite the mira-

cle of his conversion (Acts 9) and the clear mission that God had for him (Acts 9: 15–16), around 14–15 years passed before he was sent out into the mission field by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13: 1–3). Certainly a capable man, Paul was not all that young anymore and had already amassed significant influence, but even he first had to find a firm footing in his spiritual life. Others might take even longer to reach that stage. There is no shortage of bad experiences to back this claim up.

#### **God was with us**

When I was in eastern Germany back then, the community of Heinrichsberg, West Prussia, began opening up as Brother and Sister Adam recognized the truth. Brother Wilhelm Adam was a man who exercised great influence in the work in that region. After World War I, I was able to return to the congregation in Heinrichsberg with Brother Zuber. Since we did not have access to a suitable meeting room, we met in a barn. Being winter, it became so cold that it was impossible to stay in the barn, but we fortunately found a man who provided access to two rooms in his house. For having helped us, this man was later excluded from the local religious community, but God led events so that Brother Wilhelm Adam became the local mayor, and his community then let us use their church for the next revival service we held in that area. ■



# Fathers

*They are given responsibility, have the greatest burdens placed on them, and are expected to fix things—these are fathers in the prime of their lives. They are also indispensable in the church.*

**T**hey are young, full of strength and energy. Childhood and adolescence is past. Dependence upon others and formal learning is done. Now they can give back with their work, create additional value, and help others. They are fathers in the prime of their lives. They have come to know and love God as their Father (1 John 2:13). They have matured into people who meet the challenges of everyday life and the particular crises of the present responsibly and prudently.

It is always a gift for them when they come home and can hold their children in their arms and romp and play with them. They feel just as responsible for

the well-being, upbringing, and education of the children as the mothers do. In many young families, the role of fathers has changed. Very often, the idea of parents as a team is redefined. Whereas the principle of a clear division of tasks used to apply in the past, today parents often solve issues together. This makes daily life more varied and efficient for both of them but not necessarily calmer and more relaxed.

Fathers stand their ground. That's why actions are more important to them than words. While his sweetheart likes to hear the words "I love you," it is quite natural for him to show her this with reliability and constant care rather than words. While she is still talking about the problem, he has already started working on the solution.

"Don't talk—do" is the way he deals with things. She may take his caring actions for granted. But she probably doesn't realize that this loy-





alty costs him many a sacrifice when she is waiting for flowers or words.

Names immediately come to mind when some tasks need to be done in the congregation. The sisters often wish and plan, the young people and senior citizens also have their ideas—but who should do it? The fathers. We really need them in church life. They are indispensable because they carry a considerable part of the load and burden.

Christian fathers know God and the power of the Holy Spirit. They feel so indescribably dependent on Him in all the challenges they face because all too often, they lack the solution, the answer to the pressing question, and wisdom for upcoming decisions. Dad is the hero who knows everything and can do everything. The child feels safe and secure in his presence. Yet how often he feels his weakness and helplessness. Sometimes he talks to his wife and friends about his worries and his fear of future developments. He wants to do the right thing, make the right decisions, and pave the way for his loved ones. It is good that he finds strength and guidance in his daily interaction with God, the inexhaustible source.

I can still vividly remember when I was between 35 and 42 years old. For years, I had heard sermons warning about the end times in which we find ourselves. Some preachers painted a gloomy picture in the darkest colors of hardship and misery, apostasy, and ungodliness. As I listened to the sermons, it seemed impossible to me that our children and later our grandchildren would turn to God and be saved. At that time, my four children were between 5 and about 18 years old. And there should be no hope for my children? I cried out to God in many prayers for grace and mercy until one day God taught me the song: “He is just the same today.” Just as God was at the time of Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel and the time of the disciples, so He is still the same today. God directed my gaze away from the hardships and dangers to the strong hero for whom even the most difficult things are not too diffi-

cult. I was able to lay my burdens at His feet and trust Him, and God gave us as a congregation years of blessing that we had no idea of at the time.

Many fathers feel the same way I do when they see the spiritual development of society in general and the church in particular, a development that gives little cause for hope. A whole series of young fathers see the need in the churches and see the great lack of workers in the kingdom of God. They are aware of some needs that have become the norm over time, and they cry out to God for mercy, for they are concerned about the future of their children and grandchildren. They are not interested in modern Christianity but in a powerful and inviting worship of and service to God in modern times.

Sometimes they have the impression that the older brothers and sisters are so excited about heaven that they neglect the needs of the present and future. That’s why fathers stand in the gap—taking responsibility and crying out to God for a revival. They long for their children and grandchildren to still see and experience Zion and that in the years to come, the glory of God in the church will still be the norm, and the powerful work of the Holy Spirit will be a matter of course.

We need the energy and sacrifice of fathers, their love, and their will to solve problems. So let us thank God for them. Let us be patient with them even if everything is not perfect and flawless, for God also has an individual plan of growth for them. The Lord works on them in His masterful workshop and shapes them according to His will and pleasure. May His work glorify Him, the divine Master.

Let us pray for fathers that God will give them new courage, strength, patience, and grace every day. Let us ask God to give them wisdom to follow the path of grace unwaveringly and thus prepare the way for the next generations in the good pleasure of God.

*Hermann Vogt  
Gifhorn, Germany*

# Do You Always Serve the Lord?

You serve the Lord on sunny days,  
when all is fair and bright.  
Do you really serve Him always  
or just when things go right?

What if great dark storm clouds draw near  
with thunder, wind, and light?  
When billows rage upon life's sea,  
will you still serve at night?

If through illness or tragic plight  
Satan sorely tempts you,  
and hope is gone and it is night;  
Say, will you still be true?

And if the friends you dearly love  
discourage you and say:  
"Stop trusting in the Lord above,"  
Will you still serve and pray?

What if your prayers seem to be  
unanswered and in vain,  
no ray of hope for you to see;  
will you still try again?

Hold on, these trials too will pass;  
The Lord will say: "Enough!"  
The enemy must flee at last  
although things now are tough.

I know that my Redeemer lives;  
He'll help me persevere.  
and as I plead, new strength He gives,  
and this despite my fears.

Yes, always I will serve You, Lord,  
in sunshine, night, or rain.  
You are with me and keep Your word;  
my life is not in vain.

**Edeltraut Nimz**