

¹⁸ “I have made no trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “You and your family are the troublemakers, for you have refused to obey the commands of the LORD and have worshiped the images of Baal instead. ¹⁹ Now summon all Israel to join me at Mount Carmel, along with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who are supported by Jezebel.”

²⁰ So Ahab summoned all the people of Israel and the prophets to Mount Carmel. ²¹ Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, “How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!” But the people were completely silent.

²² Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only prophet of the LORD who is left, but Baal has 450 prophets. ²³ Now bring two bulls. The prophets of Baal may choose whichever one they wish and cut it into pieces and lay it on the wood of their altar, but without setting fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood on the altar, but not set fire to it. ²⁴ Then call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by setting fire to the wood is the true God!” And all the people agreed.

²⁵ Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “You go first, for there are many of you. Choose one of the bulls, and prepare it and call on the name of your god. But do not set fire to the wood.”

²⁶ So they prepared one of the bulls and placed it on the altar. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning until noontime, shouting, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no reply of any kind. Then they danced, hobbling around the altar they had made.

²⁷ About noontime Elijah began mocking them. “You’ll have to shout louder,” he scoffed, “for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is daydreaming, or is relieving himself. Or maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep and needs to be wakened!”

²⁸ So they shouted louder, and following their normal custom, they cut themselves with knives and swords until the blood gushed out. ²⁹ They raved all afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice, but still there was no sound, no reply, no response.

³⁰ Then Elijah called to the people, “Come over here!” They all crowded around him as he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been torn down. ³¹ He took twelve stones, one to represent each of the tribes of Israel, ³² and he used the stones to rebuild the altar in the name of the LORD. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold about three gallons. ³³ He piled wood on the altar, cut the bull into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood.

Then he said, “Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water over the offering and the wood.”

³⁴ After they had done this, he said, “Do the same thing again!” And when they were finished, he said, “Now do it a third time!” So they did as he said, ³⁵ and the water ran around the altar and even filled the trench.

³⁶ At the usual time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command. ³⁷ O LORD, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself.”

³⁸ Immediately the fire of the LORD flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench! ³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell face down on the ground and cried out, “The LORD—he is God! Yes, the LORD is God!”

⁴⁰ Then Elijah commanded, “Seize all the prophets of Baal. Don’t let a single one escape!” So the people seized them all, and Elijah took them down to the Kishon Valley and killed them there.

— 1 Kings 18:18-40

Discussion/Journal Questions

Share about a time in your life when God showed up in a unique or special way.

Have two or three people read 1 Kings 18:18-40 out loud slowly. After some time of reflection, ask each other what words, phrases, or ideas stand out to everyone. What questions come to mind as you meditate on this scripture?

In verse 20, what question does Elijah ask the people of Israel? If Elijah were to address us, what false idols would he call out?

In verse 22, Elijah claims to be the only prophet of God left, but we know Ahab’s servant Obadiah hid 100 prophets from Jezebel’s persecution (1 Kings 18:4). How does loneliness affect our spiritual lives?

Read 1 Kings 18:29. Sit with this verse for a moment. What does it say about everything we try to set next to or in front of God in our lives?

What did Elijah do to stack the deck against God in this contest? Why do you think he did this?

Read 1 Kings 22:51-53. Did the confrontation at Mount Carmel end Baal worship in Israel? If not, why not?

In the sermon, Sam said that idols are like weeds growing in our hearts that must be constantly pulled. What idols tend to grow in your heart?

How can you group pray for you and help you cast down any idols you struggle with?