

2026-10-21 Small Group Guide

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Based on the Sermon: Paying Attention to God — 1 Kings 18, Deuteronomy 18-19

Overview

This sermon draws from the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel and connects it to passages in Deuteronomy about true and false prophets, the danger of divination, and the importance of honest witness. The central challenge is this: when God displays his power and speaks his truth, are we truly paying attention — or are we too quick to move on, tune out, or believe what we want to hear?

Key Takeaways

Familiarity can breed contempt. Even well-known stories in Scripture can lose their impact when we stop letting them speak to us personally. The story of Elijah is not just about fire from heaven — it is about how we respond when God gets our attention.

God uses dramatic moments to call us to inventory. When God does something extraordinary, the right response is not to move on quickly, but to pause, reflect, and ask: what is God saying to me through this?

King Ahab's response is a warning. After witnessing one of the most astonishing miracles in Scripture, Ahab's immediate concern was eating and drinking. This serves as a mirror for how easily we can witness God's work and walk away unchanged.

True and false prophets have always existed side by side. Deuteronomy 18 makes clear that God raises up true voices to speak his word, while false voices also compete for our attention. Knowing the difference requires knowing the Word of God.

Gossip and false witness are serious sins. Deuteronomy 19 establishes that no

accusation should stand on the testimony of one witness alone. The casual way we receive and repeat unverified information about others can cause deep and lasting damage.

The sheep know the shepherd's voice. The more time we spend in God's Word and in prayer, the better equipped we are to recognize when a voice is not his.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Think of a time when something significant happened — a moment that felt like it should have changed everything — and you moved on from it faster than you probably should have. What caused you to move on so quickly?

Section 1: Ahab's Response — 1 Kings 18:41-42

After witnessing the fire of God consume the altar, the water, and the stones, King Ahab's immediate response was to go eat and drink. What does that tell us about the condition of his heart?

The pastor asked: how many things happen where God displays himself and we turn around and ask where we are going to eat? In what ways do we, as modern believers, mirror Ahab's response after experiencing God's work?

What does it look like practically to pause and let a spiritual experience or a word from Scripture actually soak in, rather than moving on to the next thing?

Section 2: True and False Prophets — Deuteronomy 18:14-22

Deuteronomy 18 draws a sharp contrast: do not listen to those who practice sorcery or divination, but do listen to the prophet God raises up. Why do you think it is sometimes easier to listen to voices that are not from God than to the voice that is?

The pastor mentioned that the more familiar we are with genuine truth, the easier it is to recognize a counterfeit — like handling real money and noticing when something feels wrong. How does consistent time in Scripture sharpen that kind of discernment?

The passage in Deuteronomy 18 says that if a prophet speaks something that does not come true, that is a sign the Lord did not speak it. What are some practical ways we can test what we hear — whether from a teacher, a preacher, or any other source — against the Word of God?

The pastor referenced the Bereans in Acts 17, who searched the Scriptures after Paul taught to verify what he said was true. How comfortable are you doing that with what you hear on Sundays or in this group? What would make it easier?

Section 3: False Witnesses and Gossip — Deuteronomy 19:15-21

Deuteronomy 19 establishes that a matter must be confirmed by at least two or three witnesses before any accusation can stand. How does this principle apply to the way we receive and pass along information about other people?

The pastor said: "It is not truth if you did not see it and if it is only one person." How often do we hold ourselves to that standard before accepting or repeating something we have heard about someone else?

Why do you think gossip is listed alongside serious sins in passages like Romans 1? What kind of damage have you seen it cause in a church, a family, or a friendship?

The pastor suggested that when someone begins to share unverified information about another person, we should be willing to ask: were you there, did you see this, and do you have another witness? How would you respond if someone asked you those questions? How would it feel to ask them of someone else?

Section 4: Knowing the Shepherd's Voice

The pastor closed with the image from John 10 of the sheep knowing the shepherd's voice and following him. On a practical level, what does it mean for you personally to know the voice of Jesus well enough to follow it and recognize when a different voice is speaking?

The sermon challenged us not to be solo Christians but to be connected to the body — people who pray for one another, serve one another, and help one another stay on track. What does that kind of community look like in your own life right now? Where might there be a gap?

Practical Applications

This week, consider doing one or more of the following:

Practice pausing. After your next church service, Bible reading, or time of prayer, resist the urge to immediately move on. Spend five to ten minutes in silence or journaling, asking God what he is specifically saying to you.

Do a voice inventory. Make a short list of the voices you most regularly listen to — podcasts, teachers, friends, social media accounts, news sources. For each one, ask honestly: does what this source says consistently align with Scripture? Have you ever verified it?

Commit to a two-witness standard. For the next two weeks, make a personal commitment that you will not accept or repeat negative information about another person unless you have direct knowledge or a second credible witness. Notice how often you are tempted to set that standard aside.

Read your Bible with a specific question. Open to any passage this week and ask: what does this tell me about the character of God, and what does it ask of me? Share what you find with someone in this group.

Pray for discernment by name. Ask God specifically to help you recognize his voice more clearly — in Scripture, in prayer, and in the community of believers around you.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together for the following:

Those in your church family who are sick or struggling

Discernment for yourselves and your church to recognize truth and reject falsehood

A genuine desire to pause and respond when God gets your attention

Protection of unity in your church from gossip and false witness

A deeper, more personal knowledge of the voice of Jesus Christ

"May we learn your voice. May we hear it. May we obey it."