

2026-09-09 Small Group Guide

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Based on the Sermon: Good, Evil, and the Potter's Hand

Overview

This sermon draws from the lives of Elijah and Ahab in 1 Kings, alongside passages from Jeremiah, to examine how easily people become desensitized to evil, how God remains sovereign over human choices, and how faithful obedience looks even when circumstances are difficult. The central challenge is for believers to stop measuring right and wrong by the standards of those around them and to start measuring by the standard of God.

Key Passages

Jeremiah 18:1-12 — God as the potter, Israel as the clay; God's willingness to relent or reconsider based on human response

Jeremiah 13:23 — The question of whether those accustomed to doing evil can change their ways

Jeremiah 4:22 — God's people described as skilled in doing evil yet unable to do good

1 Kings 16:29-34 — The introduction of Ahab and his compounding of evil

1 Kings 17:1-9 — Elijah's bold declaration and God's provision through ravens and a widow

Key Takeaways

1. We can become numb to what God calls evil. The sermon emphasizes that over time, people adjust their personal standard of right and wrong based on the environment they are in rather than on God's word. What feels comfortable is not always what is godly.

2. Good is not the same as godly. Living at an acceptable level among peers or in a community is not the same as living according to God's standard. The sermon warns against settling for goodness as a substitute for genuine godliness.

3. We all have blind sides. No one is fully capable of seeing every area of

their own life that needs correction. This is one of the reasons God places believers in community with one another.

4. God is still the potter. Jeremiah 18 makes clear that God retains the right to reshape, redirect, or respond to individuals and nations based on whether they turn toward or away from him. This is not a threat but an invitation.

5. Ahab's downfall was gradual and compounded. Ahab did not start at the worst possible place. He accumulated compromise over time, each step making the next one easier. His story is a warning about the direction of small choices.

6. Faithful obedience often requires trusting God in uncomfortable or illogical circumstances. Elijah trusted God when the provision seemed strange and when the circumstances seemed to get worse before they got better. That trust is the model for believers today.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Think about a time when you realized something you had grown comfortable with was actually not healthy or right. What helped you see it clearly?

Diving Deeper

The sermon describes how people adjust their behavior based on who is around them rather than who is within them. Where do you notice this tendency most in your own life? At work, at home, online, or somewhere else?

The preacher draws a distinction between being good and being godly. What do you think the difference looks like in everyday life? Can you think of examples where those two things might look the same on the outside but be very different on the inside?

Jeremiah 18 describes God as a potter who is willing to reshape his work. How does it make you feel to think of yourself as clay that God is still forming? Does that feel comforting, unsettling, or both?

The sermon points out that Ahab did not start out as the most evil king in Israel's history. He got there through accumulated choices. What do you think are some of the smaller compromises that tend to lead people toward larger ones over time?

Elijah received provision through ravens and was then sent to rely on a poor widow in a foreign country. Both situations required trusting God in ways that did not make obvious human sense. When has God provided for you in a way you did not expect or through a source you would not have chosen?

The preacher says that the body of Christ exists in part so that believers can watch each other's blind sides. What would it take for your group to be the kind of community where that actually happens in a healthy and caring way?

Jeremiah 18:12 records the people responding to God's call to repentance by saying it is no use and that they will continue with their own plans. Have you ever found yourself in that posture toward God, even quietly or internally? What does it take to move out of it?

The sermon closes with a reference to Jesus saying not my will but yours be done. What is one area of your life right now where surrendering your own plan to God feels most difficult?

Practical Applications

This week, try one or more of the following:

Audit one habit or routine by asking honestly whether it reflects what God values or simply what those around you find acceptable. Bring what you discover to God in prayer.

Identify one blind side by asking a trusted friend or family member to speak honestly with you about an area where they think you might have a gap between what you say you believe and how you actually live. Commit to receiving that conversation without defensiveness.

Read 1 Kings 16 through 17 on your own and pay attention to the contrast between Ahab's choices and Elijah's obedience. Write down one observation that strikes you personally.

Practice the potter's prayer. At the start of each morning this week, spend a few minutes telling God that you are willing to be reshaped in whatever area he chooses. Use the words from the hymn referenced in the sermon as a guide: Have thine own way, Lord.

Examine your information diet. The sermon raised the point that consuming a constant stream of news and conflict can shape our emotions and opinions in ways we do not always recognize. Consider what you are allowing to form your thinking and whether it is drawing you toward peace or toward anxiety and antagonism.

Closing Reflection

The sermon reminds us that God is not writing a story about perfect people. He is writing a story about real people who, in the middle of real temptation and real failure, chose to turn back toward him. Ahab's story is a warning. Elijah's story is an example. The question each person must answer is which direction their own story is moving.

Close your time together in prayer, asking God to give each member of the group the courage to see clearly, the humility to acknowledge blind spots, and the trust to remain in his hands even when his methods do not make immediate sense.