

Session 1: God's Divine Boot Camp

In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. . . . Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."
1 KINGS 16:29-30; 17:1



CONNECT

What are some stories (fictional or Historical) that have played a role in you becoming the person you are today?



WATCH

Watch the video for this session, Below is an outline of the key points covered during the teaching. Record any key concepts that stand out to you.

OUTLINE

I. Elijah could relate to feeling outnumbered and overwhelmed by the culture.

- A. Elijah ministered in Israel during many decades of morally corrupt leadership.
- B. The main purveyors of corruption in Elijah's day were Ahab and Jezebel.
- C. Jezebel was especially involved with Baal worship and other forms of idolatry.
- D. The wickedness of Israel's people (from the leaders down) did not escape God's notice.

II. Elijah burst onto the scene by proclaiming a drought in the land.

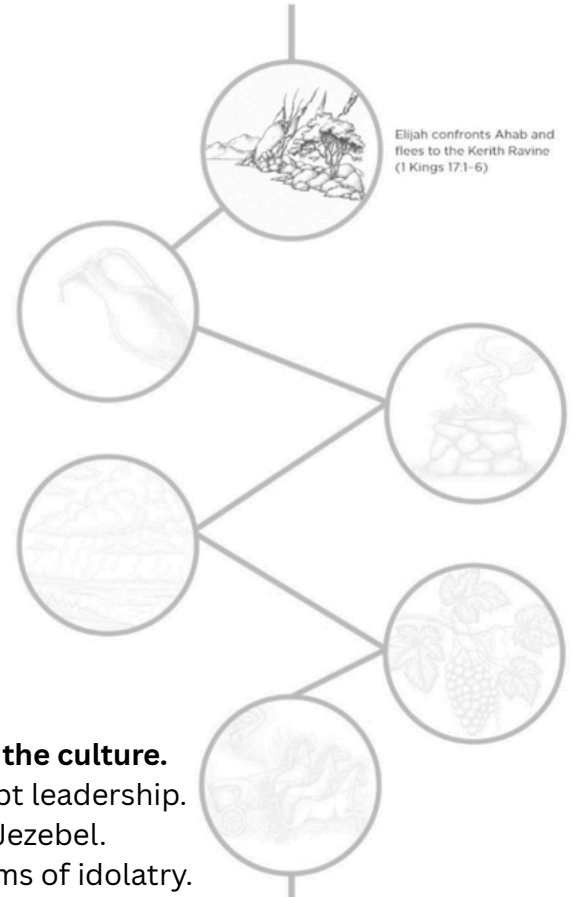
- A. The physical conditions of this drought matched the spiritual dryness in Israel.
- B. Elijah's promise of a drought was grounded in God's promises of what would happen if his people chose to worship other gods (see Deuteronomy 11:16-17).
- C. The drought was a confrontation of Baal, who was connected with rain and fertility.

III. After this confrontation, God sent Elijah to an isolated place called the Kerith Ravine

- A. In that place Elijah was cut off from society and cut down in humility.
- B. God sent Elijah to the wilderness to protect him and prepare him for the future.
- C. God needed a steadfast prophet who could stand against a corrupt culture.
- D. Even Jesus needed "Kerith-like" seasons of preparation (see Luke 4:1-13)..

IV. Embrace seasons of solitude or isolation as part of God's divine boot camp.

- A. These seasons teach us what it means to walk in the Spirit and how to lean on him as our Comforter.
- B. It is in solitude that we find time to listen for God's voice and enjoy his presence.
- C. Solitude reminds us that we cannot give out until we first take in.
- D. The smaller we make ourselves, the more room we create for God to reveal his greatness to us.





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Discuss

Discuss what you just watched by answering the following questions.

1. The culture of Elijah's day was notably immoral, in part because the king and queen promoted Baal worship and other forms of idolatry. When are some times that you felt pressured by modern culture to move away from God's values and priorities?

2. Elijah's statement to King Ahab was bold: "There will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word" (1 Kings 17:1). But that proclamation was rooted in God's promises from Scripture, including Deuteronomy 11:13-17. What might be some reasons why the Israelites failed to take those promises from God seriously?

3. Ask someone to read 1 Kings 17:2-6. Elijah was hidden from King Ahab in the Kerith Ravine but also isolated from his people. What are some seasons of loneliness or solitude you've endured in the past? What lessons did you learn from those seasons?

4. Instead of resisting seasons of isolation, it is possible to embrace them as opportunities to recognize God's closeness and provision in your life. When you feel cut off from others, what practical steps do you take to seek God for your needs?

5. Ask someone to read James 1:2-4. Boot camps are uncomfortable—even painful—yet serve an important purpose. What does James say about the purpose of facing trials? As a follower of Jesus, how might you retrain yourself to embrace the hard seasons of spiritual basic training rather than long for the comfortable spiritual "spa days"?



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Respond

God commanded Elijah to endure a season of solitude in the Kerith Ravine so he would be prepared for his future work. God needed a steadfast prophet who would stand against the tide of a corrupt culture, which meant Elijah needed to grow comfortable in isolation and in humility. But did you know that God himself followed a similar program of solitude and preparation when he walked the hills and valleys surrounding Jerusalem?

The first chapter of Mark describes the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee. He started by calling several disciples to follow him. Then he taught in the synagogue in Capernaum and cast out an unclean spirit. Then he healed Peter's mother-in-law of a high fever. Then he healed many other people and cast out demons. The Bible says the whole city was "gathered at the door" (Mark 1:33). Everyone wanted to see this incredible new rabbi! You might think this would have been a great time for Jesus to establish a home base for his ministry. An opportunity for him to lean in to his public popularity and demonstrate even more miracles from God. But instead, look at what Jesus did next:

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" 38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." MARK 1:35–38

Jesus sought moments of solitude to connect with the Father. How are you currently incorporating similar moments of solitude and connection in your daily routine?

Do you feel like your current spiritual walk provides time and space for God to prepare you for the work he wants you to accomplish each day? Explain your response.



Pray

When the time comes to close this session, talk with God about the many ways he has prepared and equipped you to be servants in his kingdom—including seasons of solitude. Express gratitude for those seasons and for the ways God has preserved you and provided for you in the midst of them. Commit to actively making time for God to fill you each day so you have something to give at home, at work, and beyond. Use the space below to write down any requests so you and your group members can pray about them in the week ahead.