

Elijah

A LIFE SURRENDERED

By AMANDA FILLEBROWN

Dear Friend,

Elijah lived a life of true surrender to God. One of the things I love the most about Elijah's story is how we get glimpses of his humanity. The Lord did some amazing things through Elijah, but woven among them you see that he was a man that struggled with real emotions - fear, depression and despair. Whether he was striking down the prophets of Baal or hiding in a cave, the Lord was with him. I am not sure where you find yourself at this moment - on top of the world or maybe in a deep valley. Whatever your position, it is my prayer that you will walk away from this devotion knowing that God is with you as well. He loves you and cares for you - his most precious child. I hope this knowledge fills in every part of your being and gives you the courage to be completely surrendered to God as well.

I would love to hear your thoughts after you finish this devotion. Please feel free to email me at amandafillebrown@gmail.com or visit my website at www.amandafillebrown.com.

*Blessings,
Amanda Fillebrown*

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Day 1 - Crazy Callings

1 Kings 18:1-15

“Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land you will possess.”

Deuteronomy 5:33

Has God ever called you to do something that seemed totally crazy to everyone else? Maybe it even seemed crazy to you?! How did people respond when you shared with them? When I chose to leave my full time job at a large church to take a job as the children’s minister at a church plant, I am sure my family and friends questioned my judgment. There were so many unknowns and some of the things that were known seemed pretty ridiculous. For example, there was no salary or income foreseeable in the near future. Regardless, I knew without a doubt that God was calling me to go.

Obadiah is a devout follower of the Lord. When Jezebel was killing the Lord’s prophets, he took 100 of them and hid them in an attempt to spare their lives. At this point, Elijah is the lone prophet of the Lord. He encounters Obadiah and tells him to go and tell Ahab that he is there. Obadiah is convinced that Elijah will disappear and then Ahab will have him killed!

Sometimes the most well-intentioned people can try to distract us from God. They can feed into our fears and doubts instead of encouraging us to follow God no matter the cost. How would things have been different if Elijah had chosen to listen to Obadiah? Elijah may have decided it was too risky and ran. It can be tricky for us to discern God’s voice in our lives, especially when other people try to direct us in a different way. How do you determine what is the right thing to do and if it is really God that you are hearing? We don’t usually get an audible voice like Elijah did.

We must choose to live a life in obedience to God even when we do not understand and others question us. We will experience great things in our lives when we do. During my time as a children’s minister at that small church plant, I was situated in a place where God was able to teach me things and bless me in ways that would not have been possible if I would have stayed where I was. We have to be willing to trust God and take steps of faith in order for him to put us in the places where we can be in a position for him to move in our lives.

Pray and ask God what he is calling you to do. Are you willing to obeying him even if his response seems risky or crazy?

Day 2 - Strength To Do Hard Things

1 Kings 18:16-45

“Elijah went before the people and said, ‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.’”

1 Kings 18:21, NIV

I worked in children’s ministry for almost 10 years. It has been the most challenging job I have ever had. It was way outside of my comfort zone. Many people look at children’s ministry and think that it’s all fun and games, but that is so very far from the truth. Yes, there were fun times and it was amazing to see truths click for a child during a lesson I had written or taught. However, there were just as many times when my heart broke because of a family situation a kid was going through that I could not fix. I would get frustrated over a behavior issue that I had no clue how to deal with. I had to humble myself and call volunteers at the last minute to ask if they could help. Often we think that if something is hard for us then we are not the right person to do the job. However, it’s actually the opposite. God calls us to do difficult things knowing that we have his power and we will learn to trust Him.

Elijah is the perfect example of someone who did hard things. He heard from God and was obedient. He did some pretty gutsy things. He confronted Ahab as we read about yesterday. He challenged the people to stop worshiping false gods and to turn back to the one true God. During the time we read about today, Elijah is the only prophet of the Lord that is left. Baal on the other hand had 450 prophets! I cannot imagine how hard that must have been. During my time in children’s ministry, I always had others working alongside of me and encouraging me. Elijah had to trust God and rely on him alone - he had no cheerleaders by his side. Despite being in a difficult situation, Elijah was obedient because God had shown himself to be faithful over and over again in his life.

Things never got easier in children’s ministry for me. The difference is that I learned to depend on God. The more I leaned in and trusted God and saw how he came through over and over the easier it became to trust him to do it again. Elijah was able to challenge the prophets of Baal because he trusted that God was going to come through for him just like he had in the past. He was certain about what God had commanded him to do and knew that God was going to stand with him.

Write down some ways that God has been faithful and has come through for you in the past. Put the list somewhere where you can refer to it frequently. It will give you strength to do the next hard thing He calls you to do!

Day 3 - God's Tender Care

1 Kings 19:1-9

"You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water."

Psalms 63:1

Have you ever been scared of something? I have always found it fascinating the way that people enjoy being scared. They go to haunted houses and watch scary movies and jump out of airplanes. Our bodies go into what is called fight or flight response when we are stressed or fearful. We releases hormones that prepare us to deal with the potential threat. We deal with it in one of two ways – stay and fight or run to safety. Our heart rates increase as well as our breathing along with many other physical symptoms. As someone who struggles with panic attacks, I try my best to avoid things that I know are going to give my body these symptoms. I do not find these feelings enjoyable at all. However, it's important that our body is able to prepare us for when there truly is danger.

In 1 Kings 19:1-9, Elijah is facing a very real threat. Jezebel had threatened to take his life when she heard what Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets of Baal. Elijah was afraid and his flight response kicked in. He became so distraught that he prayed that the Lord would take his life. In his exhaustion, he fell asleep. The verses that follow tell how the Lord responded to Elijah. These are some of my most favorite verses in the entire Bible. God doesn't get angry with Elijah and tell him to get up and fight. He doesn't punish him for running away from Jezebel. Instead, God cares for him very tenderly and gently. He sends an angel to tell him to eat. He provides food for Elijah - warm bread. Even God knows that when we are stressed out that nothing is better than carbs! After eating, he let Elijah go back to sleep. The Lord knew that the journey ahead was going to be hard.

The angel came and touched Elijah a second time and said "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." God did not minimize how difficult the situation at hand was and the toll that it had taken on Elijah . He knew that in Elijah's current state that the journey was too much for him.

Elijah ate and drank again and then he had the strength to journey on for 40 days and 40 nights until he reached Horeb. Horeb was not just any place. It was God's mountain. The same one where God gave Moses the 10 commandments. In his running, Elijah ran to where he knew God's presence had been. When we are afraid, do we run to God or do we run away? So many times we run and hide or go to other people when in reality, seeking God is the best thing we can do. Maybe we are worried that God is going to be angry with us when we are scared. However, we should remember that the same God that lovingly provided for Elijah will provide for us in our time too.

Where do you run when you are scared? What are some places that you feel God's presence the strongest? Spend some time today in one of those places praying.

Day 4 - God Speaks

1 Kings 19:10-18

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

Psalm 46:1

Obeying God doesn't always make things easy. I think sometimes we have the misconception that we will not face hardships and trouble if we are following God. However, obeying God doesn't always make for an easy road. Often, the initial mountain top highs that we experience are followed by the valley lows.

I mentioned a couple of days ago that I had left a staff position at a large church to help a church plant get their children's ministry started. One of the benefits of working at a large church is that you get to be a part of a team. When I left to help the church plant with their children's ministry, I lost my team. I had others around me who were doing ministry, but I was the only one leading children. After about a year, I started to feel very defeated and alone. I had done what God had called me to do so why was it such a struggle? I was angry and resentful at times. There were lots of Saturday nights I would be at church after service cleaning up and just asking God why? Why am I here? Most of the time it felt like I was calling out to a dark, empty room as tears dripped down off of my chin.

At the lowest times, when I was ready to flip off the lights and call it quits for good, I would feel a gentle and quiet nudge to stay. Staying was so hard sometimes, but I knew it was what I was supposed to do.

Elijah ran away after defeating the prophets of Baal. He was scared for his life and felt very alone. At one point, he even asked God to take his life. Yesterday, we read that at this low point he went to God's mountain. The word of the Lord came to Elijah. Elijah poured out his heart about all that had happened. He is then told to go stand on the mountain and wait for the Lord to pass by.

Many great and mighty things happened while Elijah was waiting – a powerful wind came that was so strong that it tore the mountains apart. There was also an earthquake and a fire. We are told that the Lord was not in any of those things. Honestly, I am not sure I would have waited around long enough for God! After the rocks started shattering from that wind, I probably would have hightailed it out of there! After the fire, there came a gentle whisper. The Lord was in that low, peaceful voice. How very kind and compassionate of the Lord to appear to Elijah in that way. The Lord showed him patience and compassion. He allowed Elijah to pour out his heart to him on that mountain. The Lord did not reprimand him, but instead he told him what to do next and what to expect.

God doesn't get angry with us when we experience fear and heartache and struggles. Instead, he lovingly provides for us. It may be by telling us what to expect next as it was with Elijah or it may be in the gentle and quiet command to just trust him and obey. Regardless of which one, please, my friend, listen to him. I could fill pages with how the Lord blessed my life because I obeyed and stayed.

Spend some time today away from the noise and listen for God's quiet voice.

Day 5 - Service and Sacrifice

1 Kings 19:19-21

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship.”

Romans 12:1

Sacrifice - I can't think of anyone who would put it at the top of the list of their most favorite things. I believe sacrifice is something we really only appreciate fully in hindsight. Sacrifice always has a cost attached to it. It involves giving up something valuable to us. Often when people think of sacrifice, they think of death. While death is a sacrifice asked of some, more often we are asked to sacrifice things of importance to us such as material possessions, positions, time and power.

Sacrifice is a theme that appears over and over again throughout the Bible. Abraham left his land and his home to follow God. Isaac was willing to give up his only son. Simon Peter and Andrew left their jobs and followed Jesus to become fishers of men. Elisha is another example of someone whose life was a living sacrifice.

Elisha was a wealthy man. We are told that he had 24 oxen and that he was driving the twelfth pair himself. This likely meant that his servants were driving the others. He was living a life of relative safety even though we learned from looking at Elijah's life that being a follower of God was dangerous during this time. Elijah shows up and puts his cloak around Elisha. Elisha's life would completely change if he accepted what Elijah was offering. Elijah was a man on the run - constantly facing danger. He was poor and had to rely on others to feed him. By choosing to follow Elijah, Elisha would be taking on that same lifestyle. Elisha didn't accept this invitation halfheartedly; his actions showed that he was all in. He slaughtered his livestock, which he cooked over his plow that he burned, to feed the people in his town. The very first thing he did after accepting Elijah's call to be his servant was to serve the people in his town. Sacrifice and service are meant to walk together.

Jesus is the perfect example of the marriage between sacrifice and service. He sacrificed everything - position, power, the perfection of heaven, and even his life. His sacrifices were an act of service to us. In Matthew 20:28, Jesus tells us that he did not come to earth to be served but to serve. In Philippians 2:5-6 we are told that we are to have the same mindset as Jesus who took on the nature of a servant. Jesus sacrificed everything to serve everyone. We should be willing to do the same. Nothing in and of our lives should be off limits to him.

Are you willing to sacrifice anything or are some things off limits? What things are you clenching on to tightly? Spend some time in prayer. Consider listening to the song "Nothing I Hold On To" by Will Reagan of United Pursuit (<https://youtu.be/5Fryb0Uqo4s>) as you worship and ask him to help you to trust Him and loosen your grip on those things.