

## Daily Reading

Monday August 30

### The Influence of Faith

1 Kings 18:37-40

In contemporary Christian culture, faith is often considered a possession that affects just its "owner." Because of our love for independence and self-sufficiency, we have, in many ways, lost the sense of community and outreach that the church is meant to embody. We live like little islands in our own "personal relationship with Christ." But in reality, God wants our faith to influence others, both within and outside the church.

Elijah's faith influenced the entire nation of Israel. By believing and delivering God's message, he was an example to them in word and deed. When he asked the Lord to reveal Himself as almighty God, fire fell from heaven, and the people believed.

His motive in the showdown at Mount Carmel was to draw the people back to the Lord. We usually think of "sharing our faith" with those who don't know Christ, but our confidence in God can also encourage weak or wayward believers. Likewise, those strong in faith can strengthen us when we are struggling with doubt.

The church is described as a body whose parts are all interconnected (1 Cor. 12:12). God never intended that we be autonomous, living in our own personal faith. We are not like a bag of marbles; rather, we're to be like a bunch of grapes whose juices blend in times of pressure.

Guard against living an isolated Christian life. Share your confidence in God's faithfulness. Your testimony could help others' faith to grow. If you're troubled by doubt or fear, let go of any pride or shame, and seek help from a strong believer. Mutual blessing awaits when we reach out to one another.

## Daily Reading

Tuesday August 31

### Building Muscles of Faith

1 Kings 18:22-36

"I wish I had great faith." These are words that almost every Christian has said at one time or another. But faith is like a muscle, which must be exercised in order to become strong; just wishing cannot make it happen.

Christians are to believe God, not only for salvation but for everything. Rather than a spiritual "plateau," faith is actually a process that involves increasing degrees of trust throughout life. Little faith hopes that God will do what He says; strong faith knows that He will; and great faith believes that He has already done it.

Elijah was a man of great faith. He saw increased challenges as opportunities for God to do His work—and the prophet believed Him for the supernatural. So can you. The Lord may not do every miraculous thing you ask of Him, but He does some extraordinary work in and through each person who is obedient and willing to trust in Him.

You may be thinking, I am not good enough for the Father to use me. The Scriptures are filled with examples of weak and flawed people whom the Lord used to achieve His purposes. He is looking, not for perfection, but for individuals willing to believe Him. He not only works through people of faith; He transforms them.

Start by reading God's Word to learn what He wants you to do. Each day's situations and needs are opportunities to trust Him. Ask the Lord to bring to mind verses that apply to your circumstances. Trust Him and do what He says—your faith "muscles" will grow, and He will be glorified.

## Daily Reading

Wednesday September 1

### Double-Minded Service

1 Kings 18:16-21

The Old Testament presents idolatry as a serious issue, but who in the modern civilized world gives it much thought? The worship of idols seems archaic, but the truth is, all of us will struggle with this heart issue.

During the days of King Ahab, Israel was pulled in two directions. They'd previously served the Lord, but Ahab had recently instituted Baal worship. When Elijah challenged the people to make up their minds about whom to serve, they were speechless.

You may be thinking, This doesn't apply to my life, but modern idols come in many different forms. When we depend on—or give priority to—anything besides the Lord, it becomes our god.

Does something in your life have a higher value than the Lord? He gives us relationships, possessions, and meaningful work, but we are constantly tempted to cherish the gifts more than the Giver. An accurate measure of priorities is the use of our time. Do you reserve a part of each day for God, or is every minute consumed by the demands of life?

On what or whom do you depend? The Lord gives us His strength and provision, but so often we choose to rely on ourselves, others, or even money. The tendency to worry or control is a sign of self-reliance rather than dependence upon God.

Double-minded service will not work (Matt. 6:24). We must make up our minds and follow through with actions. If we really believe that the God of the Bible is the only true God, we ought to give Him our whole life, follow Him faithfully, and serve Him with all our gifts and abilities.

Daily Reading

Thursday September 2

Aug. 25, 2010

Travel Companions: Faith and Obedience

1 Kings 18:1-15

Faith and obedience are travel companions heading to the same "destination"—namely, to please and glorify the Lord. You cannot have one without the other. They grow simultaneously as they are practiced, but will wither if neglected.

Elijah was a man with both of these qualities. He believed God and consistently responded in obedience. When the Lord said to show himself to King Ahab, he didn't permit fear to stop him. He had learned through experience that the Father was faithful and trustworthy.

Fear short-circuits faith when we begin to doubt that God's way is really best. If we allow worry to gain a foothold in our minds, we'll respond by refusing to do what the Lord says, which is disobedience. The result will be a change in our "travel plans"—by rejecting the way of faith and obedience, we're actually choosing the path of unbelief and sin.

Satan loves our fear and disobedience because they hinder the journey that God has designed for us. We can't believe the Lord for great things in one area of our life if we are allowing sin in another. Self-examination is essential in the walk of faith. Where have you compromised by allowing sin a foothold? Are you resisting anything that God says in His Word?

Great faith begins with small steps. When you choose to follow God's Word, an ever-increasing cycle of faith and obedience will begin. Don't let fear or sin rob you of the great adventure He's planned for your life. Who has a better track record for choosing the right path—you or God? Believe Him!

## Daily Reading

Friday September 3

Preparation for Greater Service

1 Kings 17:17-24

In Luke 17:5, the apostles asked Christ to increase their faith. The Lord told them that if they had faith as small as a mustard seed, they could do great things. God does not enlarge our faith instantly. He begins with what little we have and proceeds to grow it.

Elijah was in a faith-building program. The Lord gave him increasingly difficult challenges of reliance and obedience. Back at the brook, the prophet had to depend on the Lord for his own survival. But at Zarephath, he trusted God to provide for both himself and a widow. And in today's passage, he served her in an even larger way by raising her son to life.

Each act of believing God and the ensuing step of obedience resulted in increased opportunities for Elijah to serve the Lord and others. Raising the dead may seem like the height of his ministry, but it was to be followed by an even greater opportunity to influence an entire nation for God. Elijah was about to face the biggest spiritual battle of his life (1 Kings 18)—all his previous demonstrations of faith and obedience were the Lord's way of preparing him.

God wants each of us to be influential in His kingdom. He knows which faith challenges to present so that we can be entrusted with even greater tasks.

The Lord will provide occasions for you to believe Him and respond in obedience. These situations are what we call "problems." Begin to look at each difficulty as an opportunity designed by God specifically for the purpose of increasing your faith so He can do great things in and through you.