



# UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Through the Bible*

*April 28 - May 4*

*1 Kings 18*

## Things to Know

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## Studying God's Word *In Community*

*Reminder. Seek to understand and apply God's word, **not** rehash the sermon.*

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# Sermon Recap

## 1. You Can't Ride the Fence Forever

*"How long will you go limping between two opinions?" (v. 21)*

God doesn't tolerate spiritual indecision. Half-hearted faith is whole-hearted rebellion. You will either worship the Lord or chase after lesser gods—but not both.

*"God is not looking for part-time followers—He's calling for full surrender."*

## 2. Idols Take Everything and Give Nothing

450 prophets danced, shouted, and cut themselves. But the sky stayed silent.

That's what idols do. They exhaust you. They demand your blood. But in the end—they leave you with nothing but silence.

*"The gods we make for ourselves are always deaf, dumb, and dead." — Charles Spurgeon*

## 3. The Fire Falls on the Sacrifice, Not the Sinner

Elijah rebuilt the altar and laid the offering before God—and fire came down.

Not to consume the people, but to consume the sacrifice.

That's grace. That's the gospel.

*"At the cross, Jesus became the sacrifice so the fire of judgment would fall on Him instead of us."*

## 4. One Person + God = A Majority

Elijah looked outnumbered—850 to 1. But when God shows up, the odds don't matter.

Faithfulness is never measured by popularity but by obedience.

*"Better to stand alone with God than to stand with the crowd against Him." — Adrian Rogers*

## 5. The Goal Wasn't Fire. It Was Repentance.

God didn't send fire just to put on a show—He sent it to turn hearts back.

Revival isn't about spiritual fireworks. It's about bowed knees and surrendered lives.

“True revival doesn't start with emotion—it starts with repentance.” — Leonard Ravenhill

## *Discussion Questions*

### 1. 1 Kings 18:21

**“How long will you go limping between two opinions?”**

**Question:** In what areas of your life are you tempted to waver between wholehearted devotion to God and something else? What makes it hard to choose Him fully?

### 2. 1 Kings 18:24

**“You call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord...”**

**Question:** How does this challenge between Elijah and the prophets of Baal help us understand the difference between false religion and true faith? How do we “call on the name of the Lord” today?

### 3. 1 Kings 18:30

**“Elijah said to all the people, ‘Come near to me.’ And he repaired the altar of the Lord...”**

**Question:** What does “repairing the altar” look like in your life? Are there spiritual habits or priorities that need rebuilding in your relationship with God?

### 4. 1 Kings 18:37

**“Answer me, O Lord... that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God...”**

**Question:** Elijah’s prayer wasn’t self-centered—it was God-centered. How can we pray in ways that aim to glorify God rather than just get results?

## 5. 1 Kings 18:39

**“The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.”**

**Question:** What does a life look like that truly believes and declares, “The Lord, He is God”? What needs to change in your life to reflect that conviction more clearly?

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## Read

**Read 1 Kings 18:20-40 and make observations about the text.**

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
  - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
  - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
  - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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## Scripture

**1 Kings 18: 20-40**

### **The Prophets of Baal Defeated**

<sup>20</sup> So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. <sup>21</sup> And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word. <sup>22</sup> Then Elijah said to the people, “I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. <sup>23</sup> Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. <sup>24</sup> And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.” And all the people answered, “It is well spoken.” <sup>25</sup> Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it.”

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<sup>26</sup> And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. <sup>27</sup> And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” <sup>28</sup> And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. <sup>29</sup> And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.

<sup>30</sup> Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come near to me.” And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down. <sup>31</sup> Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, “Israel shall be your name,” <sup>32</sup> and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs<sup>[a]</sup> of seed. <sup>33</sup> And he put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, “Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.” <sup>34</sup> And he said, “Do it a second time.” And they did it a second time. And he said, “Do it a third time.” And they did it a third time. <sup>35</sup> And the water ran around the altar and filled the trench also with water.

<sup>36</sup> And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. <sup>37</sup> Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.” <sup>38</sup> Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. <sup>39</sup> And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God.” <sup>40</sup> And Elijah said to them, “Seize the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape.” And they seized them. And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there.

## Living on Mission In Community

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah confronts Israel's divided loyalty with a clear challenge: "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (v.21) This call to decision highlights that personal holiness requires an undivided heart – we cannot follow God while still clinging to our own "Baals." Elijah models spiritual integrity by standing boldly for truth, even repairing the broken altar of the LORD (v.30) to restore true worship. He then prays, "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and that You have turned their hearts back" (v.37), showing his passion for God's glory and for the people's hearts to return fully to God. Elijah's confrontation with idolatry is a timeless call to examine our own loyalties and choose wholehearted devotion. What "idol" or divided loyalty in your life is God calling you to surrender today so that you can follow Him wholeheartedly?

*How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?*

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## Optional Breakout Questions

*Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:*

1. How did you feed yourself?
    - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
  2. How did you feed others?
    - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
  3. How did you feed your flesh?
    - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*
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# Leader Resources

## Sermon-Based Curriculum:

“The Fire Falls: God Alone is God”

**Text:** 1 Kings 18

**Theme:** God alone is worthy of worship, and He will make Himself known.

**Memory Verse:** *“Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.”* — 1 Kings 18:37

### 1. Session Overview

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah stands alone on Mount Carmel, confronting the prophets of Baal in a dramatic showdown. This story isn’t just about fire from heaven—it’s about the call to wholehearted devotion. God reveals His power not for spectacle, but to turn the hearts of His people back to Him.

### 2. Opening (Prayer & Icebreaker)

**Icebreaker Question:** What’s the most “against-the-odds” moment you’ve ever experienced or witnessed?

**Prayer Prompt:** Break into groups of 2–3. Ask, *“Is there any way we can pray for our personal walks with God this week?”* Encourage vulnerability and pray specifically for areas where idols or distractions are pulling hearts away from full devotion to the Lord.

### 3. Scripture Reading

Read 1 Kings 18:17–40 aloud. (Optional: assign roles to read Elijah, Ahab, narrator, etc.)

### 4. Teaching Points

#### I. The Idolatry of Indecision (vv. 17–21)

- Elijah’s question cuts to the heart: “How long will you go limping between two opinions?”
- The word “limping” (Hebrew: *pasach*) implies wavering, like someone injured or uncertain.
- Israel’s problem wasn’t that they had fully rejected Yahweh—it was that they were trying to follow Him *and* Baal.

“The human heart is an idol factory.” — John Calvin

**Theological Note:** Baal was a storm god—this is a direct challenge from Yahweh, the true Lord of heaven and earth, who controls rain and fire.

## II. The Futility of False gods (vv. 22–29)

- 450 prophets of Baal cry, dance, and even bleed—yet no voice answers.
- Idols always demand more but deliver nothing. They leave us exhausted, empty, and unheard.

“The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of Him.” — A.W. Tozer

**Typological Note:** The silence of Baal contrasts with the God who speaks and answers by fire—anticipating Christ, who *is* the Word made flesh and the ultimate revelation of God.

## III. The Fire That Falls (vv. 30–39)

- Elijah repairs the altar—restoring worship.
- His prayer is short and simple: “Answer me, O Lord.”
- Fire consumes everything—not just the offering, but water, stones, and dust. God leaves no doubt: *He alone is God.*

“One man with God is always in the majority.” — Leonard Ravenhill

**Doctrinal Link:** Fire from heaven demonstrates divine judgment and acceptance. The cross becomes the place where God answers not by fire on us—but by fire on His Son, so we might be accepted.



#### IV. The Call to Return (v. 37, 39–40)

- The fire had one aim: *“that this people may know... and that you have turned their hearts back.”*
- Revival isn’t about spectacle—it’s about repentance.
- Israel falls on their faces: “The Lord, He is God!”

#### 5. Discussion Questions

1. **Verse 21** – What are some ways we “limp between two opinions” in our spiritual lives today?
2. **Verses 26–29** – Why do you think people turn to idols even though they fail to deliver? What idols are easiest for us to justify?
3. **Verse 30** – What might it look like in your life to “repair the altar of the Lord”? (i.e., restore intimacy and worship?)
4. **Verse 37** – What would it look like to pray with Elijah’s boldness today? What are you praying that only God can do?
5. **Verse 39** – What evidence would you expect to see in a life that truly declares, “The Lord, He is God!”?

#### 6. Application Points

- **Wholehearted Worship:** Identify areas where your heart is divided. Confess and surrender them in prayer.
- **Pray Boldly:** Write out a bold prayer like Elijah’s—asking God to move in your life, family, or church for His glory.
- **Repent from Idols:** Reflect this week on subtle idols in your life—comfort, reputation, control—and replace them with spiritual disciplines of surrender.
- **Live Courageously:** Elijah stood alone, but God stood with him. Where is God calling you to take a stand?

#### 7. Closing Reflection & Prayer

Invite everyone to pray silently, then close in this prayer:

*"Lord, we confess that we have often tried to serve You while clinging to idols. Like Elijah prayed, we ask You to answer us—not for our glory, but so that hearts might return to You. Help us be faithful in a faithless culture. Let us live with boldness, prayerfulness, and full devotion. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

## **8. Memory Verse**

*"Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back."*

— **1 Kings 18:37**

## **9. Leader's Notes**

- **Context Reminder:** This is during a severe drought—Yahweh's judgment on Baal worship (Baal was believed to control rain).
- **Encourage Depth:** This story is not just about power—it's about a nation being called back to covenant faithfulness.
- **Gospel Lens:** The fire did not fall on the people but on the sacrifice—pointing forward to Christ, who took the judgment we deserved.

