

DRIVEN



Running with
Full-Throttle
Faith

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DRIVEN: RUNNING WITH FULL-THROTTLE FAITH

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INTRODUCTION

Life is a race—and because it comes at us so fast, many people think they must compromise the truth to get ahead.

But not when the prophet Elijah came to town! As God's spokesman, he made sure nobody escaped the truth for long.

Elijah's world was similar to ours in many ways. Corruption was widespread. Most people had turned away from God. It seemed as if the bad guys were always getting ahead.

In the middle of this darkness, Elijah's race encourages and inspires us. James 5:17 reminds us that Elijah was human, just like we are. But he experienced God's power in spectacular ways.

Through an up-close look at the life of the prophet Elijah, you'll discover how to do more than just survive your life—you can be a true winner for God and help others cross the finish line too. God can help you live with faith, confidence, and purpose.

Life is a race, but it's not a race for a temporary prize. It's an all-out, wholehearted pursuit of God—who is lovingly pursuing you. Are you ready to put your faith in motion and accelerate toward God?

LESSON 1

READY TO RACE: GOD PREPARES US

1 Kings 17:1–6

DO YOU LIKE GOING PLACES and accomplishing goals? You just might have racing spirit! In fact, racing is a good metaphor for many events in life. In a negative sense, we might say about a day, “That was a real rat race.”

Whatever kind of race you’re in—whether racing to meet a deadline at work, taking a weekend camping excursion, or running a one-hour 10K—you need to prepare. The word *preparation* means to “make ready beforehand.”

1. What would you pack for an overnight camping trip?
2. What would you pack for a weekend road trip?
3. How should you prepare to run a race like a 10K?

Preparation is half the journey to a successful race. Or as Benjamin Franklin reportedly said, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” The difference between a good and bad race is often preparation.

Just as we must prepare well for races and road trips, so we must prepare if we want to find true fulfilment in life. On life’s “racecourse,” we experience confusing situations and difficult challenges, and navigating them is tricky.

The first step to preparing for life’s race is to establish a close, trusting relationship with the one true God. Consider the following two statements from the Bible.

Jesus (Who is God) said, “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

4. Based on a comparison of these two statements, how important is a close relationship with God to living a successful life?
5. On a scale of 1–10, with 10 being “completely close,” how close would you describe your relationship with God today?

If anyone ever faced a difficult racecourse of life, it was the prophet Elijah. Everyone seemed opposed to him. The government tried to have him killed. But Elijah had prepared by having a close relationship with the one true God. Let’s explore a time in Elijah’s life when God showed him how He could provide for his needs, no matter what.

GOD GIVES US A MEANINGFUL PURPOSE.

Elijah lived in Israel during the ninth century BC. This was the time in history when quartz crystals were put to use, the Olmecs were building pyramids in what would later become Mexico, the city of Carthage was traditionally founded, and prophecy was at the forefront of God’s interactions with people.

In Bible times, prophets didn’t usually win “most popular” awards—at least, not if they were true prophets. They were called by God to proclaim His words, warn people of coming judgment for sin, and call them back to trusting in the one true and living God. Sometimes prophets described future events, but not all the time. At the core they were God’s spokesmen.

Sometimes it seemed that prophets like Elijah were the only people following God. Elijah’s purpose was to call people to trust in the one true and living God. That was a crucial and meaningful purpose, but often it wasn’t easy.

God has given you and me a purpose too—wonderful, meaningful, but sometimes challenging. During this study we’ll discover how to stay on track with God’s purpose for us.

Elijah was up against a man named Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, who were ruling as king and queen over Israel. The job of a king was to govern Israel by leading its people to trust in God—to worship Him and to follow the law He had given them through Moses. But instead, Ahab and Jezebel promoted the worship of Baal (1 Kings 16:30–34) and led the people to do the same.

Baal was a false god worshiped by nonbelieving neighboring nations. To understand how terrible Baal worship was, consider that people who worshiped Baal sometimes offered child sacrifices as part of their worship. Ahab seems to have given his approval of this practice. During his reign, a man named Hiel rebuilt Jericho at the expense of two of his sons in the beginning and end of the building project (1 Kings 16:34). One Bible teacher said, “The foundation sacrifice . . . is probably what was involved. The children named were probably infants, dead or alive, placed in jars and inserted into the masonry, propitiating the gods and warding off evil.”¹

In the middle of this horrible, messy situation, God called Elijah to go to King Ahab. Elijah was to explain to Ahab the consequences he could expect as a result of his disobedience.

6. What was the consequence of Ahab’s actions (1 Kings 17:1)?

7. Do you think this consequence was appropriate? Why or why not?

8. How would you have felt if you were Elijah and had to give this negative message to Ahab?

GOD PREPARES US TO FULFILL OUR PURPOSE.

The Bible doesn’t give us Ahab’s response to Elijah’s message. But it does tell the result for Elijah. God told him to hide out for a while at a place called Brook Cherith. Elijah’s message must not have made King Ahab happy at all!

¹ S. DeVries, quoted in Paul R. House, 1, 2 Kings, vol. 8, The New American Commentary (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 204.

This brook flowed through a rural, undeveloped location east of the Jordan River. There Ahab would have difficulty finding Elijah, but it was a place with sparse food and supplies, especially during a famine.

9. What clues in the text suggest the reason God sent Elijah to this remote location?

God had a plan when He sent Elijah to the Brook Cherith. He also has a plan when He redirects our lives in ways that don't make sense to us at the time.

God provided for Elijah through normal means. Elijah could drink all the cool, clear water he desired from the brook. But God also provided for Elijah through unexpected means. Through ravens, God provided Elijah with both bread and meat. In the Old Testament, the word *bread* refers not only to what we consider bread but to all kinds of food in general, including “berries, fruit, nuts, eggs.”² Ravens may have been the first food-delivery service in history!

10. In what ways has God provided for your needs? If you're comfortable doing so, share them with the group.

By providing for Elijah in this way, God reinforced Elijah's trust in Him. God was the living, active source of provision; false gods like Baal never were. God showed Elijah that he could obey Him no matter what. Even if obeying God made Elijah's life difficult and uncomfortable—and that would happen more than once for Elijah—God would always faithfully meet his needs.

So yes, God gives people a meaningful purpose in life, but sometimes following God is neither easy nor popular. That is why many people hesitate to follow Him. But Elijah's experience reminds us that when we do follow Him, He is faithful to provide for our needs.

GOD PROVIDES FOR OUR NEEDS.

Some of our needs are food, water, clothing, and shelter. We cannot live or function

² Thomas L. Constable, “1 Kings,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Victor Books, 1985), 523–524.

without these necessities for long. Consider how generous and faithful God is in providing for the needs of His people: “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

11. How many of our needs does God promise to provide when we trust in Him?
12. Why do we sometimes feel as though God is not meeting our needs?

In Israel’s case during the ninth century, God had refrained from providing food and water. This wasn’t because He was uncaring or unreliable, but because His people refused to trust in Him. Instead they trusted in false gods, who didn’t even exist and were unable to meet their needs.

We might say, “I’m trusting in God to meet my needs,” but are we really? Jesus taught that if we worry about meeting our needs and make meeting our needs our number one priority, then we’re not actually trusting in God.

Do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6:31–33)

13. What does Jesus tell you to pursue as your number one priority?
14. What does Jesus promise God will provide if you make that your top priority?
15. Why is it hard to make our relationship with God our top priority?

To experience God’s care, you must first be sure that you have a close and trusting relationship with Him. You must admit that you have sinned (disobeyed Him) and accept Jesus Christ alone as your perfect Savior, Who lived, died, and rose again for you: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

When you believe these things, God forgives your sins and forever becomes your Heavenly Father. (See “The Gospel” on page 39.)

Then God prepares us to follow Him as He helps us fulfill our God-given purpose. Every step of the way, we must look to God for our provision, rather than trusting in worldly methods, worldly systems, or ourselves. Then we will be like Elijah rather than Ahab.

Sometimes God allows us to experience challenging and difficult times, like the famine He sent to Israel. Often His purpose in these times is to prepare us for future service. Difficulties push us to trust and follow Him. At other times, He may simply be deepening our faith in Him, or He may be drawing us back to Him when we've strayed.

16. How did Elijah's time in a remote location—being fed by birds and drinking from a brook—prepare him to serve God?

17. What difficult experiences has God used in your life to teach you to trust in Him?

18. Have you believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior?

Memorize: Matthew 6:33

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for being a caring, faithful, and generous God Who provides for the needs of His people. Thank You for sending Jesus Christ to live, die, and rise again so we would have a way for our sins to be forgiven and have a close relationship with You. Thank You also for promising to meet all of our needs as we follow Your ways, like Elijah did. Please help me to trust in You rather than trusting in myself or in things. May other people learn to trust in You through the example of my life. Thank You for preparing me to serve You. Amen.