

Turn The Hearts Of The Fathers To Their Children – Luke 1:17

Luke 1:17 [NIV] *“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

John the Baptist came in the “*spirit of Elijah*”.

What was Elijah like?

Elijah’s single-minded commitment to God shocks and challenges us.

He was sent to confront, not comfort.

Elijah spoke God’s words to the rulers of his time who often rejected his message because it was Elijah who was bringing it.

Elijah chose to carry out his ministry for God alone and paid for that decision by experiencing isolation from others who were also faithful to God.

God accomplished amazing miracles through Elijah.

But we should focus firstly on the relationship that Elijah had with God that was the beginning of his life and work with God.

1 Kings 18:20-39 [NIV] *“So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. 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.” But the people said nothing. Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire — he is God.” Then all the people said, “What you say is good.” Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “O Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no-one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or travelling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no-one answered, no-one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which was in ruins. Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench round it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.” “Do it again,” he said, and they did it again. “Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD, answer me,*

so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD — he is God! The LORD — he is God!"

For example, after God had worked this overwhelming miracle through Elijah in defeating the prophets of Baal, Queen Jezebel retaliated by threatening Elijah's life.

Elijah fled, feeling depressed and abandoned.

1 Kings 19:1-4 [NIV] *"Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."*

Despite God providing Elijah with food and shelter he was so depressed that he wanted to die.

How did God deal with this depression?

1 Kings 19:11-13 [NIV] *"The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

God used an "audio-visual display" to attract Elijah's attention then spoke to him in a quiet comforting voice, to let Elijah know just how close He was to him.

1 Kings 19:15-18 [NIV] *"The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel — all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."*

Following this reassurance God told Elijah to get back to the job He had given him.

God also reassured Elijah he was not alone, many others were part of his team and also faithful to the God Elijah served.

God has work for us to do even when we feel fear and failure.

God also has more resources and people than we know about.

Although we would like God to do amazing miracles through us, we should first focus on developing an intimate relationship with God for this was the first miracle in Elijah's life.

This is a miracle that is available to all of us.

From the life story of Elijah we can learn that we are never as alone as we may feel we are, God is always there with us.

We need to remember that after any great spiritual experience in our lives that causes us to be “*on a high*”, we may have to deal with a “*low point*” in our lives.

At such times we need to focus on the greatness of the God we serve by considering the vastness and the great powers within the universe He has created and sustains.

Then listen for Him, in a quiet time tell us what He wants us to be part of next, in His plan for our life in His church.

Elijah today would be looked on as an “*action man*” for God.

Elijah was driven by the Holy Spirit to confront this godless society with powerful words backed up by miraculous signs done by the God he served.

Reading the life and actions of Elijah in God’s Word is an inspiration for us all to cry out to God to show Himself and His Power to our generation.

John the Baptist was used by God to bring many people to repentance, empowered by the same Holy Spirit that worked in and through Elijah.

The Holy Spirit is longing to work through us in the same way today as He did through Elijah and John the Baptist, to bring many people to repentance.

Luke 11:9-13 [NIV] *“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!**”*

Ask for the active presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

But remember the Holy Spirit is God and will only work with us and in us on His terms, His will not our will.