WorldVenture ALC Bali Dr. Rick Griffith

17 October 2006 Single Message

NIV 15 Minutes

**Following God in Leadership**

***1 Kings 17***

**Topic:** Leadership

**Theme:** How is God preparing us to be leaders?

**Thrust:** See how God has prepared you for leadership—by strange but encouraging means.

**Purpose:** The listeners will be encouraged that God will take care of them as they lead others to trust God.

# Introduction

### Interest: [Leadership can make us feel inadequate.]

#### Yesterday when sharing about the new church we’re starting in Singapore I didn’t tell you the whole truth.

#### When I showed you this picture I didn’t say how utterly unprepared I felt for that first meeting. Many church planters know exactly what they want—how they are going to do it—who they are going to reach—but I only had a vague idea—and still do!

#### One experienced church planter asked me, “Are you starting a church for expatriates—or one to reach expatriates?” I said, “Both.”

#### Honestly, I feel really unprepared—where should it be located? Should we be a cell church? I don’t know how to answer a lot of basic questions!

### Need: Do you feel prepared to be a leader? You’re probably saying, “Well, in and of myself, I’ll fail. I need God’s leading for me to lead.” Don’t you feel that God alone can prepare you?

### Subject: But *how* is God preparing us to be leaders? How does He enable us to direct others?

### Background: [Jezebel imported Baal worship into Israel (1 Kings 16:29-33).]

#### Today let’s take a journey back to eighth century Israel. Our story picks up in the early divided kingdom, focusing on the northern nation of Israel after six kings have already ruled in only 56 years (averaging 9 years each).

#### Ahab is just introduced in 1 Kings 16:29-34 as the most evil king ever in Israel:

##### Ahab continued the practices of Jeroboam of preventing people from traveling south to worship at Jerusalem—presumably by saying that they can worship YHWH at Bethel and Dan (16:31a).

##### Ahab went a step further than Jeroboam, though, as he married Jezebel, who was daughter of the king of Sidon. She brought the horrendous Baal worship into Israel by building a temple for Baal in Samaria (16:31b-32)!

##### “Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him” (16:33).

#### How would *you* like to be called to confront Ahab with his sin?

### Text: In 1 Kings 17 we’ll see how God called Elijah to this tough task. This chapter actually introduces Elijah for the first time, showing how God prepared him for the major confrontation with Baal at Mount Carmel in chapter 18.

### Preview: In 1 Kings 17 we’ll draw two truths about how God prepares us to lead others as we see how God prepared Elijah to confront this evil.

### Transition: The first way God prepares us for leadership is…

# I. God often meets our needs through the strangest means (1-16).

[The LORD provides for our physical needs—but often through unlikely ways.]

## He prepared Elijah to lead against Baal by giving him food and water in unconventional ways.

### Ravens fed Elijah (1-6).

#### (1) The LORD had Elijah announce to Ahab that neither dew nor rain would come to Israel for years—this would take courage!

##### Do you know why the lack of rain is so significant here?

##### Baal was considered the god of Baal was the god of rain, thunder and lightening. Depictions of him show an angry god holding lightning bolts.

##### The story takes place up in so-called “Baal territory.” The reader is left with the question why the rain god Baal cannot provide water even in his own domain.

##### Famine would hit “the rain-god Baal’s territory” until the true God of rain said so.

#### (2-6) The LORD cared for Elijah through a brook and ravens acting out of character.

##### Why does God take care of Elijah in this unique way with ravens (6)?

##### Ravens are known to scavenge food only for themselves—never for others!

##### This shows that God takes care of his own leaders and can use whatever means he wants to care for his leaders.

### A widow about to die fed Elijah (7-16)

#### Keeping Elijah alive looks seemingly hopeless:

##### The brook dried up so he’d have to leave his hiding place for water (7).

##### He had to leave for Sidon as there was no food in Israel either (9).

##### Dreams of “Oh, great! God has a wealthy widow to care for me!” are shattered when the widow is collecting here own sticks (10).

##### The widow doesn’t even have flour for her last supper (12).

##### Yet God fed all three of them—the widow, her son, and Elijah (15).

#### So the LORD sustained Elijah’s life through the unlikely means of an impoverished but godly widow close to death who faithfully shared her last meal with Elijah.

#### In contrast, followers of the so-called “grain god” Baal went hungry.

(Is there a lesson for us as leaders here? I think there is…)

## God uses “weird” ways to prepare us for leadership.

### Support discovery brings the most unlikely people into our lives.

#### When I became a missionary my home church refused to support me—and even made me swear I wouldn’t approach anyone in the church for support!

#### Yet others who didn’t know me at all took up a huge chunk of my support.

### I also learned Spanish since I thought God was leading me to South America.

#### Then God called me to minister to the Chinese. In 18 years in Asia I haven’t met a single Spanish-speaking Chinese yet!

#### But God’s ways are not our ways as He prepares us for leadership. He isn’t nearly as concerned about efficiency as I am!

(So how does God prepare a leader? Verses 1-16 say that God often meets our needs through the strangest means. The rest of the chapter gives us a second way that God prepares us as leaders…)

# II. God gives us confidence through ministry successes (17-24).

[The LORD encourages us when we see Him use us—especially when others see it too.]

## The LORD sustained the widow’s livelihood by raising her son from death as evidence that the LORD was the real God of life—not the supposedly resurrecting Baal (17-24).

### This is the third success Elijah has had up to this point.

### But only this one in verse 24 records that anyone else recognized his calling.

### Chapter 18 will show that by now Elijah has the confidence to be outnumbered 850 to 1.

### Surely if Elijah can give life to the dead, then he can kill the living!

## God grants us enough success now to give us confidence for the future.

### “God never called a man to do a job in which he failed” (DL Moody).

### ILL: Roy encouraged me that the new church will succeed.

# Conclusion

### Subject: So how is God preparing us to be leaders?

#### God often meets our needs through the strangest means (1-16).

#### God gives us confidence through ministry successes (17-24).

### Recognize how God has prepared you for leadership (MI).

### Exhortation/Application: How has He prepared you?

#### What unusual way has He confirmed his calling to you?

#### How has He encouraged you through others seeing your ministry success?

# Study Questions (Step 1)

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### The story picks up in the early divided kingdom, focusing on the northern nation of Israel after six kings have already ruled in only 56 years (averaging 9 years each).

### Ahab is just introduced in 16:29-34 as the most evil king ever in Israel:

#### Ahab continued the practices of Jeroboam of preventing people from traveling south to worship at Jerusalem—presumably by saying that they can worship YHWH at Bethel and Dan (16:31a).

#### Ahab went a step further than Jeroboam, though, as he married Jezebel, who was daughter of the king of Sidon. She brought the horrendous Baal worship into Israel by building a temple for Baal in Samaria (16:31b-32)!

#### “Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him” (16:33).

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### We are tempted to follow other gods throughout our lives, just as Ahab followed Baal.

### God included this text about Elijah needing to trust the LORD in the midst of such an evil environment when even his king led the people astray.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### Baal was considered the god of Baal was the god of rain, thunder and lightening. Depictions of him show an angry god holding lightning bolts.

### The story takes place up in so-called “Baal territory.” The reader is left with the question why the rain god Baal cannot provide water even in his own domain.

# Questions

### Where is Gilead (1)? Is it significant that Elijah was from the other side of the Jordan? Elijah was asked to go east of the Jordan after making his declaration to Ahab—so he was going back to his own area.

### Why does God take care of Elijah in this unique way with ravens (6)? Ravens are known to scavenge food only for themselves—never for others! This shows that God takes care of his own people.

# Tentative Theme/Thrust Statements (Step 5)

Text

# Possible Illustrations (Step 6)

### Crossroads International Church

# Possible Applications (Step 6)

### Text

**Outlines (Steps 2-5)**

**Following God in Leadership**

***1 Kings 17***

**Exegetical Outline (Steps 2-3)**

# Exegetical Idea (CPT): The way the LORD prepared Elijah for his leadership against Baal was to meet his physical needs and to enable him to take care of a widow who cared for him.

# I. (1-6) The way the LORD prepared Elijah for his leadership against Baal was to grant him food and water through the unconventional means of ravens.

## (1) The LORD had Elijah announce to Ahab that neither dew nor rain would come to “the rain-god Baal’s territory” until the true God of rain said so.

## (2-6) The LORD took care of Elijah through a brook and ravens acting out of character by providing him food as evidence that He can use whatever means he wants to care for his people.

# II. (7-24) The way the LORD prepared Elijah for his leadership against Baal was to enable him to take care of a godly widow who cared for him.

## (7-16) The LORD sustained Elijah’s life through the unlikely means of an impoverished but godly widow close to death who faithfully shared her last meal with Elijah while followers of the so-called “grain god” Baal went hungry.

## (17-24) The LORD sustained the widow’s livelihood by raising her son from death as evidence that the LORD was the real God of life—not the supposedly resurrecting Baal.

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will be encouraged that God will take care of them as they lead others in following God.

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)—Steps 5-6

# Subject: How does God prepare us as leaders?

# Introduction

### Interest: Leadership can make us feel inadequate (ILL: feeling unprepared for CIC first meeting).

### Need: Do you feel prepared to be a leader? Don’t you feel that God alone can prepare you?

### Subject: How is God preparing us to be leaders? How does He enable us to direct others?

### Background: Jezebel imported Baal worship into Israel (1 Kings 16:29-33).

### Text: 1 Kings 17 actually serves as an introduction to Elijah, showing how God prepared him for the major confrontation with Baal at Mount Carmel in chapter 18.

### Preview: In 1 Kings 17 we’ll draw two truths about how God prepares us to lead others as we see how God prepared Elijah to confront this evil.

### Transition: The first way God prepares us for leadership is…

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## He prepared Elijah to lead against Baal by giving him food and water in unconventional ways.

### Ravens fed Elijah (1-6).

### A widow about to die fed Elijah (7-16)

## God uses “weird” ways to prepare us for leadership.

### Support discovery brings the most unlikely people into our lives.

### I learned Spanish to minister to the Chinese.

# II. God gives us confidence through ministry successes (17-24).

## The LORD sustained the widow’s livelihood by raising her son from death as evidence that the LORD was the real God of life—not the supposedly resurrecting Baal (17-24).

## God grants us enough success now to give us confidence for the future.

# Conclusion

### Subject: So how is God preparing us to be leaders?

#### God often meets our needs through the strangest means (1-16).

#### God gives us confidence through ministry successes (17-24).

### Recognize how God has prepared you for leadership (MI).

### Exhortation/Application: How has He prepared you?

#### What unusual way has He confirmed his calling to you?

#### How has He encouraged you through others seeing your ministry success?

# Discussion Questions: