

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides (January 23rd-29th)

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. Who is someone that you would like to spend more time with this year? And why?

Bible Study Questions

1. If you have been reading in 1st and 2nd Kings, what have you been learning? What do you notice about God? Who do you identify with? What questions do you have?
2. Read 1 Kings 18:16-46
 - In 18:21, Elijah tells them that they can no longer waver between two positions, worshipping God or Baal. What positions do you think that Christians waver between most today? Where in your life you find yourself wavering between God and something else?
 - It says that the people said nothing. Why do you think that was the case?
 - In this story, God shows the worthlessness of Baal. What idols do we place our trust in today apart from God? What are some examples in which we claim to follow Christ, yet hold onto some of the idols or sin issues of the world?
 - From this story, what devotion to God look like?
3. John the Baptist was said to be the 2nd Elijah. Read the account of him in Luke 3:1-20
 - From this story, how does John the Baptist define devotion to God?
 - Is there any area in your life in which you need to align yourself with this vision?

4. Elisha minister during a time of great apostasy in Israel. Yet God was still actively caring and bringing justice to his people. How does this bring you encouragement?
5. Through Elisha, God demonstrated that he was still acting in a sinful world. Jesus **was God** acting in a sinful world. Dwell on that a bit. What is your response when you allow that truth to sink in?

January 23rd
The Eli's
1 Kings 17- 2 Kings 13

Intro: Once Jeroboam reinvents the Israelite faith in the Northern kingdom, they continue in a downward move away from God. Things reach a crises point when king Ahab institutes state sponsored worship of the Sidonian god of storms, Baal. In this context, God raises up the prophet Elijah.

- I. **Elijah passionately called people back to a wholehearted commitment to God:** God works through Elijah to show the impotency of Baal by blocking rain from Israel for three years. Then Elijah stages a dramatic public showdown between himself and the priests of Baal. A key line is in 18:21 where he asks the people, *“how long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”* The rest of the verse tells us that the people said nothing. God was not looking for part time followers, but those who would be devoted to him. In the end, God is shown to be the real God. The people renew their devotion to God, but quickly slip back into sin.
- II. **Even in their sin, God’s saving presence was still active.** After Elijah, God did incredible works through the prophet Elisah, whose name means “God saves”. Even though they were rebelling, God had not yet given up on his people.
 - a. **God cared for his people:** We find stories of Elisha providing clean water for a city (2:19-22) and providing economic support for a poor widow (4:1-7). He even does a resurrection for a woman who has lost her only son (4:8-37).
 - b. **God provided justice:** God sends a bear to maul teens who mock God’s prophet (2:23-25). Most importantly, God promises justice to the house of Ahab and he does that through king Jehu (9:8-10).
 - c. **God shows mercy to outsiders:** One of the most shocking stories are ones that involve enemies of Israel. The Aramean general Naaman is cured of leprosy (chapter 5). Furthermore, Elisha travels to Aram to announce the next king, Hazael (8:7-15). The message is that God is not only king over Israel, but over all kingdoms.

Conclusion

In Malachi 4:5, it was prophesied that the prophet Elijah would come before the day of the Lord’s coming. Jesus later said that John the Baptist

was the Elijah who was to come (Matthew 11:15). John the Baptist had the role of calling people to repentance and wholehearted devotion to God. Then he paved the way for the ministry of Jesus.

When we look at the ministry of Elisha, we find many parallels between him and Jesus. Elisha means “God saves” while Jesus means “The lord saves”. Elisha begins ministry by walking through the Jordan river. Jesus begins by being baptized in the Jordan river. Elisha gives sight to the blind, heals lepers, does food miracles, and even raises someone from the dead. Jesus does so on a grander scale. Even in Elisha’s death, a dead body touches his bones and comes back to life. Through Jesus’ death, all men who believe in him are brought are given eternal life. Jesus is the greater Elisha. If Elisha demonstrated God acting in a sinful world, Jesus **was God** acting in a sinful world.