

# LIVING OUTSIDE OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE



WEDNESDAYS @ 7:00 PM EST



@STARBETHBC

# SERVE WITH COURAGE

Part 1: Wednesday, June 2, 2021

Courage comes in many shapes, sizes and forms.

### **Examples of everyday courage:**

- Trying a food that you've never tried before.
- Engaging in a new experience.
- Asking someone out on a date.
- sky diving or riding a bike for the first time.
- Leaving an abusive relationship
- Asking for a promotion or a raise at work.

- *People often choose the path of least resistance, why, because it's easy and comfortable.*
- But serving God isn't a cushy job. It entails..
  - *opposition, struggle, fear, heartache, and sacrifice.*
  - *Still, it's the greatest job with the longest lasting impact.*
- *Serving God over the long haul demands we step out of our comfort zone and exhibit courage in the face of opposition and uncertainty.*

- In 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, Elijah emerged on the scene, when the spiritual foundation of Israel had crumbled.
- The people worshipped the idol god Baal led by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel.
- Elijah was called by God to speak truth to power and oppose the government sanctioned idol worship.
- Elijah's actions are an example of a courageous nobody who stepped out of their comfort zone for God.

# 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 16:29-33

In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. <sup>30</sup> Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. <sup>31</sup> He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. <sup>32</sup> He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. <sup>33</sup> Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to arouse the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him.

Verse 29-30: Under King Solomon's reign Israel began to decline.

- Solomon opened the nation to idolatry when he married women from lands where idols were worshipped.
  - After his death, the nation split in two.
  - The northern Kingdom had a string of unrighteous kings who failed to obey God.
- Ahab became king of the northern Kingdom 60 yrs. later. While the other Kings were bad. The Bible says that Ahab did more evil than any before him.

Verse 31: The writer of Kings introduced Jezebel the wife of Ahab and her family background.

- Jezebel's father was once an idol priest who conspired against the King of Tyre and seized the throne.
  - Growing up in his home, of a tyrant and murderer who worshipped idols, she is the embodiment of “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”
- Through Ahab’s reign, Jezebel dominated him and the kingdom. Her influence became legendary.

Verse 31: Although Israel had already dabbled in Baal worship. Israel practiced the freedom of Worship (some worshipped Yahweh, others worshipped false Gods).

■ Ahab permitted Jezebel to bring the full-blown culture of Baal worship into Israel.

– Baal was believed to be the god who provided fertility and prosperity in various aspects of life.

– This became a great temptation for Israelites who became dependent on Baal.

– **Deut. 8:18** - *“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.”*

***Q: What are the challenges with living in a culture where pluralistic worship or truth is tolerated?***

Verse 32-33: Ahab & Jezebel's marriage took Israel's worship of Baal to a whole new level.

■ **Deut. 7:3-4**—*“Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.”*

- Ahab even setup up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal in the Capital, Samaria.
  - *Ahab made an Asherah pole.*
    - Asherah represented the chief goddess and mother of Baal.
    - The pool was sculpted in the shape of Asherah and was considered a sacred monument near religious locations.
  - *The allure of illicit sex connected with worship of Baal & Asherah was very tempting.*
- This attraction, coupled with the urging by the King & Queen drove Israel away from Yahweh.



**1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 17:1**

Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe[a] in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”

Verse 1: When the divided kingdom fell under immoral leadership who looked to idol worship, God commissioned prophets to call the people back to Yahweh.

- Elijah shows up and initially is a solitary voice speaking up for the true God of Israel.
  - Elijah bravely proclaimed God's message.
  - Elijah's name carried significance in a cultural climate that was not accepting of our God.
    - His name suggests that Elijah's parents were devout believers in a land filled with idolaters.

- Elijah's name in Hebrew consists of various words:
  - “El”: *Elohim (name for God)*
  - “I”: *My (personal pronoun)*
  - “Jah or Yah”: *Lord*
- Elijah's name when utter meant “My god is the Lord.”
  - This name during the time of Ahab's government officially supported the worship of Baal, declared the truth of the one True God.
- Elijah went to the capital and confronted Ahab with a sort message that pulled no punches.
  - *“As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives whom I served, there will be no more rain in the next few yeas except at my word.”*

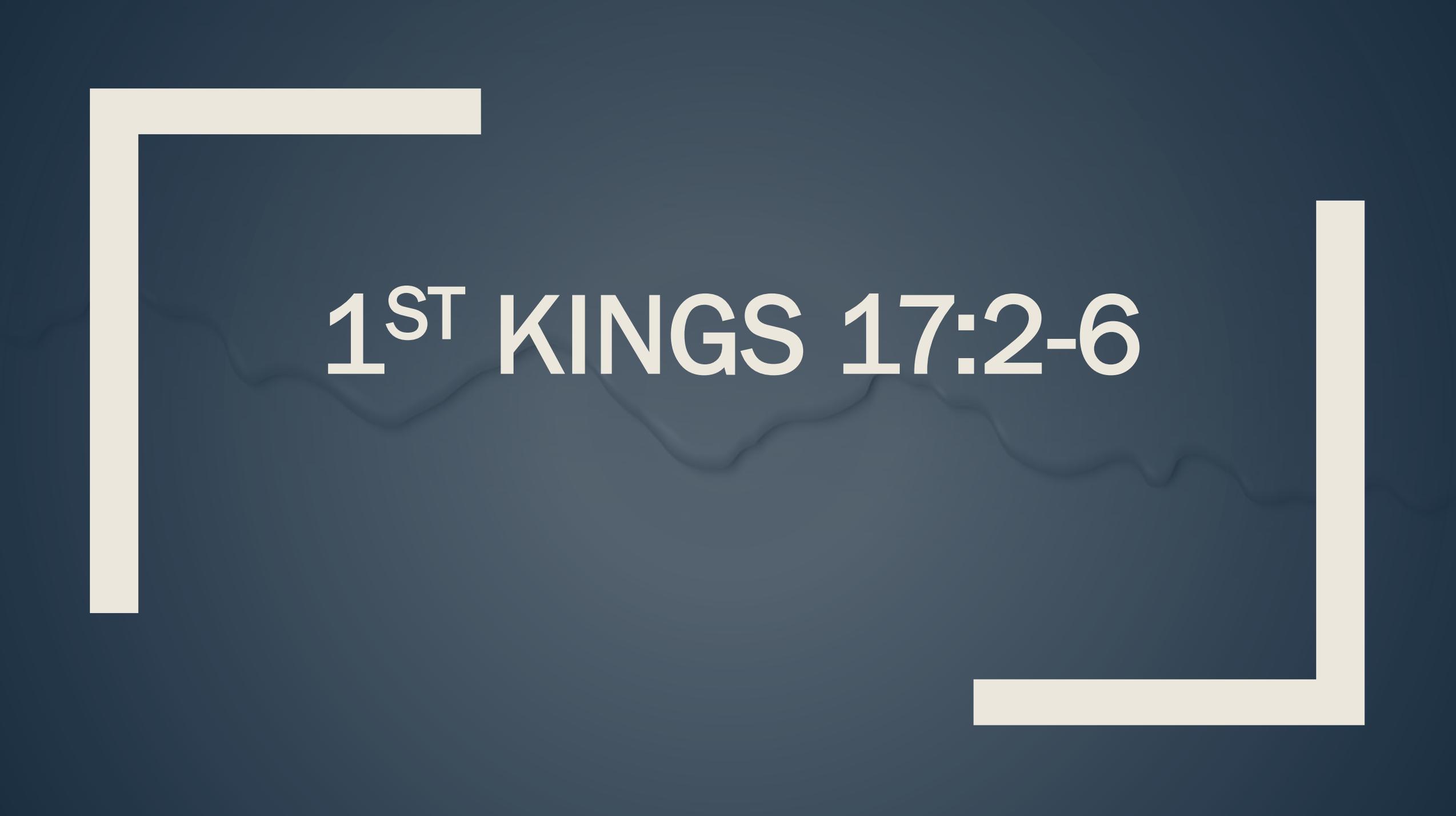
- Elijah believed what God told him to say. He believed God would keep the word of judgment he proclaimed.
- Elijah took a minority stance to expose the lies of the false belief system.
  - Opposing Baal was politically incorrect.
  - Opposing Baal was an invitation to opposition.
  - Serving God is not always popular. Serving God requires faith and courage.
- ***2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 32:7*** “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him.”

- Elijah message contradicted the myth behind Baal.
  - Baal was known as the storm God, who created prosperity by sending rain.
  - *The drought's message was to awakened Israel and to prove that Yahweh was the one/true living God.*
- The Message also challenged the King's authority.

Announcing a drought in advance meant a contest had begun.

  - Elijah's actions shows his courage to directly challenge the king and kingdom for God.

- Elijah's was brave to leave his comfort zone.
  - Most people think that people like Elijah are rare or make excuses as to why they cannot serve.
- Yet he no different than you or I.
  - James 5:17 - *“Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.”*
  - God is searching for people like YOU to leave their comfort zone and serve him with courage.



# 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 17:2-6

<sup>2</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: <sup>3</sup> “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. <sup>4</sup> You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.” <sup>5</sup> So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. <sup>6</sup> The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

Verse 2-3: After declaring his message God abruptly tells Elijah to leave before he can be arrested.

- God sent Elijah to spend some time in isolation.
  - Instead of doing as other prophets. he was directed leave the spotlight and wait/hide in silence.
- The Hebrew word translated “hide; suggests the idea of concealment or a secret absence.
  - God did not initially reveal to Elijah the reason for his departure. But simply to hide at the Kerith Ravine
  - **Q: Can you follow God when you don't know why?**

Verse 4-6: While traveling God told Elijah he provided for his survival by drinking from the Ravine & eating what the ravens brought him.

■ **When you step out of your comfort zone God will provide for you.**

– A Ravine is a rocky creek bed that remains dry except during rainy seasons.

■ In a drought ravines should be dried up places. But not this Ravine. It was supernaturally blessed to have plenty to drink.

– Ravens normally store food in rocky areas, which provided a perfect space for Elijah to be fed food to eat.

■ Ravens normally eat dead animals. Yet the verse 6 says they brought him bread and meat.

■ Kerith means “Cutting” or “separation”.

- Serving God means being called out or separated from the rest.
- For Elijah to stay in an isolated place required faith.
  - How could he trust the ravine and ravens would continue to provide for his needs.
- ***Proverbs 3:5-6*** – “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

- God didn't send Elijah on a camping trip. But he told him to settle/live there until further notice.
  - *Living outside of your comfort Zone can teach you meaningful lessons like....*
    - God's sovereignty over creation.
    - To totally depend on God.
    - God's word is true (*Numbers 23:19*).

*The choice to serve God where serving God is unpopular also may come at a cost. You may face rejection or ridicule. It may cost you advancement in your job or social circle. But the choice is always worth the price.*