

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 11: Elijah on Mount Carmel

1 Kings 18:1-46

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

First Kings 18 is one of the most electrically dramatic chapters in the Old Testament, and the teacher's first task is to make sure the drama serves the doctrine rather than becoming an end in itself. The passage is doing serious theological work on three levels simultaneously. First, it is a direct confrontation between the living God and the pretensions of Baal, a nature deity whose prophets could not summon rain, fire, or even a whisper. Second, it is a confrontation with the divided heart of Israel, who had not fully defected to Baal but who had also not remained faithful to the Lord. They were limping. God's answer to that limp was not a lecture but a demonstration. Third, it raises the permanent question of authentication: how does anyone know which God is real? The miracle answered that question for Israel in a moment of national crisis; the completed word of God answers it for us today.

The doctrinal stakes in Q9 are significant for a church-of-Christ class because the text is so dramatic that students may be tempted to draw the wrong lesson, namely that we should expect or seek new miraculous demonstrations today. The teacher must gently and clearly explain that the miraculous gifts of the New Testament era served the same authenticating function as Carmel, establishing the truth of the apostolic message as it was being delivered (Heb 2:3-4; Mark 16:20). Now that the word has been fully given and confirmed, the miracle has accomplished its purpose. We do not seek new fire from heaven. We open the Book where the fire has already fallen and is permanently preserved. The call to undivided allegiance is as urgent as ever; the ground on which we stand to answer it is the completed, miraculously-attested word of God.

The formation aim of this lesson is the question of the divided heart. The limp between two opinions is not a problem unique to ninth-century Israel. It is the characteristic spiritual posture of comfortable, respectable, partially committed Christianity in any century. Students should leave this lesson having named something specific where their loyalty has been divided and having made a decision, however small and concrete, to bring that area under the wholehearted lordship of Jesus Christ.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 18:1-6. After three years of drought, Ahab's concern is for his horses and mules rather than the spiritual condition of his people. What does Ahab's response to the famine reveal about what idolatry does to a leader's perception of what actually matters?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The contrast between Ahab and Obadiah in 18:1–6 is sharp and deliberately drawn. Ahab's response to a three-year famine sent by God as a consequence of national idolatry is to go looking for grass. Not repentance. Not prayer. Not a seeking of what went wrong. Grass. The man's moral horizon has contracted to the immediate and the animal.

Obadiah, by contrast, is introduced with emphatic language: 'Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly' (18:3). The word 'greatly' is unusual and intentional. This is not a man who gives God a polite nod. He had hidden a hundred prophets in two caves and fed them bread and water at considerable personal risk, in a court where Jezebel was actively murdering the Lord's prophets (18:4). He was running a household of genuine faith inside a household of organized godlessness.

The theological point is about what idolatry does to perception. Ahab can see only what is physically in front of him: the dried landscape, the empty troughs. He has no category for asking why this has happened or what God might want from him. Idolatry does not merely corrupt behavior; it corrupts perception. It makes leaders incapable of seeing the real cause of the real crisis because their frame of reference excludes the true God.

For the teacher, this is the opening diagnostic question of the lesson. What does the shape of a leader's response to crisis reveal about what they actually believe? A man who fears the Lord looks at famine and asks what God is saying. A man who does not look for grass. The question is not just about Ahab; it is about the framework of assumptions through which any of us read the difficult moments of our lives.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Idolatry as a corruption of perception, not merely behavior
- The contrast between Ahab's animal-level concern and Obadiah's costly faithfulness as a study in what genuine fear of the Lord produces
- How leaders who have abandoned the true God lose the capacity to diagnose spiritual crises accurately
- The role of material crisis as God's call to repentance rather than merely a logistical problem to be solved
- Reading difficulty in our own lives through the lens of what God may be saying rather than only what needs to be fixed

Discussion Prompts

- What do you think it reveals about a person's actual beliefs when their first response to a crisis is entirely practical, with no spiritual dimension at all?

- Ahab had access to everything a king could want, but the famine had him looking for grass. What does that suggest about what comfort and power alone can do for a person facing God's word?
- How does Obadiah's presence in Ahab's court complicate the picture? What does it mean that God had someone genuinely faithful even in that environment?

Question 2

Student Question:

Obadiah feared the Lord greatly and hid a hundred prophets in caves at great personal risk (18:3-4), yet he served as the head of a wicked king's household. Think about the context you occupy every day: a workplace, a neighborhood, a family, where the surrounding culture does not share your faith. What does Obadiah's example teach you about being genuinely faithful in a hostile environment, and where does his example most challenge you personally?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Obadiah's situation is one of the most interesting in the whole chapter. He is introduced before Elijah reappears, and the text gives him more attention than a mere plot device would require. He is a man who 'feared the Lord greatly' (18:3), had acted with extraordinary courage in hiding and feeding a hundred prophets at personal risk (18:4), and yet served as the head of Ahab's household.

This combination unsettles easy categories. Obadiah was not compromising with idolatry; he was actively subverting it from within. But he was frightened when Elijah asked him to carry a message to Ahab (18:9-14), not because he lacked faith but because he had a clear-eyed understanding of how dangerous his position was. His fear reads as prudence, not cowardice. He had watched Jezebel kill prophets. He knew what the cost of exposure could be.

The self-application question should prompt students to think about their own context honestly. Most believers today do not serve in openly idolatrous royal courts, but many work in environments where the values and assumptions of the surrounding culture are actively hostile to Christian faith. The question is not 'how do I escape?' but 'how do I remain genuinely faithful, even at risk, in the place where God has put me?'

The teacher should resist moralizing Obadiah into a simple hero. He was genuinely complex: brave and fearful, faithful and cautious, deeply committed but also deeply aware of his own vulnerability. That complexity makes him a more useful model for students who know exactly what it feels like to be faithful in a difficult environment while also knowing they are not fearless.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faithful witness in hostile environments as a consistent call on God's people in both Testaments
- The distinction between prudent caution and faithless compromise
- God's willingness to use genuinely complex, frightened people rather than only fearless heroes
- The courage required to actively protect God's servants rather than merely avoiding participation in evil
- How our particular placement by God in a given context is itself a calling, not merely a circumstance to endure

Discussion Prompts

- Obadiah was deeply frightened of what might happen if he carried Elijah's message to Ahab. Does his fear disqualify him as a model of faithfulness, or does it make him more useful as one? Why?
- What would it look like to be genuinely faithful in your specific context the way Obadiah was faithful in his, at real cost and real risk?
- Where do you find the line between prudent awareness of risk and faithless avoidance of what God has asked you to do?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 18:17–21. Ahab calls Elijah the 'troubler of Israel,' but Elijah immediately redirects the charge: the real troublemakers are those who abandoned the Lord's commandments to follow Baal. Then Elijah poses his question to all of Israel: 'How long will you go limping between two opinions?' (18:21). What does 'limping between two opinions' mean in its context, and why did the people say nothing in response?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Ahab's accusation, 'Is it you, you troubler of Israel?' (18:17), is one of the most revealing moments in the chapter. Ahab has had three years to think about what has gone wrong and has arrived at the conclusion that the problem is the prophet, not the idolatry the prophet was calling out. This is the classic move of every system in conflict with God's word: blame the messenger.

Elijah's response is immediate and crisp: 'I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals' (18:18). He does not defend himself. He does not negotiate. He turns the accusation back with precise theological accuracy and then immediately moves to action.

The question to Israel that follows is devastating in its simplicity: 'How long will you go limping between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him' (18:21). The

Hebrew word translated 'limping' (pasach) describes a halting, uneven movement, and it is the same word used for the prophets of Baal dancing around their altar later in the chapter (18:26). The very word used for Israel's double-minded compromise is also used to describe the frenzied ritual of the pagan prophets. The people who thought they were being prudent were already doing a version of Baal worship in their hearts.

The silence that follows is as important as the question. 'The people did not answer him a word' (18:21). This is not ignorance. They knew what the right answer was. They had heard the Law. They had the memory of the Exodus and the conquest. The silence was the silence of a people caught, not of a people confused. They could not simultaneously claim allegiance to the Lord and defend their syncretism, so they said nothing.

For the teacher, the silence of the people is itself a teaching moment. There are questions that come from God's word that we cannot answer without convicting ourselves. The appropriate response to that silence is not evasion but repentance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The strategy of blaming God's messenger rather than examining one's own departure from God's word
- The precision of Elijah's counter-charge: the troubler is the one who abandoned God's commandments, not the one who named it
- The meaning of 'limping between two opinions' as halting, divided, syncretistic allegiance
- The significance of the people's silence: caught rather than confused
- Syncretism as the characteristic temptation of God's people in every era, not outright atheism
- The call to wholehearted, undivided allegiance as the consistent demand of the living God

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think the people said nothing when Elijah asked his question? What do you think was going on in their minds?
- What is the difference between being genuinely confused about what is true and being caught in a division of loyalty you cannot defend?
- Where do you see the 'limp between two opinions' showing up in the lives of people around you today, or in your own life?

Question 4

Student Question:

Elijah's question hit the people in the silence that follows when a truth is so accurate it cannot be answered. Is there a place in your own walk where the silence of your behavior answers the same question Elijah asked? Where are you most tempted to keep one foot in devotion to God and one foot in a competing loyalty, and what has that cost you spiritually?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The self-application of Elijah's great question is the emotional and spiritual center of the entire lesson. The limping between two opinions is not a phenomenon unique to Ahab's Israel. It is the characteristic posture of comfortable, culturally embedded Christianity in any generation.

The specific texture of modern limping looks different from Baal worship but shares the same structural feature: we want the benefits of belonging to God and the benefits of belonging to whatever our culture is currently offering as an alternative center of meaning. We want the comfort of faith and the approval of a secular peer group. We want the peace of prayer and the control of anxiety management on our own terms. We want financial generosity in principle and financial security in practice.

The teacher should name the limp honestly without shame-loading the class. Elijah did not mock Israel for limping. He named it and called them to decide. The point is not that divided people are evil; it is that the division is costing them something real, namely the experience of what it means to serve God with the whole heart.

Push students toward specificity. 'A place in your walk' is vague. Encourage them to name the actual competing loyalty: a relationship, a financial habit, a professional ambition, a recurring sin, an area of the mind they have not surrendered. The specificity is where the application actually lives.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Syncretism as the characteristic temptation of comfortable, culturally embedded faith
- The specific competing loyalties that most commonly divide the heart of the modern Christian
- The cost of divided loyalty in terms of spiritual vitality, peace, and effectiveness
- Naming a competing loyalty specifically as the first step toward wholehearted repentance
- The gracious character of God's call to choose: it is an invitation to freedom, not merely a demand for compliance

Discussion Prompts

- Can you name the specific thing in your life that most often competes with your wholehearted devotion to God? What does the limp look like for you personally?
- What have you lost spiritually as a result of maintaining that divided loyalty rather than settling it?
- What would it actually feel like, in a concrete way, to bring that area fully under the lordship of Jesus Christ?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 18:22–29. The 850 prophets of Baal cried aloud, danced, and cut themselves from morning until the time of the evening sacrifice with no response. What does the utter silence of Baal reveal about the nature of false gods, and why does the text dwell so long and in such detail on the failure of Baal's prophets before Elijah acts?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The account of Baal's prophets is remarkable for the way it holds irony and tragedy together. These 450 men are not cynical performers putting on a show for hire. They are true believers in a system that cannot deliver. They cry aloud from morning until noon. When nothing happens, they dance around the altar. When nothing happens, Elijah taunts them, and they intensify, crying louder and cutting themselves with swords and lances until blood poured over them (18:28). From morning until the time of the evening offering, six hours at minimum, they pour out everything they have. And the text delivers its verdict with devastating understatement: 'But there was no voice. No one answered. No one paid attention' (18:29).

Elijah's taunting in 18:27 is often read as mere mockery. It is better understood as rhetorical theology. He lists the standard ancient Near Eastern excuses for why a deity might not respond: perhaps he is deep in thought, or away on a journey, or sleeping and must be awakened. The taunt is designed to expose the absurdity of the Baal system by putting its own logic in the open. If Baal cannot respond even when his best prophets give everything they have, the standard excuses do not apply; he is simply not there.

The theological point is about the nature of idols. The Psalms put it plainly: idols have mouths but do not speak, eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear (Ps 115:5–6). The impotence of Baal on Carmel is not exceptional; it is definitive. This is what all false gods do. They absorb devotion, demand everything, and return nothing. The silence of Baal is the silence of every idol, ancient and modern.

The length of the Baal sequence in the text matters. The writer dwells on the failure slowly and in detail because the people of Israel needed to see it fully. You cannot walk away from a lie you have only glimpsed. The extended failure of Baal's prophets was an act of mercy toward a watching people: God was taking Baal apart piece by piece before their eyes so that when the fire fell, they would understand the distance between the real and the counterfeit.

For the teacher, the question about modern idols is crucial. The silences in life that follow our most exhausted investment in the wrong things are the same silence. The career that was supposed to give meaning and did not. The relationship that was supposed to complete you and left you emptier. The achievement that was supposed to satisfy and only whetted the appetite for more. These are the Baal moments of contemporary life, and they are quietly preparing people to hear Elijah's question.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The impotence of idols as a consistent biblical theme (Ps 115; Isa 44:9–20)
- The difference between sincere but misdirected worship and the worship of the true God
- Elijah's taunt as theological exposure of the Baal system's own logic rather than mere mockery
- Why God allowed such an extended display of Baal's failure before acting: mercy toward a watching people
- The silence of false gods as a mercy that prepares people to recognize the real
- Contemporary idols (status, achievement, relationships, pleasure) and their characteristic eventual silence
- The tragedy of exhausted devotion given to what cannot hear or respond

Discussion Prompts

- What do you think was going through the minds of the 450 prophets of Baal as the hours passed and nothing happened? What does sincere devotion to a false god cost a person?
- Why do you think God waited until the time of the evening offering to act? What was the extended silence of Baal accomplishing in the people watching?
- Can you think of a time when something you invested heavily in returned only silence? What did that silence teach you about what actually satisfies?

Question 6

Student Question:

The prophets of Baal gave everything they had to a god who could not hear them. It is easy to see the tragedy from the outside. But think about the exhausting investments people around you make in things that cannot ultimately deliver: status, achievement, relationships made into gods, pleasure as a purpose. Where have you personally invested yourself in something that eventually answered with silence, and what did that teach you about what actually satisfies?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The self-application of Q5 presses into territory that is both tender and important. Most people in a Bible class have had some version of the Baal experience: a sustained, earnest investment in something that finally returned nothing. The question is not whether that has happened but what we made of it when it did.

The modern idols are sophisticated. They promise more convincingly than Baal ever did because they can actually deliver some of what they promise, for a while. Status does feel good when it arrives. Achievement does produce a real, if temporary, satisfaction. Romantic love does bring genuine joy. The problem is not that these things give nothing but that they give something that only whets the appetite for more while declining to give the thing we actually need: identity, security, and belonging before the living God.

The teacher should help students see that the silences life returns are not punishment. They are, as the Baal sequence was, an act of mercy. God lets the idol fail fully so that we are freed to turn to the One who can actually answer. The exhausted, bloodied prophets of Baal did not respond to the evidence in front of them. God's people do, and the call to turn from whatever has returned silence is always open.

Push for specificity without pushing for public confession of something too personal. The question can be answered in general terms ('a season of my life when I was chasing X') without requiring the class to expose their most vulnerable struggles in front of one another.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The sophisticated nature of modern idols compared to ancient ones: they deliver enough to keep us investing
- The silence that eventually follows exhausted investment in the wrong things as a mercy from God
- Learning to read seasons of disappointed expectation as God's invitation to turn to what actually satisfies
- The difference between what modern idols promise and what they can deliver long-term
- God's patience with those who have given themselves to idols before finding Him

Discussion Prompts

- What is the modern equivalent of crying out to Baal from morning to noon in terms of the things people around you invest everything in hoping for fulfillment?
- Have you ever experienced the silence that follows an exhausted investment in something that could not deliver? What did that moment teach you?
- How do you think God views someone who has genuinely given themselves to the wrong thing, finally come up empty, and is now listening again?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 18:30–39. Elijah repairs the broken altar of the Lord, uses twelve stones to represent all Israel, drenches the sacrifice and the wood three times, and then prays a remarkably brief and confident prayer. What is Elijah asking God to accomplish in his prayer (18:36–37), and what does his thorough preparation and the soaking of the altar with water communicate about the kind of faith he was exercising?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Elijah's preparation of the altar is theological choreography. He does not simply pile up wood and lay on the bull. He repaired the broken altar of the Lord (18:30), using twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of the sons of Jacob (18:31). This is a statement. The whole nation, divided

and drifting, is represented in that rebuilt altar. Then he digs a trench, arranges the wood, cuts the bull, and asks for water to be poured over everything three times until the trench itself is full (18:33–35).

The soaking of the altar is sometimes read as a practical strategy to make the fire more impressive when it comes. It is better read as an act of faith so extreme it borders on audacity. Elijah was not setting up a trick; he was eliminating every possible mundane explanation. When the fire falls on wet wood, a soaked sacrifice, and a water-filled trench, there will be no question about what has happened or who has done it. The preparation is itself a kind of prayer: 'Lord, I want there to be no ambiguity about who answers today.'

The prayer itself (18:36–37) is a model of confident, specific, God-knowing petition. It begins with God's covenant name and His covenant relationships: 'O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.' It names what Elijah is asking for: 'let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.' And it names the purpose: 'Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.' The prayer is entirely about God's reputation and Israel's restoration. There is nothing in it about Elijah.

For the teacher, the contrast with the prophets of Baal is complete. They cried and danced and bled for hours in a prayer that was essentially noise. Elijah prays two verses and has a conversation with God about what God has already promised to do. The length and intensity of prayer is not the measure of its faith; knowledge of God is.

The twelve-stone altar carries a redemptive-historical weight as well. Israel was divided at this point between north and south. The twelve stones insisted, against the political reality, that God's claim was on all twelve tribes. Elijah was not praying for the northern kingdom alone. He was praying for the whole people of God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Elijah's soaking of the altar as an act of faith designed to eliminate ambiguity about the source of the fire
- The structure of confident biblical prayer: grounded in God's character, specific in its request, purposeful in its aim
- The contrast between noise-as-prayer and knowing-God-as-prayer
- The significance of twelve stones in a politically divided nation: God's claim on all Israel
- Repairing the broken altar as an act of covenant renewal before the miracle
- How Elijah's prayer reveals that the purpose of the miracle is God's reputation and Israel's turning, not the prophet's vindication

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think Elijah soaked the altar with water before praying? What was he communicating to God and to the watching crowd by doing so?
- Compare Elijah's two-verse prayer to the 450 prophets' hours of frenzied crying. What does the comparison teach you about what makes prayer powerful?
- What does it tell you about Elijah that his prayer makes no mention of himself or his reputation, only God's reputation and Israel's restoration?

Question 8

Student Question:

Elijah's prayer was saturated with knowledge of who God is: 'O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel' (18:36). It was specific about what he needed and clear about why he needed it. How would you honestly describe the quality of your own prayer life right now? Is it marked by that same confident, specific, God-knowing quality, or has it drifted toward something vague and routine, and what would it take to recover its fire?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The quality of prayer is one of the most practically important questions in the lesson. Elijah's prayer on Carmel is not the only model the text gives us. It also gives us, immediately afterward, his persistent prayer for rain (18:42–44), where he sent his servant seven times to look for a cloud before the tiny sign appeared. Together, the two prayers in this chapter model both the brief-and-confident petition and the patient, repeated asking.

The honest assessment this question calls for is uncomfortable for many believers. Prayer in the life of the average church member has often drifted toward the vague and the routine. We pray for the same things in the same words at the same time of day, and after a while it is not really prayer anymore; it is a spiritual habit that produces the warm feeling of having done something religious without requiring the actual engagement of mind, heart, and will with the living God.

What made Elijah's prayer specific was that he knew exactly who God is, what God had promised, and what God was trying to accomplish that day. You cannot pray specifically without knowing God specifically. The drift toward vague prayer is usually a symptom of a drift in the knowledge of God, which is a drift in the reading of Scripture, which is ultimately a drift in the devotion of the heart.

The teacher should invite honest self-assessment without creating shame. The question is diagnostic, not punitive. Where is your prayer life right now? Not where you wish it were, not where it was at your best, but where it actually is this week? And what would it take to bring back to it the quality Elijah brought to a mountaintop confrontation with false gods?

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The relationship between knowledge of God and the quality of prayer

- The danger of prayer becoming routine and vague rather than specific and engaged
- The combination of bold confidence and patient persistence modeled in Elijah's two prayers in this chapter
- What drift in prayer reveals about drift in the reading of Scripture and knowledge of God
- Honest self-assessment of one's prayer life as a spiritual discipline rather than a source of condemnation

Discussion Prompts

- If you described your prayer life this week to someone honestly, what words would you use? Specific and engaged, or vague and routine?
- What is the connection between how well you know God and how specifically and confidently you can pray?
- Elijah prayed twice in this chapter: once confidently for fire and once persistently for rain. Which mode of prayer do you find harder, and why?

Question 9

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 18:36–40, then 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and 1 Corinthians 13:8–10. The fire that fell on Carmel was a miraculous act of God authenticating His prophet and His word against the claims of Baal in a moment of national idolatry. What was the theological purpose of this miracle in its own historical moment? And since the New Testament declares that prophecy, signs, and miraculous gifts have ceased now that the completed word of God has been given, what does Carmel's fire mean for us today, and where does God-authenticated truth now reside for those who want to know the living God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal center of the lesson and must be handled with both theological precision and pastoral warmth. The fire of the Lord that fell on Carmel was a genuine miracle, and its purpose is explicitly stated by Elijah himself: 'let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word' (18:36). The miracle authenticated the true God against the false god, authenticated the true prophet against the false prophets, and authenticated the word that the prophet had spoken. That is the three-part function of the sign.

This authenticating function of miracles is consistent across both Testaments. In Hebrews 2:3–4, the writer explains that the great salvation 'was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.' The miracles of the apostolic era, like the miracles of the prophetic era, were God's testimony to the truth of the message being delivered. They were not decorative; they were evidentiary.

The New Testament is explicit that these gifts were temporary and purposeful. First Corinthians 13:8–10 states that prophecies will cease, tongues will stop, and knowledge will pass away ‘when the perfect comes.’ The ‘perfect’ (complete thing) is the completed revelation of God in the New Testament. Second Timothy 3:16–17 declares that the completed Scriptures are sufficient to make ‘the man of God complete, equipped for every good work.’ If the completed word equips us for everything, nothing is lacking that a new miracle would supply.

The practical implication is crucial: we do not seek new fire from heaven because the fire has already fallen and is permanently preserved in the completed, miraculously-attested word of God. The apostles who walked with Jesus, watched the resurrection, and were guided by the Spirit into all truth (John 16:13) gave us a word that stands forever (1 Pet 1:25). We do not need new confirmation because the original confirmation was sufficient and final. What we need is to open the Book and believe what is there.

The teacher should be clear and kind about this. Many students will have been exposed to charismatic or Pentecostal teaching that expects new miraculous signs. The response is not scorn but clarity: the purpose of signs was authentication, and authentication is complete. God is not less powerful or less present because He now speaks through His completed word rather than through new miracles. He is speaking all the time, to everyone who will open and hear. Carmel’s fire is not behind us as something lost; it is behind us as something accomplished, the permanent seal on a completed revelation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The authenticating purpose of miracles in both the prophetic and apostolic eras
- The cessation of miraculous spiritual gifts with the completion of the New Testament revelation (1 Cor 13:8–10)
- The sufficiency of the completed Scriptures for the entire Christian life (2 Tim 3:16–17)
- Why seeking new miraculous signs today misunderstands the purpose of signs in Scripture
- The permanent and sufficient nature of the apostolic testimony as God’s final word (Heb 1:1–2; 2:3–4)
- The distinction between God’s power being present and God’s mode of demonstrating truth having changed
- The call to wholehearted allegiance remaining as urgent as it was on Carmel, now answered by the completed word

Discussion Prompts

- Elijah’s prayer says explicitly that the miracle was meant to show that God is God, that Elijah is God’s servant, and that what Elijah spoke was God’s word. What does that tell you about the purpose of miracles in Scripture?
- If the purpose of signs was to authenticate the message, and the message is now fully given in the completed New Testament, what are the implications for those who claim new miraculous gifts today?

- Where does God's truth, fully confirmed and permanently preserved, reside for us today, and how should we relate to it differently knowing the cost at which it was authenticated?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across all of 1 Kings 18, from Obadiah's quiet courage to Elijah's drenched altar to the people's cry 'The Lord, He is God,' name one specific thing this chapter has settled in you about your own allegiance to God, and describe one concrete step you will take this week to live with less limp and more wholehearted devotion.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question asks students to bring the whole of chapter 18 to bear on one specific truth and one concrete step. The chapter is so rich that students may be tempted toward the general. The teacher's job in this closing moment is to press for the specific.

The three great images from chapter 18 that tend to land most deeply are: Obadiah's quiet, costly faithfulness in an impossible environment; the 'limping between two opinions' that named something in Israel that needed to be named; and Elijah's drenched altar and two-verse prayer that trusted God completely in the face of impossible odds. Any of these can be the anchor for a capstone response.

The people's cry at the end, 'The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!' (18:39), is the destination of the whole chapter. It is the correct answer to Elijah's question. It is what God was working toward through the three years of drought, the rebuilt altar, the soaked wood, and the falling fire. The teacher should close with that cry and invite the class to make it their own, not as a statement about what happened in 850 BC, but as a declaration about the shape of their own allegiance today.

The concrete step should be as specific as the student can make it. Not 'I will be more devoted to God.' Instead: 'I will name the competing loyalty I have been maintaining, have a conversation with my spouse or an accountability partner about it this week, and bring it before God in specific prayer on Monday morning.' That level of specificity is what actually moves.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The discipline of moving from general truth to specific application and time-bound step
- The cry of the people as the model response to genuine encounter with the living God
- The ongoing call to wholehearted allegiance as the permanent lesson of Carmel
- Accountability as the means by which named commitments become actual changes
- Gratitude as the right note on which to close: God proved Himself to preserve and reclaim His people

Discussion Prompts

- Which single image from chapter 18 has stayed with you most, and why do you think it landed where it did?
- What is the one thing you are most sure God is saying to you personally through this passage, and can you name it in one sentence?
- What is the most specific, concrete step you could take this week in response to the challenge of wholehearted allegiance?