

The Power of God in Raising Up Faithful Ministry Partners

A Biblical Reflection Based on 1 Kings 17:1-24

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When telling the truth threatens the loss of ministry support or partners, we often respond in one of three ways: we stop telling the truth, we modify the message, or we choose to tell the truth at all costs.

During Elijah's time, many prophets either stopped telling the truth (1 Kings 18:4) in exchange for safety, or changed their message in exchange for favor or support from the king and his household (1 Kings 18:19b). But Elijah was different. He chose to speak the truth faithfully and fearlessly (1 Kings 17:1), despite severe opposition and pressure in the ministry.

According to verse 1: "Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe 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.'" This was an unwanted, unbelievable, yet desperately necessary message for their time.

What can we learn from Elijah's life and ministry that will inspire us to remain faithful in our calling? This biblical reflection teaches us about the power of God in raising up faithful ministry partners. We don't need to compromise our calling to gain favor or support, because God Himself is the one who empowers and provides. This is demonstrated in five powerful ways in 1 Kings 17:1–24:

1. GOD CAN RAISE UP FAITHFUL MINISTRY PARTNERS IN WAYS BEYOND WHAT WE CAN IMAGINE (vv. 3–4)

When drought and famine struck, God told Elijah: "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there."

This is remarkable because ravens, by nature, are not known for sharing. Yet in verse 6, we read: "The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook."

When nothing else is available, God can lead us somewhere else. When no one is available, He can use something unexpected. Truly, God makes a way where there seems to be none.

2. GOD CAN RAISE UP FAITHFUL MINISTRY PARTNERS OUTSIDE THE PRESENT COVENANT COMMUNITY (v. 9)

God said to Elijah: "Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food."

This woman was not an Israelite, but a Gentile from Sidon—a worshiper of Baal. Still, God chose her to support Elijah. When those who should be helping are unfaithful, God can raise up someone else who will be.

Worried about unfaithful partners? Remember God's words in Romans 11:4b: "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

3. GOD CAN RAISE UP FAITHFUL MINISTRY PARTNERS REGARDLESS OF THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS (vv. 10a, 12–16)

The widow said: "As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die."

She was a poor widow, affected by the famine, and nearly without hope. Yet God multiplied her resources: "There was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. The jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah." (vv. 15–16)

Don't underestimate the value of any ministry partner God provides. They may be poor by worldly standards, but rich in God's provision.

4. GOD CAN RAISE UP FAITHFUL MINISTRY PARTNERS REGARDLESS OF THEIR IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES (v. 12)

The widow was gathering sticks for a final meal when Elijah arrived. She was focused on survival—not on ministry, not on hospitality. But after hearing God's word, her priorities changed: "She went away and did as Elijah had told her." (v. 15a)

So don't be discouraged when people seem too busy or uninterested. Preach the Word and trust that "it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." (Philippians 2:13)

5. GOD CAN RAISE UP FAITHFUL MINISTRY PARTNERS EVEN THROUGH TESTINGS OF THEIR FAITH (vv. 17–24)

Later, the widow's son became seriously ill and died: "Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing." (v. 17)

In her grief, she blamed Elijah: "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?" (v. 18)

But God was in control. Elijah cried out to the Lord, and He restored the boy's life: "The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived." (v. 22)

Testing doesn't disqualify ministry partners—it refines them. It can even strengthen their commitment and deepen their experience of God's grace.

Conclusion:

Now that we understand God's power in raising faithful ministry partners:

Let us stop doubting the calling of those God has placed alongside us. Like the woman of Zarephath said to Elijah: "Now I know that you are a man of God."

Let us stop doubting God's provision for our life and ministry. She also said: "...and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth."

Trust the Lord. Remain faithful. He is more than able to provide the people, the resources, and the strength for the work He has called you to do.

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