

<p>Lessons from Elijah, Ahab, and Elisha sermon series</p> <p>C Proper 4-5 (1 Ki is not a perfect hit for either week, but fits between them.</p>	<p>Lessons from Ahab 1 Kings 16, 2 Cor 6.14</p> <p>Authored by Tim Isbell</p>	<p>Preached 7/4/2004</p>
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Thesis: From Ahab's story we learn 1) God requires undivided loyalty, 2) to be careful who we marry (including the dangers of "missionary dating,") and 3) when we're bothered by the killing God sanctions in the Old Testament, we need to look at the broader context (especially including Jesus - the most complete representation of God that we have.

Prayer Time teachable moment:

Robbie Williams, a British pop singer, spoke on BBC Radio in July 2001 about his previous addictions:

I haven't had a drink or done drugs for seven months, and I'm feeling good. I'm enjoying it. It's quite hardcore to get up in front of 60,000 people knowing that when you come off stage you're not going to get drunk.... [Instead of drinking I] pray. Not for long. I ask Elvis to look after me. I've got a tattoo on my arm: "Elvis grant me serenity." Before the gig we all get in a huddle and pray to Elvis to look after us while we're onstage.

Now I probably don't need to tell any of you this ... but Elvis doesn't hear ... nor does he have the power to answer even if he did. ... but there is one who does...

Sermon begins:

Some tips to help with your reading ...

Last Sunday I suggested that you do a bit of Old Testament reading. I want to start today by giving you a little background on this part of the Bible.

Israel/Judah timeline

1&2 Sam and 1&2 Kings bounce between the history of Judah and Israel.

1&2 Chronicles cover the same time period, but only from Judah's point of view.

"The book of the history of the Kings of Israel."

This line tips us off that there were other histories and they're not in our Bible.

There are other religions mentioned in these chapters

For that matter, they appear in many other parts of the Old Testament: Baal and Asherah.

(I invited a layperson to do a bit of research and gave him 5 minutes to present it.)

Read 1 Kings 16.25-33

Last week we looked at the life of Elijah, a follower of God, and we took away some important lessons.

Next week we'll look at Elisha, another follower of God and the understudy of Elijah.

Today it's King Ahab, a king who tried to have it both ways. Ahab occasionally followed God, but often followed other gods.

Did you catch what the Bible says about Ahab's father?

But Omri did what was evil in the Lord's sight, even more than any of the kings before him. 1 Kings 16:25 (NLT)

Did you catch what the Bible says about Ahab?

But Ahab did what was evil in the Lord's sight, even more than any of the kings before him. 1 Kings 16:30 (NLT)

And later the Bible says this about Ahab:

No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the Lord's sight as did Ahab. 1 Kings 21:25-26 (NLT)

What would you like written about you?

For me: "Tim had a heart that beat like Jesus' heart: full of love for God and for others."

Today... 3 Lessons from life of Ahab

1. God requires our undivided loyalty.

Henri Nouwen ... what we create can devour us

In *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen retells a tale from ancient India: Four royal brothers decided each to master a special ability. Time went by, and the brothers met to reveal what they had learned.

"I have mastered a science," said the first, "by which I can take but a bone of some creature and create the flesh that goes with it."

"I," said 2nd, "know how to grow that creature's skin and hair if there is flesh on its

bones."

The 3rd said, "I am able to create its limbs if I have the flesh, the skin, and the hair."

"And I," said 4th, "know how to give life to that creature if its form is complete."

Then the brothers went into the jungle to find a bone so they could demonstrate their specialties. As fate would have it, the bone they found was a lion's. One added flesh to the bone, the second grew hide and hair, the third completed it with matching limbs, and the fourth gave the lion life. Shaking its mane, the beast jumped on his creators. He killed them all and vanished contentedly into the jungle.

We too have the capacity to create what can devour us. We humans must be careful what we worship.

Albatross story ... falling in love w/ a decoy

One hundred decoys were placed on the Izu islands of Japan to attract endangered albatrosses and encourage them to breed. For more than two years, a 5-year-old albatross named Deko tried to woo a wooden decoy by building fancy nests and fighting off rival suitors. He spent his days standing faithfully by her side. Japanese researcher Fumio Sato, talking about the albatross's infatuation with the wooden decoy, said, "He seems to have no desire to date real birds."

This albatross's relationship with the wooded decoy will never be fruitful. No little albatrosses will ever come from it. That's the way it is when we give our love to a wooden decoy.

God invites us into a relationship with himself, and that relationship is real. It is so real it will last forever, and it will bear fruit, now and forevermore.

1st & 2nd commandments are clear: Put no other Gods' before the Lord

Do not make an image and start worshipping it!

We don't have the option to add the Lord to the other list of gods we worship.

We don't have the option to add the Lord above the other list of gods we worship ...

The real God demands that his followers throw away all other gods and worship him alone ...

- Even when other things/faith systems look pretty good.
- Even when those around us are worshipping something else.

The life God offers us is a life of faith, and it will be fruitful.

The pronouncement on any other kind of life is, "Tim did what was evil in the Lord's sight."

Be very careful who you marry

Listen to Bible's description of Ahab.

But Ahab did what was evil in the Lord's sight, even more than any of the kings before

him. And as though it were not enough to live like Jeroboam, he married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of the Sidonians, and he began to worship Baal. 1 Kings 16:30-31 (NLT)

No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the Lord's sight as did Ahab, for his wife, Jezebel, influenced him. 1 Kings 21:25

Mark Twain ...

From what I can tell, Mark Twain was not a Christian, nor did he claim to be when he began courting Olivia Langdon. Back in Twain's day, a man typically had to get permission from a woman's parents before marrying her. Mark Twain had a problem, however. Olivia Langdon came from a professing Christian family that would not allow their daughter to marry an unbeliever. To overcome this obstacle, Twain took on the guise of a spiritual seeker who needed the support and prayers of Olivia's family in order to clean up his life.

Twain, influenced by Olivia's prodding, presumably converted. Twain wrote to his mother after his engagement to Olivia: "My prophecy was correct....[Livy] said she never could or would love me—but she set herself the task of making a Christian of me. I said she would succeed, but that in the meantime she would unwittingly dig a matrimonial pit and end by tumbling in it—and lo! the prophecy is fulfilled."

Olivia's family was convinced Twain was a Christian and permitted the marriage. But was Twain's conversion an illusion? One scholar insists that Twain "was a man in love, wooing a woman he hoped to marry. His 'religious' feelings at that time, expressed in love letters to Olivia, disappeared as soon as the nuptials were over" (www.yorku.ca/twainweb/filelist/skeptic.html).

After their wedding, Twain ridiculed Olivia's beliefs and devotion. Soon Olivia's optimism began to wane, and her fervent faith cooled. Eventually she forsook her religion altogether, and a deep sorrow deluged Olivia's life. Mark Twain loved her and never meant to hurt her, but he had broken her spirit. He said, "Livy, if it comforts you to lean on your faith, do so."

She replied sadly, "I cannot. I do not have any faith left."

Twain often wished he could restore Olivia's faith, hope, and optimism, but it was too late.

"Missionary dating" is dangerous

The New Testament has something to say about this, too. Read 2 Cor 6.14.

There are 2 reasons to avoid this sort of dating:

1. We may be influenced to worship something other than the Lord.
2. It's unfair to our spouse. (Sharon's reasoning).

The 2nd one needs some explanation. It is not fair to someone who is not a Christian to marry them or seriously date them, if you are a Christian. Being a Christian means, at your very core of yourself, that God is the most important thing to you.

For example, If a girl is not a Christian, she would almost always expect to be the most

important thing to the boy. She will feel left out a lot of the time if her boyfriend or husband puts God first in his life. It's quite understandable.

When a Christian dates another Christian, they know they can agree on all the most important things.

For older teens and adults it is especially important for Christians to not date people who are not Christians. That is because people who are not Christians often have different rules for what it is ok for a boy and girl to do together sexually before marriage. As Christians we know that our bodies belong to God most of all. Non-Christians think that their bodies belong to themselves and they can pick what to do with them and with other people.

But what if I'm already married to someone who does not worship the Lord?

Read 1 Cor 7.12-14

What about all the killing God sanctions in the Old Testament?

For an accurate picture of God, look at Jesus.

When we don't like something we see in the Bible, it's tempting to set ourselves up as God's judge in these instances.

When we don't like something that happens in our world, or our own life, it's also tempting to get mad at God and judge him.

But that is BACKWARDS.

Part of becoming a Christian is deciding that God is ultimately good, and that we're going to trust him rather than become his judge.

Still, I would be troubled if the only Bible stories of God are in these in 1 and 2 Kings. Or for that matter, there are many other stories in scripture that would trouble me a lot.

It's a very good thing that we have the New Testament, and its stories of Jesus, to give us a robust view of what God is really like and that he can be trusted.

Let's close with a few passages from the New Testament: Col 1.15, John 1.1,14,18, John 14.9, 2 Cor 4.4.

Other resources:
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