

That The World May Know: Walk As Jesus Walked - Session 1: Run!

Displaying the Zeal of Elijah

The Jewish rabbis and their disciples (*talmidim*) sought to have the same fire, zeal, and passion for the Lord and His Word that Elijah modeled. A disciple of Jesus must possess a fire for God, a passion for His Word, and the zeal to be an obedient follower who walks as Jesus walked.

1. As Jesus became better known and His reputation grew, who did people think He was? Why do you think they thought this? Why did they think this? What does it reveal about the kind of man Jesus was?
Matthew 16:13 – 16
2. When He was in the temple before Passover, Jesus demonstrated His zeal for the Lord in a dramatic way. What did He do? Why? What impact did His words and actions have on people around Him?
John 2:13 – 22
3. The following Scriptures highlight the kind of Zeal for God that Jesus wants His disciples to have.
 - a. What personal sacrifice must a person be willing to make to be a disciple of Jesus? Does this sacrifice require zeal for the Lord? Why?
Mark 8:34 – 38
 - b. What indicates that at least some of Jesus' disciples were very zealous?
Mark 3:13 – 19
4. What evidence do the following passages provide that the early believers also were zealous for the Lord?
Acts 18:24 – 28
Acts 21:10 – 16
2 Corinthians 8:16 – 24
2 Corinthians 9:1 – 5

Zealous to Obey and Honor God

The ministry of John the Baptist focused on preparing people for the coming of Messiah and God's great acts of redemption. John was widely recognized as having the same passion for God that Elijah had, and he was deeply committed to the Hebrew Scriptures as the basis for his teaching and actions.

1. According to Malachi's prophecies, who would precede the Messiah's coming?
Malachi 3:1
Malachi 4:1 – 6
2. What message did the angel of God give to Zechariah as he was burning incense in the temple? What did the angel say about John's zeal for God?
Luke 1:8 – 17
3. How do we know that Jesus considered John to be the Elijah who would come as promised by the prophet Malachi? How did Jesus view John and his ministry?
Matthew 3:13 – 17
Matthew 11:7 – 15
Matthew 17:1 – 13
4. Who did the religious leaders think John might be? What was their response to him?
John 1:19 – 28
5. What does each of the following passages reveal about the zeal of John the Baptist? How far was he willing to go? How much was he willing to sacrifice to be who God had called him to be? How zealous was he to proclaim the message of God?
Matthew 3:1 – 4
2 Kings 1:8
Matthew 3:5 – 12
Mark 1:1 – 8

Sharing the Passion of Elijah

To zealously love God is to love him with one's whole being, and godly people of every era and culture have a consuming passion to do his will and maintain his honor in everything they do and say. The Jews of Jesus' day had been taught of Elijah's passion from their earliest days, so they readily understood what it meant to zealously walk with God. The people of Asia Minor who were immersed in the pagan, Hellenistic culture of the Roman Empire had no knowledge of Elijah. They aspired to pleasure and self-preservation. How would Jesus' disciples teach them to walk as Jesus walked?

1. Even before God called Paul to preach the news of Christ to the Gentiles, Paul was extremely zealous for God. What things does Paul reveal about himself that show he took this calling seriously? Which metaphor did Paul use to describe his walk with Jesus? What were his concerns regarding his performance?
Galatians 1:13 – 2:2
2. Which two metaphors that would have been very familiar to people of the Roman Empire did Paul use to encourage Timothy in his walk with Jesus? How intense a focus and commitment does this say Paul expected of Timothy?
2 Timothy 2:1 – 5
3. Paul told the Galatians that they had been "running a good race." What apparently happened to them and how did Paul "coach" them regarding the importance of their effort?
Galatians 5:7 – 8

Acclaiming the Greatness of God!

The athletic competition and games metaphors used by the early Christian disciples were more than just a meaningful way to communicate the passion of Elijah to people who had never heard of him. In the Roman Empire, running the race of faith was also an acclamation of loyalty that would become a matter of life and death for the early believers.

- 1 What did Paul write to Timothy as the pressure of emperor worship intensified? What evidence of the passion of Elijah was in his words? How did Timothy and the people he pastured in Ephesus respond?
1 Timothy 6:11 – 16
- 2 What did believers who faced the harsh reality of emperor worship – the possibility they could be put to death for acclaiming Jesus alone – learn about the hope of their commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? How would those words have fueled their passion?
Romans 10:9 – 11
Philippians 2:5 – 11
- 3 The emperor's authority and the reality of emperor worship in the Roman Empire during Jesus' time sheds light on the interaction between Jesus and Pilate.
John 18:28 – 37
 - a Who sentenced Jesus to death? What authority did he represent?
 - b Why did Jesus submit himself to the authority of a Roman emperor who claimed to be god? How did the early Christians who faced death because of their obedience to God view what Jesus did?
 - c What were the implications of Pilate's actions for the early believers?

A Personal Challenge

The stadium in Aphrodisias is a dramatic reminder of the passion with which we are to train, compete, and fight to “run” our walk of discipleship with Jesus with all our heart, soul, and strength. The stadium is also a reminder of the crowds of faithful followers of God who have gone before us. The won the prize of his everlasting honor. They are our “fans” who cheer us on as we remember their faithfulness to our Lord.

- 1 Many great men and women of faith stand out.
Hebrews 11:1 – 12:1
 - a Which great men and women of faith stand out to you?
 - b Who comprises the “great cloud of witnesses” who have run the race facing you?
 - c Faith for those witnesses involved far more than verbal assent or rational belief in God and his Word. What was it that made their faith commendable?
 - d How much effort, passion, and zeal for God did those witnesses demonstrate?
- 2 What motivated Jesus? What did He do? What effect should His examples have on you?
Hebrews 12:1 – 3
- 3 If you have a mental picture of life being like a marathon that you are running in front of great runners of God's race of faith who have gone before you, how might that change how you live? How would it change the effort you expend in running your own “race”?

References

Exodus 2	Exodus 3
Exodus 7	Exodus 8
Exodus 9	Exodus 10
Exodus 11	Exodus 12
Exodus 19	Exodus 20
Exodus 24	Exodus 32
Numbers 25	Deuteronomy 1
Deuteronomy 6	Deuteronomy 29
1 Kings 17	1 Kings 18
1 Kings 19	2 Kings 1
2 Kings 2	Psalm 69:9
Psalm 106	Proverbs 23
Isaiah 9	Daniel 7
Malachi 3	Malachi 4
Matthew 3	Matthew 11
Matthew 16	Matthew 17
Mark 1	Mark 3
Mark 6	Mark 8
Luke 1	Luke 9
John 1	John 2
John 3	John 18
John 19	Acts 1
Acts 2	Acts 7
Acts 18	Acts 19
Acts 21	Romans 10
Romans 12	1 Corinthians 9
1 Corinthians 8	2 Corinthians 8
2 Corinthians 9	Galatians 1
Galatians 4	Galatians 5
Philippians 2	Colossians 3
Colossians 4	1 Timothy 6
2 Timothy 2	2 Timothy 4
Titus 2	Hebrews 1
Hebrews 8	Hebrews 11
Hebrews 12	James 5
1 Peter 3	1 Peter 5
1 John 4	Revelation 12
Revelation 13	Revelation 19