

1. Throw Down Texts—1 Kings 18:16-46; Matthew 10:1-42 (that was my first impression of our daily Bible reading texts for the past week from sections of 1 Kings and Matthew. Overall these texts chronicle completely different historical times. Kings is all about Israel's history with Kings—Solomon, then after the dividing of the kingdom and from there—pretty much all down hill as Israel rebels against God and his “covenant of love.” Matthew tells the story of Christ from birth to death to resurrection. But in our reading I found a common story from these two vastly different ones—the throw down texts. In Kings it is about Elijah—a throw down kind of prophet who is God's man to a rebellious Israel. His call was to preach a message from the Lord against Israel's sin of idolatry and to warn the Kings of the destruction it would bring. This climaxes in an amazing showdown with the false prophets of Baal in which Elijah dramatically and undeniably demonstrates God's power over any other God. In Matthew it is about Jesus sending out the twelve—his disciples—in sort of a short-term outreach to the lost sheep of Israel. He provides them detailed instructions on what to do and what to expect—really a showdown of their own. These stories are generations apart—and apart from us, yet they could not be timelier. What do they teach us?)
2. Cultures Will Clash (It is as unavoidable for us as it was for Elijah and the twelve. God's culture/Christ culture comes from another place; does not share much in common with the harsh culture of the world; and will be opposed. Listen to Jesus—**Matthew 10:17-23**! Elijah could speak to this—immediately after Mt. Carmel he ran for his life—Ahab put a hit on him. Why? Because the light of God exposes the wickedness of the world's culture. Evil is named. Satan is identified and that cannot be tolerated. This should not shock us! There is a war going on and we are in the middle of it)
3. We must be bold! (Elijah was bold—did not back down from the challenge; Jesus instructed the twelve to “not be afraid”—vs. 26. He basically told them—God has your back so be afraid of letting him down—not those who oppose. We need boldness today—boldness to live out God's will in an opposing culture. Boldness to speak truth to this culture. Boldness to endure the pushback regardless of how harsh. Boldness—sharpened however with wisdom, gentleness and innocence—like Christ himself who did not shrink back from his mission, but did it wisely. The world's culture is bold—so must we be!
4. Victory Will Come! (but usually in unexpected ways. Think of Elijah—his demonstration of God's power on Carmel was decisive yet he had to learn what real victory was not in such power, but in a still, small voice as he hid from Ahab—chapter 19. Of course, Jesus clearly taught in the SOM that the culture clash is not going to be won by quite a different strategy—by the meek, poor, persecuted turning the other cheek and pray for the persecutors—then he demonstrated it by dying. Redefines everything)
5. Choose a Side! (Throwing down here—that is what the texts do. Baal or Jehovah? Elijah or Ahab? Christ or the world? Listen again to Jesus—**Matthew 10:34-39**. All of us will be on one side or the other. Which is it? Answering this takes honest introspection and self-awareness bc one thing Satan excels at doing is deception. I am sure that Ahab thought he had it all going on with Baal—he had probably reasoned how that was acceptable. But he was on the wrong side. God seeks our full devotion—not part time. Think about Jesus sending those guys out—they had to be fully in or they would fail. The same holds true now—are we fully in or are we dancing around the altar of other gods? Choose a side. Told you that these texts throw it down!)