

Following God instead of the Crowd

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. Just wanted to give a very warm welcome to anyone who is visiting us this morning, or if it's! It's your first time here. We're delighted that you are here. Welcome. Well, this morning, Olive is going to come and read our passage for us. So thank you so much, Olive. Let's see. It is 1 Kings chapter 22, and it's verses 1 to 17. So thank you, Olive.

Good morning. If you're reading from the Church Bible, page 364. From God's Word, Micaiah prophecies against Ahab. For three years, there was no war between Aram and Israel. But in the third year, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went down to see the king of Israel. The king of Israel had said to his officials, Don't you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us, and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Aram?

So he asked Jehoshaphat, Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth Gilead? Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses. But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, First, seek the counsel of the Lord.

[1 : 50] So the king of Israel brought together the prophets, about 400 men, and asked them, Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?

Go, they answered, for the Lord will give it into the king's hand. But Jehoshaphat asked, Is there no longer a prophet of the Lord here whom we can inquire of?

The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, There is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him, because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah, son of Imlah. The king should not say such a thing, Jehoshaphat replied. So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, Bring Micaiah, son of Imlah, at once.

Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them.

[3 : 23] Now Zedekiah, son of Kinana, had made iron horns, and he declared, This is what the Lord says, With these you will go, though are Armenians, until they are destroyed.

All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. Attack Ramoth Gilead, and be victorious, they said, for the Lord will give it into the king's hand.

The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, Look, the other prophets, without exception, are predicting success for the king.

Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably. But Micaiah said, As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me.

When he arrived, the king asked him, Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead or not?

[4 : 39] Attack and be victorious, he answered, for the Lord will give it into the king's hand. The king said to him, How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth?

In the name of the Lord. Then Micaiah answered, I saw Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd.

And the Lord said, These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace. Amen.

Well, thank you, Olive. I'm just wondering, Has anyone of you ever been in a situation where everyone around you is doing something, and you just know that what they're doing is wrong? Maybe you're there and everyone around you is laughing at someone, or mocking someone, and you just know that what they're doing is wrong.

[6 : 01] Or maybe those around you have found some way to cheat in some sort of a system, or to cheat in a test, and you just know that it is wrong.

Or maybe those around you are gossiping about someone, or maybe they're speaking in an inappropriate way, and you just know what is going around you is wrong.

Well, in those moments, it is incredibly difficult to stand alone when everyone else is doing something that you know is wrong.

It can be very hard not to go with the flow when everyone else is going in a certain direction. Someone said, Any dead fish can go with the flow and float downstream, but it takes a live fish to swim against the current.

It's easy to be a dead fish. It's easy to float downstream, to go with the flow, but it takes incredible courage to stand alone for the truth.

[7 : 28] It takes courage to stand alone for the Lord. It takes courage to swim against the current when everyone else is floating that direction.

Well, a great example of this sort of courage is the prophet Micaiah. In 1 Kings chapter 22, prophet Micaiah chose to follow the Lord and not the crowd.

And this is what happened. In verses 1 to 3, King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were planning to go to war against Amram to take over or to actually retake over this place called Ramat Gilead.

I'll have pronounced it better, but Ramat Gilead. Now, going to war was a huge decision. So King Ahab wanted some counsel.

He wanted some advice before moving forward. So verse 6, he got together around 400 of these prophets. Now actually, they're false prophets.

[8 : 39] He gathered them all together and he asked them all whether he should go into battle or not. Well, all 400 or so prophets said, go to war.

Every single one of them said, yes, go to war. Victory will be yours. They were in many ways telling the kings exactly what they wanted to hear.

Many described these prophets as, yes, men. They spoke what was popular instead of what was true. And not one of them questioned the decision to go to war.

They all said, go for it. But King Jehoshaphat, who really was a godly king, sensed something was wrong.

So verse 7, he said, is there not another prophet of the Lord we can inquire of? And then King Ahab, who wasn't so much a godly king, he said in verse 8, there is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me.

[9 : 57] He's got nothing good to say, but always bad. He is Micaiah, son of Imlah. So between them, they got a messenger to send for this prophet Micaiah.

A messenger went to get the prophet Micaiah to bring him back to the king. And listen to this. On the way back to the king, the messenger tried to pressure the prophet Micaiah into going along with the 400 prophets.

Verse 13, this is what the messenger said to the prophet Micaiah. Look, the other prophets, without exception, are predicting success for the king.

Let your word agree with theirs and speak favorably. I think we can all relate to that at times.

This messenger was putting pressure on the prophet Micaiah to go along with the crowd. Just picture the scene at the moment.

[11 : 15] 400 prophets all saying the same thing. These are 400 dots on the screen. These are 400 voices.

I counted them and it took a while to put this up on the... I figured out how to do 200, then I copied and pasted the second 200. 400 voices said, go to war.

400 voices said, you will win. victory will be yours. And now there's one voice. The prophet Micaiah. He is one man standing before 400 others. You know, the pressure on him must have been enormous to be a dead fish and just to float along with the crowd.

And it would have been much easier to float along with the crowd. It would have been much easier to go along with what the crowd was saying. But listen to the prophet Micaiah in verse 14.

[12 : 28] As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me.

You know, in other words, you know, as long as I live, I can only say what God tells me to say. I cannot say what the king wants me to hear. I can only say what the Lord says.

Not what you want me to say. And verse 17, the prophet Micaiah actually gave the opposite message to these 400 prophets.

He basically said don't go to war. He basically said, you know, it won't work out well for you. The prophet Micaiah refused to compromise even when he stood completely alone.

And, you know, going against these 400 false prophets cost him. Verse 24 says he was slapped in the face if we read on a bit further.

[13:40] Verse 27 says he was thrown into prison and given only bread and water. It cost him. But despite the rejection, the suffering, the prophet Micaiah remained faithful to the Lord and faithful to the Lord's word to him.

He followed God and not the crowd. And it's interesting, we read on, we'll see that, you know, the prophet Micaiah was proved right because they went to battle, King Ahab ignored God's warning through the prophet Micaiah, and King Ahab died exactly as Micaiah had prophesied.

The 400 were wrong. God's word was true. You know, friends, part of being a Christian is following the Lord and not the crowd.

It's just part of what it is to be a Christian. And throughout the Bible we see so many examples of this. Noah built an ark in the middle of the desert when the world watched on and probably mocked him.

Daniel continued praying alone even when it became illegal to pray. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow to the golden image.

[15:14] Esther stood alone before the king to save God's people. Stephen stood alone against the angry mob even to the point of death. And ultimately the Lord Jesus himself he stood alone and even you could say he hung alone in rejection and suffering while remaining obedient to the Father.

Part of being a Christian is following the Lord and not the crowd. Not what's popular. maybe it's at school maybe it's at work maybe it's among friends maybe it's in your sports team maybe it's in your family there can be enormous pressure to compromise stay silent fit in go along with the flow it can be so difficult not to but in those moments I suppose I want to encourage us to remember how the Lord helped the prophet Micaiah to stand alone against 400 or so voices.

One man stood against 400 voices because he feared God and valued God's word more than people. I think that's the challenge for each one of us will we follow the crowd or will we follow the Lord may the Lord help each one of us to follow him to follow him and his word no matter how unpopular it will be may the Lord help each one of us to follow him and his word no matter how unpopular it will be because there is always a transforming blessing when we are obedient to him and his word.

It might not be a material blessing it might not be a physical blessing it might not be a financial blessing but it's a guarantee that there is always a transforming eternal blessing when we are obedient to him and his word and it might be painful it might be challenging but there will be a blessing in walking in obedience to him.

I just want to leave us with these words that we heard earlier from the apostle Paul. Paul encourages us this is an encourage this is a challenge this is something we can pray for.

[18:00] Romans chapter 2 verse 2 do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is his good pleasing and perfect will.

Let's pray together. Amen. Lord I just pray that you