

FIELD-TESTED SERMON RESOURCES

# SERMON SERIES

TRUSTED | BIBLICAL | FIELD-TESTED

Thank you for downloading this sample PDF from our Sermon Series line of resources.

When you stand up in front of students to proclaim the Word of God, you need trusted, creative, and biblically solid content. YM360's Sermon Series are exactly what you're looking for!

Field-tested, from-the-trenches of youth ministry, YM360 Sermon Series are complete detailed sermon outlines, discussion questions, and graphic packages designed to help you lead students closer to God through proclaiming His Word.

## SERIES OVERVIEW FOR **Extraordinary Life: Authentic Faith Through All The Ups and Downs.**

The whole story of Elijah fits fully within eight chapters of the Bible, yet he is one of the most significant characters in scripture...Why? Because the life of Elijah is one of the most human stories in the Bible, in those eight chapters, there are victories, and defeats, incredible faith, and profound doubt. There is passion, anger, joy, loss, loneliness, discipleship, hope, violence, and ultimate belonging. No matter who you are, you can find at least part of your story echoed in Elijah's life. This series is going to explore that life, with all its ups and downs. From the victory of Mt. Carmel to the despair of Mt. Horeb to his flaming ride into heaven. And through his life, we are going to learn about what an authentic and profoundly human life of faith and passion looks like for us.

## "EXTRAORDINARY LIFE" COVERS THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES AND PASSAGES:

- **Session 1 - But First, Some Cake (1 Kings 17) |** This sermon explores the power of relatable stories and introduces Elijah, a prophet whose human experiences resonate deeply. It highlights Elijah's encounter with a hopeless widow and her son, showing how God brings hope in dire circumstances. We learn that hope starts small, requires trust, and is transformative. The story teaches that God provides hope and presence in our lives, just as He did for Elijah and the widow.
- **Session 2 – Have You Checked The Bathroom? (1 Kings 18) |** Even when Elijah was outmatched 450 to 1, he still trusted that God would be victorious. When we feel outmatched by the brokenness in our world and in our lives, we too can trust that God is not outmatched, and will prevail.
- **Session 3 – When God Made Pancakes (1 Kings 19) |** When faced with the fact that his victory at Mt. Carmel didn't change Israel's heart, Elijah was devastated. He was lost and felt isolated and went into the desert to die. But God met him there, cared for him, gave him back his purpose, and led him to community. Because when we feel lost and alone, God gives us a home.
- **Session 4 – Definitely (Not) an Alien Abduction (2 Kings 2)** This is the final moment of Elijah's life, and while the story may seem extraordinary at first, it is filled with ordinary human moments. It is by finding these moments that we can let the story truly speak to us where we are and take us where we need to go. It reminds us that no one is too insignificant for God's story.

## "EXTRAORDINARY LIFE" IS PART OF YM360'S SERMON SERIES LINE OF RESOURCES AND IS IDEAL FOR:

- Any large group setting
- Mid-week youth service
- "Master teacher" format

# BACKGROUND SLIDES, PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK, AND MORE . . .

## EVERY SERMON SERIES FROM YM360 COMES WITH:

- **Detailed Sermon Outlines** – Every Sermon Series comes with detailed sermon outlines. Teach them "as is" or adapt them to suit your specific ministry context.
- **Discussion questions** – Questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives. You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go.
- **Title and Background slides** – These are designed to be dropped into your favorite presentation software to help you build a creative environment around your sermon. Use them as a backdrop for song lyrics, Scripture passages, teaching points, and any illustrations you choose to display.
- **Artwork for promo and social media** – Social media images, web banners, and a printable poster file are included. Perfect for newsletters, websites, social media platforms, or print them off for posters and bulletin inserts.
- **Logo (including native logo design files)** – We include a logo file and the native design files to allow you to use the logo in ways you see fit.
- **100% downloadable and adaptable**

Each YM360 Sermon Series comes with title and background slides, promotional art (including Instagram images), and logo treatments. Here is what to expect.

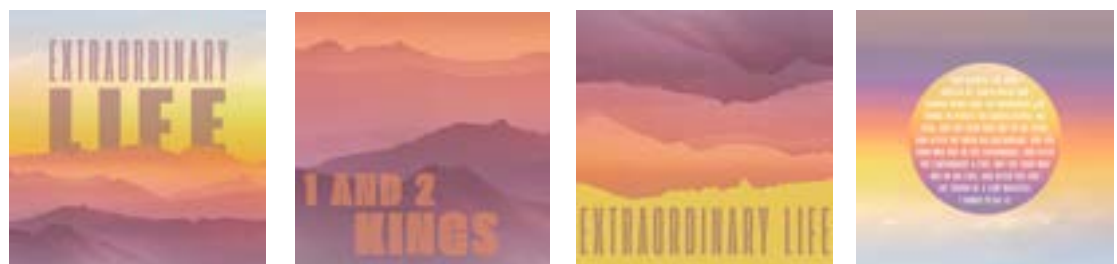
**BACKGROUND AND  
TITLE SLIDES**



**PROMOTIONAL  
ARTWORK**



**INSTAGRAM  
IMAGES**



**LOGO  
TREATMENT**



NOTE: Each YM360 Sermon Series also comes with the native files of the logo in case you want to replicate the design for other uses.

**How To Use A YM360 Sermon Series** | YM360 Sermon Series are designed for use by a communicator in a large group setting. Each series download provides various elements such as a detailed sermon outline, suggestions on illustrations or images, Scripture passages, background information, and application points that you can use to craft a message that speaks to your students in your specific context.

This series download also includes discussion questions that can be used to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

Make sure to leverage the series logo, title slide, background slides, and social media artwork this YM360 Sermon Series provides for promotion and message support. We've even included the native design files to allow you the freedom to use the logo in any way that meets your needs.

This YM360 Sermon Series was created to be suitable for all types of churches and ministry environments. It was intentionally designed to provide you with everything you need while also allowing you the freedom to make it fit your particular ministry context. Nobody knows your ministry like you do. Therefore, we encourage you to make any adjustments to this series you feel are necessary to best fit the needs of your students, church, or ministry context.

**A Prayer Before You Prepare** | God, thank you for the opportunity I have to speak life into these students. I pray that as I prepare to give these lessons you allow me to experience your love and grace so that I can communicate that with my students. Help me know, with clarity, my human experience of my life with you, so that I can validate what these students are going through while pointing them in your direction. Give me strength in vulnerability, clarity in communication, and most of all a passion for your mission to heal the world. Transform the hearts of these students. I love you. Amen.

## Extraordinary Life Teaching Guide | A One-Page Glimpse Of Everything You Need To Prepare

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**Series Snapshot** | *Extraordinary Life*, a four-session sermon series on Elijah, will help your students see their own story echoed in one of the most human stories in the Bible. Through Elijah's story, and all of its ups and downs, your students are going to learn what an authentic life of faith and passion looks like.

**Series Overview** | The story of Elijah, spanning just eight chapters, is one of the most human and significant stories in our Bible. His life includes victories and defeats, faith and doubt, joy and loss, loneliness and hope. This series will explore his journey from Mt. Carmel's victory to Mt. Horeb's despair and his ascent to heaven. Through Elijah, we'll learn about living an authentic, passionate life of faith. His experiences guide us in navigating our struggles, showing how a life of faith encompasses all human emotions and challenges. Elijah's story reveals the profound depth of a truly human life lived in faith.

- **Session 1 - But First, Some Cake (1 Kings 17)** | This sermon explores the power of relatable stories and introduces Elijah, a prophet whose human experiences resonate deeply. It highlights Elijah's encounter with a hopeless widow and her son, showing how God brings hope in dire circumstances. We learn that hope starts small, requires trust, and is transformative. The story teaches that God provides hope and presence in our lives, just as He did for Elijah and the widow.
- **Session 2 – Have You Checked The Bathroom? (1 Kings 18)** | Even when Elijah was outmatched 450 to 1, he still trusted that God would be victorious. When we feel outmatched by the brokenness in our world and in our lives, we too can trust that God is not outmatched, and will prevail.
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### Extraordinary Life Series | Session 1

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**Large Group Teaching Summary** | This sermon explores the power of relatable stories and introduces Elijah, a prophet whose human experiences resonate deeply with us today. It highlights Elijah's encounter with a hopeless widow and her son, showing how God brings hope in dark and difficult circumstances. We learn that hope starts small, requires trust, and is transformative. The story teaches that God provides hope and presence in our lives, just as He did for Elijah and the widow.

**Key Takeaway** | When we feel hopeless, God gives us hope.

**Scripture Focus** | 1 Kings 17:8-16

**What You May Need** | **Optional Illustration:** What is your favorite story? (This could be a movie, book, historical event, etc.); **Optional Illustration:** Personal experience of hopelessness; **Optional Illustration:** Personal experience of God providing you hope.

### I. Introduction

- A. Take a moment to think about your favorite story. It could be anything from Romeo and Juliet to Stranger Things to Michael Jordan's 1998 NBA Championship run. Bring it to the forefront of your brain.
1. Do you have it? Good.
  2. **Option 1 - Quick discussion**
    - a) Why is that particular story your favorite story?  
*(1) Call on a couple of students to answer*
  3. **Option 2 - Personal Story**
    - a) My favorite story is...  
*(1) Quickly tell the students what your favorite story is, and why. What about it particularly resonates with you?*
- B. Have you ever stopped to wonder what makes certain stories more impactful than others?
1. Think about the iconic types of stories that have transcended generations and stuck with us over long periods of time.
    - a) Stories where the underdog triumphs, the young hero from the middle of nowhere defeats the big bad guy, or the two star-crossed people meet and fall in love.
  2. These stories are everywhere, and they are replayed again and again in different ways...Why?
- C. What makes a story great? What makes it impactful? What makes it worth retelling?
1. You can answer these questions in so many ways. "Great stories are exciting," "Great stories keep you on the edge of your seat," "Great stories make you feel all kinds of emotions," or "Great stories keep you guessing."
  2. But the answer that encapsulates all the others is this:
- D. Great stories are stories that are human.
1. In other words, great stories are stories that human beings can relate to.
  2. We love underdog stories because we all know what it feels like to be outmatched. We love stories where the hero from nowhere defeats the big bad guy because we all know what it is like to feel insignificant. We love stories about people meeting and falling in love, because we know, or can imagine how it feels to fall in love.
  3. Maybe we don't know what it is like to carry the Ring to Mordor or to stand face-to-face with Voldemort, but we know what it is like to feel scared in the face of a challenge or how difficult it is to have courage in the face of uncertainty.
  4. We love stories we can find ourselves in, stories that can tell us more about who we are, why we are here, and how to live our lives.
- E. The Bible is filled with stories like this, and we are starting a series on one of those stories. We are going to talk about a guy named Elijah. Elijah is a big deal in the Bible. He is kind of like the icon for the ideal prophet of God. His story has been one that has resonated with people for thousands of years...Why?

- F. Because the story of Elijah is a story that is profoundly human. Throughout his life, he experiences incredible joy, despair, victory, defeat, hopelessness, passion, and more...All the things we experience as we live our normal lives. Elijah was ordinary, like you and me, yet he lived an extraordinary life.
- G. Over the next four lessons, we will learn from Elijah how to live an authentically faithful and human life. The kind of life where we don't have to wear some weird religious mask, but are true to ourselves and our experience, while still being faithful to what God has called us to.
- H. Let's give a little context:
  - 1. Elijah lived in Israel during a time when hope was hard to find. There were famines, wars, a corrupt king, and rampant injustice.
  - 2. The people who were affected the most by all these things were people who lived on the margins of society. People who were poor, or crippled, single mothers and orphans, etc.
    - a) They were abandoned, rejected, bullied, and ignored by those in power, the very people who were responsible for caring for them.
  - 3. These people, understandably, had no hope...

### II. Tension

- A. Maybe you know what it feels like to feel hopeless.
  - 1. All sorts of things can make us feel hopeless. It can be anything from not making the basketball team you wanted, to getting a test back and seeing it is a whole letter grade off what you hoped for, to not getting into your dream school, to going through a hard breakup, or having a family member who is sick and getting sicker.
  - 2. **Optional illustration: A story where you felt hopeless**
    - a) *I use a funny story of a time I was kindly rejected by someone I liked in high school. I tell it in a light and funny way, but at the end talk about how it made me feel hopeless and not good enough.*
  - 3. Everyone who has ever felt hopeless can agree that hopelessness is super painful.
    - a) It takes all the wind out of your sails, it removes all motivation, food doesn't taste as good, and things that were once fun become draining. The worst part of it is, hopelessness makes us believe that there is no way out, there is no light at the end of the tunnel.
  - 4. We can imagine how these hopeless people in ancient Israel felt because we know what it's like to be hopeless. We can put ourselves into the story because the story is human, with real emotions we have all felt.
  - 5. And because we can find ourselves in the story, we know that the hopelessness they were feeling was a profound problem.
- B. Because we need hope.
  - 1. It has been scientifically proven again and again that we need hope. Hope gives us agency and grit, it reduces anxiety, increases happiness, boosts the immune system (yes that's real), and improves our quality of life.
  - 2. Hope is not optional for a human being. We need it like we need water or food, if we go without it for long periods of time, we wither away.

### III. Truth



- A. One of the first stories we have from Elijah's life is about a single mother and her son who had lost all hope and were, quite literally, withering away, and God, through Elijah brings hope into that hopelessness.

**B. Read 1 Kings 17:8-12 (ESV)**

1. *"Then the word of the Lord came to him, 'Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.' So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, 'Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.' And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, 'Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.' And she said, 'As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.'"*
2. This is where we get our first glimpse at the level of hopelessness these people were dealing with.
3. When Elijah met the woman, she told him that she had practically no food. So she was gathering sticks and was going to use them and the last of the flour and oil she had to make a stick pie for her and her son to eat so that they could "eat it and die"...as far as last meals go, dry sticks have to be one of the worst.
  - a) This is rock bottom. Profound hopelessness, profound isolation, and profound desperation, all wrapped into a horrific combination for this woman and her son.
  - b) You can imagine what she must be experiencing in her life to drive her to that conclusion. She must have thought that God had abandoned her and her son. It's easy to think that God has abandoned us when we feel hopeless.
  - c) But God never leaves or forsakes us, and God hadn't abandoned this woman, God wasn't going to leave her there, and neither was Elijah.

**C. Read 1 Kings 17:13 (ESV)**

1. *"And Elijah said to her, 'Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son.'"*
2. Elijah's response here is so interesting, and a bit jarring at first.
  - a) She says, "I'm about to make a stick pie for my son and me to eat and then die." Casual.
  - b) He responds, "Yeah cool, you can do that in just a second, but first, can you make me some cake? Just a little bit? Yellow cake with chocolate frosting, please" (Ok, I added that last bit).
  - c) WHAT???
3. What an absurd response! She might as well have made him some of her sick-death pie instead. Cake??? Are you kidding me?? Doesn't he know that there is no hope? Why would he want cake? Doesn't he know that stick-death pie is the only thing on the menu?
4. But Elijah knew something the woman did not know: God was about to give them a reason to hope.

**D. Read 1 Kings 17:14-16 (ESV)**

1. *“For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.’” And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.”*
  2. Now Elijah’s response makes more sense. One of the major sources of the woman’s hopelessness was their lack of food (makes sense, you kind of need food to, you know, live), and when Elijah asked for a little food, he was asking her to share what little she had left.
  3. But that is ok because God was about to perform a miracle for this woman. The little bit of flour and oil that she had left, wouldn’t run out, so she would always have enough food. (I ask God to perform this miracle on my Chipotle Burrito Bowls every time, and, much to my chagrin, God has never done it...but I digress).
  4. When Elijah told the woman this, she trusted him and went and made him the cake. She was transformed. The same woman, who was about to use the last of her food to make a stick-death pie, was now baking a cake for a stranger...all because of the small amount of hope that she had been given. This is what hope does.
  5. And, of course, God was faithful to fulfill that promise, and the woman never had to worry about food again.
- E. This story may have a miracle in it, but the emotions and experiences that Elijah and this woman live through are incredibly human. And through their experience, we learn much about how God gives hope when we feel hopeless.
- F. Hope starts out small
1. Before Elijah told the woman that God would make her food last for as long as she needed it to, he first asked her something small, “make me a cake, you will have enough for that.”
  2. When we feel hopeless, often God gives us hope a little bit at a time. Maybe it is a conversation with a friend where you are reminded that you’re not alone, or a sunset that reminds you that there is still beauty in the world.
  3. When we feel hopeless, it is normal to think that the only thing that can lift us from that place is something huge, miraculous even, but it doesn’t always work that way. What we learn from this story is that sometimes, the first signs of hope are small, “You will have enough to make a cake.”
- G. Hope requires trust
1. This one is tricky. The woman had to go bake the cake before she knew for sure that God would do what Elijah said God would do. She had to trust that God would keep God’s promises.
  2. If we want to experience the hope that God offers, we first must trust that God will be faithful. This can be really hard, especially when everything around us is adding to our hopelessness. But God has promised to be present with us, no matter how low we get.
    - a) This doesn’t mean that everything will work out exactly as we hoped. We may not magically make the team, or get into our dream school. We may never get with the person we like, or the person we love who is sick may not get better. But what it does mean is that God promises to give

us hope and beauty in the midst of those things.

### H. Hope is transformative

1. When we first met this mother, she was so desperate, so hopeless, that she was ready to give up, and by the end of the story, she was providing for Elijah. Her outlook on life had completely changed. She believed that God was going to fulfill His promise to provide for her when she needed it, and that changed her life. That is the power of hope.
  2. When we experience the hope that God gives us. When we trust that God will provide for us, that God will be with us when things get hard, and that God will turn the broken things in our lives into something beautiful, then we are transformed.
  3. The way that we live our lives changes, and our hopelessness begins to slowly be replaced by hope, hope that God will be faithful to heal us and the world.
- I. When we feel hopeless, God gives us hope.
1. **Optional illustration:** *Tell a story of when God gave you hope at a time when you felt hopeless.*

## IV. Application

- A. Now what can be tricky about this idea at first glance, is that the woman is kind of a passive participant in this whole story. She is minding her own business and then Elijah shows up and, through him, God gives her hope. So what are we supposed to do with this information? How do we apply it to our lives? Is the lesson just “wait around until God gives you hope”?
- B. Though that might seem like the case in this story, there are definitely things we can learn and ways we can apply this idea to our lives. Let’s look at a couple:
1. If you feel hopeless, lean into community.
    - a) The woman was honest with Elijah about her hopelessness. She was honest about her situation. And this allowed Elijah to bring her hope.
    - b) When we feel hopeless, we don’t have to be in that place alone. We can confide in the people around us, the people who we know care deeply about us, our community. They can share that burden with us so that it is no longer as heavy.
  2. If you feel hopeless, perform small acts of trust.
    - a) The woman went and baked a cake. That is a small task (unless you’re bad at baking). Even though nothing in her world gave her reason to hope except for this strange man with a sweet tooth, she trusted enough to do a small task: bake a cake.
    - b) When you feel hopeless, look for small ways God might be reminding you of hope. Maybe that is by choosing to share with your siblings, or sit with the kid at lunch who normally eats alone.
    - c) These small acts, done in trust that God is going to redeem your hopelessness, pull us out of ourselves and help us notice how God is moving in the world around us. Giving us hope that God will move in our lives too.

## V. Gospel

- A. The beauty of following a God of hope is that no matter how low or hopeless we feel, we have reason to trust that God will be present with us, and lift us up.
- B. We know this because we have seen God embrace the ultimate form of hopelessness and death, and still come out on top.
- C. When Jesus rose from the dead, he showed us that no matter how strong the hopelessness is, he is stronger. No matter how low we are, he is capable of raising us up, no matter how broken, he is capable of healing.
- D. The empty tomb is a constant reminder of the power of God's hope, not even death could hold Jesus, and that is offered to you and me.
  - 1. *If you want to go into a bit more gospel detail here, you can.*

### VI. Conclusion

- A. This ancient story still has so much to teach us about our lives. Why? Because it is a human story. It is a story about emotions and experiences that we still face today. We still face isolation, depression, grief, loss, and all sorts of other things that drive us to hopelessness.
- B. And just like how God and Elijah were able to give hope to this woman and her son. God is able to do so now

## Extraordinary Life of Elijah Sermon Series | Session 1: But First, Some Cake

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**Extraordinary Life Series Overview** | The whole story of Elijah fits fully within eight chapters of the Bible, yet he is one of the most significant characters in scripture...Why? Because the life of Elijah is one of the most human stories in the Bible, in those eight chapters, there are victories, and defeats, incredible faith, and profound doubt. There is passion, anger, joy, loss, loneliness, discipleship, hope, violence, and ultimate belonging. No matter who you are, you can find at least part of your story echoed in Elijah's life. This series is going to explore that life, with all its ups and downs. From the victory of Mt. Carmel to the despair of Mt. Horeb to his flaming ride into heaven. And through his life, we are going to learn about what an authentic and profoundly human life of faith and passion looks like for us.

**Large Group Teaching Summary** | This sermon explores the power of relatable stories and introduces Elijah, a prophet whose human experiences resonate deeply with us today. It highlights Elijah's encounter with a hopeless widow and her son, showing how God brings hope in dark and difficult circumstances. We learn that hope starts small, requires trust, and is transformative. The story teaches that God provides hope and presence in our lives, just as He did for Elijah and the widow.

**Key Takeaway** | When we feel hopeless, God gives us hope.

**Scripture Focus** | 1 Kings 17:8-16

## Extraordinary Life | Session 1 Discussion Questions

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You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your large group teaching or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to foster conversations, help students think critically about the teaching, and wrestle with how these Biblical truths impact their complicated and ever-changing lives.

### Get Them Talking | An Optional Opening Question To Get Students Talking

If you were stranded on a desert island and could only bring one thing to keep you hopeful, what would it be?

### Discussion Questions

1. Read 1 Kings 17:8-16: What does this teach you about God? What does it teach you about yourself?
2. In the sermon, it was mentioned that great stories are stories that are human and relatable. Why do you think it's important for stories to resonate with us on a personal level?
3. How would you define hope in your own words?
4. What are some common sources of hopelessness in today's world, especially for people your age?
5. The sermon mentioned that hope often starts out small. Can you think of any small signs of hope you have experienced during difficult times?
6. Have you ever experienced a time in your life when you felt hopeless? Can you share a little bit about that experience?
7. Why is trust essential in experiencing hope? How can trust in God's faithfulness impact our perspective on hopelessness?
8. What are some practical ways we can encourage one another and others around us who are feeling hopeless? How can we be agents of hope in our communities?
9. What are some strategies or practices that can help us hold onto hope during seasons of waiting or uncertainty?
10. How does Jesus' resurrection offer hope in the face of even the most hopeless situations?