**Scripture and Background Information for September 29-October 6**

**The 40 Day Lab**

When you look throughout the Bible, there is a pattern where God uses time periods of 40 days to invite people to encounter Him in a new way or for the very first time. Those 40 days were not just about learning facts about God, but they were *real-life experience* with God.

**A special BONUS for this series:** We are providing daily prompts by text message which will give you practical ways to experience God beyond the lectures. We encourage you to sign up by texting **40DAYLAB** to 33222.

To prepare for your group discussion each week**,** group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD’S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scriptures at the bottom of this page.

Remember we are using the updated **Discussion Guide** (available from your leader or from the Next Steps Center). Because we are using longer narrative passages, we have adapted the prompts to keep the time commitment between 20 & 30 minutes. In the **GOD’S WORDS** section, rather than copying the scripture “word for word”, you’ll write down a few of the details that you might need to retell the story to a friend or a neighbor. In the **MY WORDS** section, take a few minutes to retell the story in your own words.

**Background for 1 Kings 19:1-18**

1 Kings chapters 17-19 tells the story of the prophet Elijah who accomplished many signs and wonders in his preaching of God’s word. Ahab was the king of Judah during this time, and he was a wicked and evil king. In chapter 18, just before our encounter with Elijah, Elijah confronts Ahab because Ahab has led Israel to worship foreign gods. Then in challenging the people of Israel for their idolatry, Elijah proves in a miraculous way that God is the only God (18:20-40). As the people believe and forsake their foreign gods (Baals) as a result of Elijah’s sign, the prophets of Baal are seized and killed. Elijah has just won a huge victory for God in the midst of a confused and increasingly pagan Israel.

However, in 1 Kings 19:1-18, we learn of the aftermath of Elijah’s victory. Rather than being praised as being the one to bring an end to the false gods in Israel’s history, Ahab chases Elijah out of town. Faced with the reality that he had not been able to accomplish what he wanted to, Elijah begs that God would end his life (verse 10). As the result of a 40 day journey, God encounters Elijah in a way that gets his attention. The reminder is that the job isn’t finished yet—that Elijah must appoint another who will continue God’s mission of prophesying to Israel. Elijah needed to be reminded that his ministry was not the end, but just part of an on-going conversation in seeking to bring God glory through the generations—that even in our disappointment or our victory God is God. And He is a God that has a mission that is bigger than us, and that in His grace, He allows us to play a part just as Elijah did.

**Scriptures for the upcoming weeks:**

**October 6 Jesus Matthew 4:1-11**

**October 13 Celebration Acts 1:1-8**