

# Mission Impossible

Western Regional Director Retreat  
Sea Ranch, California

## Introduction

We have a new 2030 calling, though it's not really new, it's just our original calling—reach the collegiate community for Jesus—that is now better defined and focused. And like the old calling, it's impossible to fulfill without God's direction, provision, and mercy.

Despite the success we have seen in some parts of InterVarsity in the past decade, broader cultural indicators would suggest that belief in God and efforts to walk in His invisible presence over a

lifetime are becoming more difficult for those of us in the West. Those who understand and study the forces that erode belief think the opposition forces will only increase thus making our task even more impossible.



A fellow who knew a thing or two about revival and Mission Impossible was Elijah. His story, found in the book of Kings, took place in the 8th century BC sixty-five years after the death of King Solomon and the civil war that split Israel into the northern kingdom called Israel and the southern kingdom called Judah. Successive kings, three in the south and seven in the north, had led a people rescued from Egyptian slavery and schooled in the desert by Moses away from their true calling and identity. Others gods with their magical and demeaning practices of cult prostitution and human child sacrifice had been welcomed into a smorgasbord of religious activity. And the prophets of the one and true God, Yahweh, had been killed or banished to hide in caves.

Into this scene stepped a prophet, Elijah, whose name means El is Yah or God is Yahweh. His job was to confront false religion, clear out the pantheon, and called a recalcitrant people back to their roots. He performed his dangerous task with authority, humility, and humor.

## Reflection Assignment

During our time together at Sea Ranch, we will reflect on part of his story. In preparation for our time together Tuesday afternoon, would you read 1 Kings 16:29-17:24? In addition, reflect upon the following two questions

1. What part of the 2030 Calling seems most impossible to you for your region?
2. What part of your difficult job drives you to Jesus most often?

## Quotes

Any of us, when faced with human suffering, wonder, "What can I do?" The Missionaries of Charity gave me a simple lesson that applies to any crisis. You do what's possible in the moment, of course, but you take time to pray. You make space for it, allowing God the room to work in your heart. Alone you cannot perform the miracles sometimes required—especially at the epicenter of a major famine.

Sr. Bertilla said to me, “David, people think our ministry is only about physical needs and activism. They are so wrong. We are called to pray, first and foremost. We sisters each spend at least five hours on our knees every single day.”

*David Ward speaking about the 1980 famine crisis in Ethiopia in World Vision Magazine*

The secular world around us is saying in a loud voice, “We can take care of ourselves. We do not need God, the church, or a priest. We are in control. And if we are not, then we have to work harder to get in control. The problem is not lack of faith, but of competence. If you are sick, you need a competent doctor; if you are poor, you need competent politicians; if there is a technical problem, you need competent engineers; if there are wars, you need competent negotiators. God, the church, and the ministers have been used for centuries to fill the gaps of incompetence, but today the gaps are being filled in other ways, and we no longer need spiritual answers to practical questions.”

*Henri Nouwen—In the Name of Jesus, page 33*

Coach Wooden’s most important lesson was that we should never focus on the outcome but on the activity itself. “Don’t think about winning the game,” he’d say. “Just do everything possible to prepare. As long as you know you have done everything possible and you have given your best self on the court, that is your reward. The scoreboard is meaningless.”

*Coach Wooden and Me: Our 50-Year Friendship On and Off the Court by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar*

If you don’t pray you will inevitably become either depressed or inflated- or bounce back and forth between the two. Only prayer can provide for you that fine line (spiritual, psychological, emotional) between depression and inflation.

*Ronald Rolheiser in The Holy Longing, page 218*

What are these anti-faith forces? They are not the product of some conscious conspiracy by godlessness. They are instead, all those things, good and bad, within us and around us that tempt us away from prayer, from self-sacrifice, from being more communal, from being willing to sweat blood in a garden in order to keep our integrity and commitments, and from mustering up the time and courage to enter deeply into our own soul. Hence they are not abstract, foreign forces. They live in the house with us and are as comfortable to us as a well-worn shoe. What blocks faith is that myriad of innocent things within our ordinary, normal lives which precisely make our lives comfortable: our laziness, our self-indulgence, our ambition, our restlessness, our envy, our refusal to live in tension, our consumerism, our greed for things and experience, our need to have a certain lifestyle, our busyness and over extension, our perpetual tiredness, our obsession with celebrities, and our perpetual distraction with sports, sit-coms and talk shows. These are the anti-mystical forces of our time.

*Ronald Rolheiser in The Holy Longing, page 217*

## **Benediction**

Softening the soil of our hearts, O Lord. Help us to hear your voice each day. Speak to us from your Word, our friends, our enemies, and our dreams. Help us to follow you faithfully as you faithfully love us. Amen