

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to Neighborhood today. I've been out for a few weekends, and it feels good to be back. Even though I was gone, I joined you online... and it was incredible to experience yet another reminder of how great the team is here at Neighborhood. God has blessed us with a fantastic staff, and I'm so proud to work alongside you.
- B. I'm also eager to get back into our series on GRIT.
- C. Here's a personal story to set it up.
- D. You might have heard me talk about how I was a reluctant pastor. I grew up in a little church. I took my first step of faith very young, and I received Jesus and became God's child. And let me say that if you're investigating Jesus and his claims, welcome — and we want to be a safe place for you to do that. And that is the first step of faith — receiving Jesus and becoming God's child.
- E. I don't remember the details very well of when and how that happened. It's foggy. But what isn't foggy is another big day in my young spiritual life. That's the day I was maybe 8 or 9 in Sunday School.
- F. My ancient teacher, Uncle Ben, who was 300 years old, was finishing up Sunday school. He had us boys bow our heads. He said, "Boys, maybe God is calling you to serve him as a pastor or a missionary. If that's the case, I want you to raise your hand."
- G. Immediately I had this picture in my mind of me preaching to lots of people, coupled with this assurance in my heart that I would be a pastor. I call this my "call to ministry."
- H. So I raised my hand.
- I. And never told a soul about it. That's because I was embarrassed. Partly because I was embarrassed, and partly because I didn't feel worthy. I still don't.
- J. As I went on, I tried to shake this call to ministry. I didn't talk about it in high school. When it was time to choose a college, I didn't let this pastor gig determine my choice.
- K. I kept the whole pastor thing under wraps. And that is why it took me three colleges and seven years to get the bachelor's degree. The opposite of an accelerated program.
- L. I was ashamed of becoming a pastor, but I was never ashamed of being a Christian. I shared my faith through high school. I helped start a prayer meeting on my school's steps in the morning. I spoke in our youth group. I ran kids' clubs called Awana. I walked across the room and talked about Jesus.
- M. I just couldn't bring myself to say I would be a pastor. Because of my own insecurities, because of my own sense of unworthiness, and because I knew the kids at school would give me head noogies, I went into stealth mode.
- N. That all changed in my early twenties. I'll save that part for another day.
- O. The reason I tell this story is because of a new hero we meet today. See, I was a reluctant pastor. And our hero for today was a reluctant hero.

II. G.R.I.T.

- A. Welcome to part 6 in our summer series at Neighborhood. The series is called G.R.I.T.
 - 1. *Grace Revealed In Trials:*
 - 2. *G.R.I.T. is the spiritual toughness to face the tyrants that would steal your dominion and the faith to crush them with supernatural weapons of grace.*
- B. For a case study in GRIT, we've been using the story of one of God's mighty prophets, a man named Elijah. Let's pick up where we left off last time.
 - 1. *And it came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth." So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and there was a severe famine in Samaria. (1 Kings 18:1, 2)*
- C. So that's the set up. If you missed the first parts of this series, no worries. We can backfill details as we go.
 - 1. The first person we meet here is the LORD. That would be God... and he somehow communicates with...
 - 2. The second person we meet is ELIJAH. He is a spokesperson for God, called a prophet. Elijah has been in hiding. He has been in hiding for three and a half years. That's how long the nation-wide drought has lasted. Everything is dried up, and the nation is in serious trouble.
 - 3. The third person we meet is AHAB. "Go present yourself to Ahab." He is the King of Israel. He is also a world-class psycho. Ahab is ruthless, powerful, and volatile. He also has an ongoing feud with God. He has torn down the altars of God. He has built up idols to the false god Baal. He's a bad guy, and because of him, Elijah promised there would be no rain in the land until Elijah himself gave the word.
 - a) This put a massive target on Elijah's back. For three and a half years, Ahab and his henchmen have been looking for Elijah. And this brings us to the fourth person we're going to meet.
- D. *And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was in charge of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly. For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.) (1 Kings 18:3, 4, NKJV).*
 - 1. Say hello to Obadiah. If you've read your Bible much you'll know there's a whole book in the Bible called Obadiah. It's really small, and it's most likely not the same guy as this Obadiah. In fact, there are about 13 men in the Bible who share this name.
 - 2. I love this Obadiah especially. You'll see why.
 - 3. Obadiah is the hero today, and if you're expecting a child, this name is available.
 - a) For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.
 - 4. Jezebel is the fifth character we meet, and she's a peach. She's the Queen. Ahab's wife. Pretty notorious for being nasty. An idol worshipper from way back, Queen Jezebel is pulling King Ahab's strings to turn the nation from God.
 - 5. Jezebel is a monster. Remember how we say "this fallen world is a morally broken pain machine?"

6. Well Jezebel is the pain machine in skin.
 7. After Elijah announced there would be a drought, Jezebel went on a rampage. She slaughtered every prophet of God she could get her hands on...
 8. Except there was this official in her own palace: Obadiah. He “feared the Lord greatly,” an Old Testament phrase for faith and grit.
 9. Obadiah goes into stealth mode. He gets word to the prophets who haven’t been slaughtered. He sets up a cave for them. He provides food. He provides water. He shelters them, right under the noses of Ahab and Jezebel. For three and a half years, Obadiah has sheltered one hundred prophets of the Lord in two separate locations... while working his day job for the people who are trying to massacre them all.
 10. What would you call that?
 - a) GRIT: Grace Revealed In Trials.
 11. That is Obadiah, a man of true Grit.
 12. So the crazy King Ahab calls him in with a plan:
- E. *And Ahab had said to Obadiah, “Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so that we will not have to kill any livestock. So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. (1 Kings 18:5, 6, NKJV).*
1. The day job calls.
 2. You want to be spiritual, maybe. You want to serve God, maybe. But the day job calls.
 3. Let us get theological for a moment. We who name the name of Christ believe that Jesus is coming again. He is our Coming King.
 4. Theology experts have described a handful of scenarios on HOW that second coming of Christ will actually happen.
 5. How will God’s kingdom come to earth? How will that coming age of peace, and goodness, and love actually come? Who ushers in the era the Bible calls the “thousand years” or millennium (Rev 20:2-7)?
 6. Answer:
 - a) God’s kingdom cannot happen in its fulness until Jesus Christ personally returns to reign as King on this planet.
 - b) Humans cannot usher in the kingdom of God.
 - c) Only Jesus can.
 7. There is a tug of war in theology today over this. Some say that humans bring God’s kingdom to earth, then Jesus returns. In theology, this is called the postmillennial view. First, WE fix up this world, through social justice, we restore paradise, and we create the millennium with God’s help. THEN, after that, post-that, post-millennial — then Jesus returns. God’s kingdom now, and then Jesus returns.
 8. There is some truths in this, and these are good people, but I don’t see that in Scripture.
 9. But the bigger truth is that this fallen world is a morally broken pain machine, and the only power that can turn that around is the personal coming, and bodily presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. WE can’t fix up the world. First Jesus returns, then God’s kingdom comes. So the statement of faith for our family of churches says this:
 - a) *“The second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is imminent and will be personal, visible, and premillennial.”*
 10. We believe only Jesus can usher in the beautiful kingdom of God.
 11. Does that mean we just give up and let society crumble around us? No way! We are Obadiah’s. We are messengers of the love of God. We are ambassadors of grace. We are proclaimers of the gospel. We are citizens of a heavenly kingdom, sent here from God to create outposts, foretastes, of the world to come. Yes, we get involved. Yes, we give our lives to alleviating the world’s pain, to acts of mercy, to lives of kindness.
 12. We are channels of the almighty grace of God, through thick and thin.
 13. Even if, like Obadiah, we have to move into stealth mode.
 14. BUT... we know that we’ll never switch off the pain machine. We’ll never unravel the evil so tightly woven into the world around us. Apart from King Jesus stepping foot on earth, this world is hopeless.
 - a) The church by and large stopped preaching the second coming of Christ, and postmillennialism crept in. That we, through social justice, will recreate the Garden of Eden.
 - b) It’s not going to happen.
 - (1) The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. (1 John 5:19, NKJV).
 15. So how shall we then live?
 16. Like Obadiah. When your boss says go look for water, you go look for water. In other words, live in this fallen world, recognize it’s a mess, deal with the crazy tyrants around you, be a gritty person, don’t quit your day job, lean on God, keep the faith, grow in grace, in wisdom, and grit, do good — for example, to shelter the prophets of God in caves and share the gospel — but never expect the world to become daisies and sunshine as long as the devil is roaming free.
 17. Our hope is in that glorious FUTURE day when when Christ returns, and then, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15, NKJV).
 - a) Then, that day, that’s when love wins.
 - b) Then the devil is confined.
 - c) Then evil gets unraveled from the cosmic fabric and torched into nothingness.
 - d) Then we look in the face of Jesus.
 - e) Then we say, “It was worth it all.”
 - f) Then there will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more pain, and no more tears.
 - g) Then your heart’s deep wounds are healed.

- h) Then your truest self gets unveiled, a spectacle to dazzle the angels.
- i) Then the pain machine gets devoured by the almighty grace machine and spit it into oblivion forever.
 - (1) Then... when Jesus returns.
- 18. Obadiah has a foot in two kingdoms... the present world of the pain machine (he's working for Ahab), and the future world of the grace machine (he's sheltering the prophets). It's almost a paradox, and that's how we're all living.
 - a) You're stuck in the pain machine.
 - b) But you get to experience the grace machine too.
 - (1) Both at once.
- 19. And that's why you need Grit. And even with Grit, you'll sometimes blow it.
- F. *Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, "Is that you, my lord Elijah?" And he answered him, "It is I. Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'" So he said, "How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? (1 Kings 18:7-9, NKJV).*
 - 1. Elijah shows up, tells Obadiah he wants to see Ahab, and look at the response: How have I sinned that you are delivering me into the hand of Ahab to kill me.
 - 2. Let's get inside Obadiah's head... "So you want me to go to King Ahab and say, 'Excuse me Your Royalty but you'll never guess who I bumped into... no, not Sinatra. No, not the Beebs. No, not Kim either. All right, I'll tell you. I bumped into... [clears throat]... the prophet Elijah."
 - 3. If I tell Ahab that, his next question will be... "Why didn't you arrest him?"
 - 4. So this is a huge moment of stress for Obadiah, and this is why I love the guy.
 - 5. He asks, How have I sinned..."
 - 6. Do you get what's going on in his soul?
 - 7. He does what so many of us do way too often.
 - a) He connects the dots between the huge problem in his life and the sins in his life.
 - b) *I'm having trouble, so I must have sinned. I've got these massive problems, so I must have done something wrong.*
 - (1) Listen... Yes, if you live your life out of bounds as far as God is concerned, that life is going to overflow with needless complication and needless drama. You're going to be a drama queen. You might be a hairy drama queen.
 - (2) However, unless it's obvious, don't waste your life imagining how to draw a straight line between your sins and your troubles.
 - (3) Something has broken that line. Something has interrupted that line. And that would be the beautiful, horrible thing called the Cross of Jesus Christ.
 - (a) When Jesus died on that Cross, he broke that link.
 - (b) When Jesus shed his blood, he ended that judgement.
 - (c) When Jesus cried out IT IS FINISHED, he silenced forever the devil's whisper that God is out to get you.
 - c) Your trials, your troubles, your difficulties, your illness, your backward answers to prayer — none of these mean that you have sinned.
 - d) Your confusions, your perplexities, your frustrations, your unfulfilled longings — none of these mean that the love of God has stopped flowing your way.
 - e) Here is the dot of your moral failures. Your dark side. Your deceptions, hatreds, exploitations, and shame. Here is the dot of the judgement and wrath of God. If you have Jesus, then whatever line connects those dots his broken, shattered, and demolished, once for all, forever, to the end of time, and it can never come back.
 - 8. When Obadiah asked, "how have I sinned" he was voicing a fear that is so very common. It's one that I face way too often. It's the fear that says God is out to get me because I haven't lived up to his standards. Well, you're right, and welcome to the club. The gospel is that Christ meets God's standards on your behalf, so trust him to.
 - G. *"As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you. "And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here'!"*
 - H. *"And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth.*
 - I. *"Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid one hundred men of the LORD'S prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water? "And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'" He will kill me!" (1 Kings 18:10-14, NKJV).*
 - 1. What does Obadiah do?
 - 2. He does two things, first defensive, second offensive:
 - a) DEFENSIVE. First, he puts on his lawyer hat and argues how good he is. "I sheltered prophets. I hid them in caves. I fed them with bread. I quenched their thirst with water... haven't you heard all this, Elijah? I'm a good guy. Why are you doing this to me?"
 - (1) I am learning that every time the little lawyers pop out in my heart, it's because I'm doing the very crazy thing of trying to justify myself.
 - (2) The moment that begins, Grit evaporates. Because Grit requires CONFIDENCE, and always justifying yourself is the opposite of confidence.
 - (3) The reality is that God has justified me in Christ, so I can live with nothing left to prove.
 - (a) If people say, You're a loser, and inside you say, I am more than a conqueror.
 - (b) If people say, You're ugly, and inside you say, I am beautiful in my Savior.

- (c) If people say, You're a failure, and inside you say, My sufficiency is of the Lord.
 - i) If you can take emotional punch after punch, and not pull out the army of lawyers to make the case... then you are resting in your high calling in Christ, and you can live your life with nothing left to prove.
 - (1) So the first thing he does is descend his worth... Hey Obadiah, your insecurity is showing... your Grit is cracked.
 - b) The second thing he does is go on the OFFENSIVE. "I'm gonna tell Ahab, and you're going to disappear on me. Elijah, you are one spooky dude, and the Spirit of God wafts you around like a feather in the wind. And I'm gonna die — because of you — and remember what a good guy I am — and, and, and then who's going to take care of these prophets? Right? See what you're doing to me here? Honestly, you're being unreasonable, if you ask me."
 - (1) Trying to pull yourself up always leads to trying to push someone else down. It's inevitable. You can't be insecure in yourself without bringing down another.
 - (2) This is why I love Obadiah so much. He fears the lord greatly, yes, and he's got a pretty heavy load of insecurities going on too.
 - (3) My kind of guy.
 - (4) Elijah is nice to him.
- J. *Then Elijah said, "As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today." So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah. (1 Kings 18:15, 16)*
1. Elijah swears an oath to show himself to Ahab today.
 2. He just got insulted. His integrity just got questioned. He didn't get defensive. He didn't react. He gave Obadiah what he needed — an oath that he wouldn't disappear on him.
 3. Why?
 4. Because he had GRIT, and part of GRIT is confidence in the approval of God.
 - a) God has accepted you.
 - b) God has justified you.
 - c) God has declared you good in his sight.
 - (1) So you've got nothing left to prove.
 - (2) Which means that other people can't get under your skin.
 - (3) If you've got GRIT, you don't take every offense personally, and you allow that the other person has a lot of growing to do.
 5. Obadiah gives me hope. You don't have to erase your fears to have GRIT. You don't have to erase your doubts, or your worries, or your sadness, or your pain. This isn't hyping yourself up into an adrenaline rush. It's not hyped up spirituality. GRIT isn't about not feeling scared, not feeling mad, not feeling sad. No. You feel your feelings.
 6. *GRIT is about rising above the emotion of the moment and doing what needs to be done, because you have this spark of life in you named the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 7. Sometimes we pastor types get all fired up on making every Christian a Super-Christian.
 - a) Like we should all be heroes.
 - (1) I can imagine Obadiah's legalistic pastor saying, Have you ever shared your faith with Jezebel? Have you ever told Ahab of the love of God? And then putting him on a guilt trip.
 - (2) No. He was in stealth mode; it was for survival.
 - (3) Well, then you should be ashamed of yourself!
 - (4) No, you should carry on. Well done, Obadiah, a man who had insecurities, a man who, in stealth mode, feared the Lord greatly.
 8. I used to beat myself up for going into stealth mode. But not any more. I wasn't ready. And God isn't pushy. And Obadiah is a role model for me.
 - a) Not all are called to martyrdom. Not all are called to vows of poverty. Not all are called to seminary and hours of prayer a day and signs and wonders or else your a second class Christian.
 - (a) If there's anything to take away from the story of Obadiah, it's the simple truth that it's okay to be normal.
 - b) *Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, (1 Timothy 2:1-3, NKJV).*
 - c) Sometimes, a quiet and peaceable life is the biggest thing God wants for you.