



## First Baptist Church At The Villages

INSPIRING FAITHFULNESS • ELIJAH • 1 KINGS 17:8-24 •

FOR USE BY GROUPS 08/26 - 08/31/2019

### Main Point

God's provision leads us to deeper faith and trust in Him.

### Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What are some necessities God provides for us every day that we might overlook?**

**How does God's provision for us shape our character and faith?**

**Why is it dangerous to become self-dependent in difficult circumstances?**

Regardless of how difficult our circumstances may seem, God wants us to depend on Him and seek His wisdom in our crises. He promises to provide for His children. In today's discussion we will focus on God's giving through faith. The story of the prophet Elijah and a widow in 1 Kings 17 reveals how He provides for the needs of those whose faith is in Him.

### Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

King Ahab reigned for 22 years and proved to be the most ungodly king Israel ever had. His wife Jezebel led him to try and make Baal worship the official religion of Israel. As a prophet of Israel, Elijah confronted Ahab and announced a terrible drought being sent by God. During the drought, God miraculously cared for Elijah.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 KINGS 17:1-7.

**Why did God bring about a drought upon His people?**

It is tempting to think that God brought about the drought simply to punish Israel for turning to the worship of Baal. While this is partially true, the main reason that God brought the drought was so that Israel would repent and turn to Him for provision again. The goal of God in the drought was to heal Israel of their idolatry. God knew that Baal could not provide rain for them, and Baal certainly couldn't provide forgiveness of sins. The drought was a hard mercy that God brought upon His people in order to save them.

**In James 5:17, the Bible teaches that “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.” Why is it important to remember this fact about Elijah?**

**How do you suppose Elijah’s faith in God was shaped by his time by the brook Cherith? How do you think this affected the rest of his ministry?**

Elijah was exactly like we are. He was susceptible to fear and despair just like the rest of us (1 Kings 19:3-5). God brought Elijah to the brook of Cherith to provide for him so that Elijah could learn to trust God for provision. If God was going to use Elijah to call upon Israel to trust in God, God had to make certain that His messenger had learned to trust Him first himself. It is safe to say that Elijah learned trust at the brook Cherith. Because of this valuable lesson, Elijah was able to trust in the Lord later in his ministry when things looked bleak. Elijah knew that God was superior to Baal in every way, for he had experienced God’s provision firsthand.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 KINGS 17:8-14.

**Why do you believe Elijah was willing to go where God called him? What can we learn from his obedience?**

**Why do we tend to trust in our abilities instead of God’s? When have you had difficulty obeying a clear directive from God? How have past experiences with Him helped you be obedient to Him?**

**What do our actions indicate about our beliefs in God’s promises? How may this reveal our lack of faith? Explain.**

Sensing fear in the widow’s response, Elijah told her not to be afraid. God’s promise was a sufficient supply of flour and oil during the drought, enough to feed herself, her son, and Elijah. The widow did not question Elijah about how God might fulfill His promise to her, but she obeyed His prophet’s instructions. God miraculously ensured the woman’s food supply never ran out as long as the drought endured. To receive God’s promises, we too must respond in faith.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 KINGS 17:15-16.

**How do these verses illustrate that faith must be active, not passive? What are some ways God provides for us that require us to be active?**

**What evidence do you have that God keeps His promises to those who obey?**

The widow acted on God's promise that Elijah had spoken to her, and God kept His word. When we trust God to fill our needs, we may not experience the same kind of miracle the widow did, but we know He will be faithful. We first must risk acting on our faith and doing what the Lord leads us to do. We can be confident He will take care of us in His own time and in His own way.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 KINGS 17:17-24

**How did God test Elijah's faith? What can we learn from Elijah's response?**

**What did the widow learn as God worked through Elijah? What word of advice would you give new Christians who are struggling to trust in God's provision?**

The boy's death became an opportunity for God to display His love and power to a Sidonian woman in a country given over to the worship of Baal. When the woman saw that her son was alive, she made two observations. She said she knew Elijah was a man of God and that the word of God that came through Elijah's mouth was the truth. God had already done several miracles for Elijah. Now, He had done a miracle through Elijah. God is still a God of miracles today. Sometimes He acts directly in a situation of need. More often, He acts through impressing fellow believers and/or family members to give generous help. He might make available extra work opportunities or even a new job. Or He may help by teaching us better money management skills. Any way, He is acting.

## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How has God provided for you through others? How has God provided for others through you?**

**How does God work through our church to provide for those in need? How can our group support these efforts or start one of our own?**

**How might these opportunities allow us to share our faith with those who don't have a relationship with Jesus?**

## Pray

Close by reminding your group that sometimes God calls us to step out in faith as we trust His ability to provide for our needs and provide for the needs of others through us. Pray together that God would help your group to remain obedient to Him, so that your faith and generosity will reveal His power in your lives.

## Commentary

### | 1 KINGS 17:8-24

Among spiritual leaders in Israel's history, Elijah stands alongside Moses and Samuel in importance and influence. In a time when Ahab and Jezebel stubbornly led Israel away from God, Elijah confronted them with God's words and struggled to lead Israel to repentance and renewed faith.

As the centuries passed, Elijah became the symbol of all prophets; and as such, he appeared with Moses at Jesus' transfiguration (Matt. 17:3). Elijah's miraculously being taken into heaven (2 Kings 2:11-12) and Malachi's prophecy (Mal. 4:5) made some people speculate Jesus or John the Baptist might be Elijah (Matt. 16:14; John 1:21). Luke 1:17 and Matthew 11:13-14 indicate that the coming of John the Baptist fulfilled Malachi's prophecy about Elijah.

In 1 Kings 17, when Elijah's water source dried up, the word of the Lord came to him as it had before. Elijah had a living relationship with God and a strong prayer life (Jas. 5:17). Elijah heard God's voice because he was listening for Him as part of his daily walk with God. God's command to Elijah must have struck him as unusual because it sent him to Zarephath, a land dominated by Baalism.

In a town whose inhabitants worshiped Baal, the Lord would care for His prophet by working a miracle through the faith of a widow, proving Baal to be nothing. When he arrived, Elijah saw a widow there picking up firewood and asked her to bring him a drink and then bread. We may view hospitality as good manners or a generous custom, but the people of the biblical world saw the practice of hospitality as a sacred obligation. Often a person providing hospitality did far more than was requested, but Elijah knew the severe drought had produced a devastating famine and the woman might be reluctant to part with food. Elijah's words also created the opportunity for God to work a miracle.

The widow told Elijah she had only a handful of flour and a little oil left with which to prepare bread. She intended to build a fire with the sticks she had gathered, prepare a last meal of bread for herself and her son, and then wait to die of starvation. As food supplies dwindled in the town, she knew those who distributed the food would overlook a vulnerable widow and her son. She saw only death in her future.

Elijah urged the widow not to be afraid. He then asked her to do something incredibly difficult; make bread for him first then some for her son and herself. The widow had introduced Elijah's God into the conversation. If the widow followed Elijah's instructions, God would ensure that her jar of flour and jug of oil would never

be empty until God brought back rain to the land. If she demonstrated faith, she and her son would have enough to eat until the drought and famine ended. God's promise challenged the widow to believe and trust God with her future.

On hearing God's promise, the widow obeyed, not because she and her son had no better option, but out of faith in God. God responded to her faithful action by keeping His promise. As long as the drought lasted, Elijah, the woman, and her son had enough to eat. God had defeated Baal. While those in Sidon and Israel slowly starved, God miraculously provided for His prophet, a widow, and her son. The Lord alone deserves worship.

Later, the widow's son became ill and died. Calling Elijah a "man of God" (17:18), the widow accused him of punishing her for her sin. She mentioned no specific sin. Probably she was assuming that the illness and death meant God was punishing her for some wrongdoing.

Elijah did not answer the woman's question. Instead, he took the boy to his room. He was staying in a separate room on the roof, approached from an outside stairway. Elijah prayed for the boy's life, and the Lord answered his prayer. The boy's death became an opportunity for God to display His love and power to a Sidonian woman in a country given over to the worship of Baal.

When the woman saw that her son was alive, she made two observations. She said she knew Elijah was a man of God. She also said that the word of the Lord that came through Elijah's mouth was the truth. God had done several miracles for Elijah. Now, He had done a miracle through Elijah.

For both Elijah and the widow, their steps of faith involved risk. They had to act on God's promise without being able to see or even explain how everything would work out. They listened to God's promises, believed He would do as He promised, and then began to obey the Lord's instructions. God took care of their needs. Their actions set an example for all of us in a world filled with uncertainty.