

The Still Small Voice

1 Kings 19:1-18

MEMORY VERSE

1 KINGS 19:11-12

“...And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Two plastic cups per child, two to three feet of string, scissors, and markers.

Brown card stock, pencils, scissors, markers or crayons, and pins or a stapler.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Listen For Your Name

As you open up your teaching time, begin to teach your lesson in a whisper volume/tone of voice. Even if children are not quite listening give them a few moments. Usually, when someone begins to whisper in a room of people who are talking, others will stop to listen to the whisperer.

If the children respond and become quiet, listening to what you have to say, share with them that we are going to learn about a time when God whispered to His servant and got his attention even more than a fire, or an earthquake, or a great wind. Share with your class that God does not always speak to us in the “BIG” things; quite often He speaks to us in little ways and quiet ways.

If the children do not respond to your whispering, go ahead and get their attention. Like above, share what today's lesson is going to be about, but also share how important it is to be listening for God's voice. God will sometimes speak to our hearts in a whisper. What if we are not listening? Encourage the children to listen for God's whisper in their hearts as Elijah learned to do in our today's lesson.

LESSON TIME!

In our past two lessons, we have looked at the life of Elijah, one of many prophets in the history of Israel who spoke God's Word to the people. Elijah was sent to speak to wicked King Ahab and the children of Israel who were steeped in idol worship.

Elijah was well known for the great miracles God did through him. Remember last week? Elijah set out to prove to evil King Ahab and the wandering children of Israel that only the Lord is God. The result was a showdown at Mount Carmel between Elijah, God's only representative, and 450 of King Ahab's false prophets. Do you remember what happened? God won! Elijah then killed the false prophets beside the brook Kishom and fled back to Jezreel.

After the great victory at Mount Carmel, Elijah headed into a difficult situation. For when Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab, learned that her false prophets were dead, she was not happy.

1 KINGS 19:1-2

And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword.

Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."

If there was any one in Israel who did not know who Elijah was, they did now. Elijah had challenged the people to take a stand for God, turning away from the idol worship supported by King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel. The showdown between Elijah and Ahab's false prophets was no contest for God. God's awesome power was displayed along with His heart to rid Israel of the false prophets. In a short period of time, King Ahab's religious system was wiped out.

Soon after Elijah's confrontation with the false prophets, he told King Ahab that there was going to be heavy rain coming. (Remember, the land had been experiencing a great drought.) Previously, Elijah had predicted the drought to Ahab (1 Kings 17:1); now, he predicted rain. God would further demonstrate His power.

Elijah went up to Mount Carmel and prayed for rain. He then sent a message to King Ahab warning him to return to Jezreel before the heavy rains would stop him. Elijah then out ran King Ahab's chariot to arrive in Jezreel before him, a 25-mile journey—another display of God's awesome power and confirmation that Elijah was indeed His representative. No doubt, Elijah was hoping that King Ahab, after seeing the awesome majesty of the one true God, would have a change of heart as he returned to Jezebel and reflected on all that had happened.

Unfortunately, King Ahab did not turn from his wicked ways. He reported to Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and she became very angry. Her religious system was now nothing but a ridiculous display of failure in the eyes of the people. Jezebel's priests had been eliminated and her pride and authority damaged, not to mention the loss of the investment she had made in these prophets. Furthermore, Elijah was a constant thorn in Jezebel's side. He was always predicting gloom and doom for her kingdom, and she was unable to control his actions. As long as God's prophet was around, she could not carry out all the evil she wanted to do. In her anger, she vowed to kill him.

Sometimes people are angry or irritated with Christians because they are a reminder of their sin and evil practices. They might think if they could just get away from God's people, everything would be okay. Yet, we can never run from God. He loves us too much. He will confront people with their sin, either through His Word or through His people.

1 KINGS 19:3-8

And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"

Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat."

Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again.

And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you."

So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

As soon as Elijah heard of Jezebel's threat to kill him, he ran for his life. Evidently, Elijah's fear stemmed from the power he felt Jezebel had. Rather than trusting in God for his protection, as he had for the past 3 1/2 years, he ran for his life! He ran all the way through the kingdom of Judah to the southernmost town in the land, Beersheba. Still fearful that Jezebel's spies might discover him, he told his servant to stay behind and he traveled alone one more day's journey, which was about fifteen miles into the Negev desert. He wanted to get as far away as he could.

Elijah was a great man of God who demonstrated great faith in a great God. He had *just* experienced two great spiritual victories with the defeat of Jezebel's prophets and the answered prayer for rain. But, now fear gripped Elijah's heart, as he realized this wicked woman, who set out to destroy the prophets of God (1 Kings 18:4), wanted to hunt him down to kill him. Elijah's focus had once been on God, but now he was focused on the problem. Momentarily, he seems to have forgotten that **troubles seem smaller when we remember the greatness of God.**

How would you respond in a situation in which your life was threatened because of your stand for God? We can certainly understand why Elijah ran. We, too, can quickly be overcome with hopelessness over our problems.

Do you see a mistake that this "man of God" made? He did not stop to pray. He did not seek God's counsel. Sometimes we panic and do not seek the Lord for His wisdom in a situation. We would rather run away than wait any longer and have to deal with the problems.

Elijah lost hope and ran as though God was incapable of helping him. This only led to more problems. Feeling like he was all alone, he became even sadder. He was so discouraged, he prayed that he might die. Elijah had forgotten the lessons God had been teaching

him all these years. His eyes were on his circumstances rather than on the Lord. He felt that he was no more successful than his forefathers in ousting Baal worship from Israel.

God did not answer Elijah's request that he die. God did not even acknowledge that request. The Lord was not through with Elijah and his ministry to the people of Israel. Sometimes God answers our prayers with "no" because He knows what is best for us.

Exhausted and discouraged, Elijah lay down under a tree and fell asleep. He woke up at the touch of a messenger sent by the Lord. Though Elijah's faith had waned, God's love, mercy, and grace toward him remained. God sent an angel (a messenger) to take care of Elijah's physical needs. Elijah would need energy to walk on a journey to Horeb, the mountain of God. Just like He empowered Elijah to stand up against Jezebel's fake prophets, God strengthened and prepared him for his next mission. God will always prepare and empower us to do His work. We should never feel abandoned or alone; for underneath are the everlasting arms of the Lord to help us.

It is interesting that Moses and the Israelites had traveled for 40 years in the same wilderness that Elijah now traveled. As God sustained them with manna and water from the rock, they learned lessons of His faithful care and provision. Elijah would learn those same lessons as he walked through that wilderness for 40 days and nights, kept by the food God provided. This 200-mile trip would prepare Elijah for what God was going to reveal to him on Mount Horeb.

1 KINGS 19:9-10

And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

When Elijah arrived at Horeb, He found a cave and hid in it. Discouraged and afraid, it seems Elijah could only see the dark side of his troubles. There, the Lord began to speak to Elijah, beginning with a question: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

The Lord was not angry with Elijah for running away. He wanted Elijah to think about what had happened and why he was in this place of discouragement. It's here that Elijah revealed his heart to the Lord. He had run because of fear. His response revealed that he felt he was standing completely alone and defenseless against the ungodly forces that threatened to overpower him (verse 14).

Elijah only saw the hopelessness of his problems, not the power of God. He felt like it was all a failure, even though the Lord had greatly used him.

Phone Call from the Lord

You will need two plastic cups per child, two to three feet of string, scissors, and markers. This is an old craft done for many years but can still teach us about communication and how the Lord wants to speak to us.

Give each child two plastic cups and one piece of string two to three feet long. With the scissors, poke a small hole in the bottom of both cups. Push one end of the string into the hole in the cup from the bottom. Tie a knot into the end of the string. The knot end should be inside of the cup. Do the same with the second cup. Allow the children to decorate their telephones with stickers or markers.

When done with the craft have the children split into pairs. Have one child hold one end of a phone and the other child hold the other end of the phone. The string should be pulled taut, but not hard. Have one child speak into a cup while the other child places their cup to their ear. They should be able to hear the talking because of the vibration of the sound waves over the string. Allow the children to take turns. Explain to the children that it is important for us to listen for the Lord's voice. Sometimes, we can hear Him very loud and clear; other times, it might be more difficult, especially when there is a lot of noise around us. You can try to experiment with one pair of children. Have them try it with everyone else in the room talking and again while everyone else is silent. Ask them which time was easier to listen. It is the same way in our lives when we let the distractions of the world keep us from hearing the Lord.

1 KINGS 19:11-14

Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake;

and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

God did not lecture His fearful prophet but rather chose to again remind Elijah of His awesome power. Standing on the mountainside outside his cave, Elijah witnessed what Moses had seen in the same mountains centuries before—a demonstration of God's control over even the powerful forces of nature. Elijah again observed God's control over the wind, earth, and fire. **Troubles seem smaller when we remember the greatness of God.** But on this occasion, the Lord was not in any of these.

Back in the cave, Elijah heard the voice of God again and pulled his cloak over part of his face as he went to the cave's entrance. God chose to reveal Himself in a gentle whisper. Elijah knew that the gentle whisper was God's voice. If we only look for God to work in big ways, we may miss Him. Most often, we find God speaking to us in a gentle whisper.

God asked the same question He asked earlier; Elijah gave the same response. Elijah may have understood the point of God's display of power of natural forces for his benefit, yet he was still unsure about the situation he faced.

1 KINGS 19:15-18

Then the LORD said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria.

"Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.

"It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill.

"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

Elijah needed to see his situation as God saw it. He needed to be encouraged. God was not done with Elijah. He was to continue in the ministry that God called him to finish. Refreshed by God's love and compassion, Elijah understood once more that God was in control and had a future and plan for his life. He was now able to move on. **Troubles seem smaller when we remember the greatness of God.**

Elijah experienced God's love and compassion in times of great difficulty as well as times of great victory. God could have given up on Elijah, but He did not. At times, we may feel like God cannot use us any more because of our past failures, problems, or lapses of faith. Not true! God will not give up on us, either. In God's gentle way, He will speak to our heart to encourage us to continue His work in our life. What a blessed life it is as we walk with the Lord. **Troubles seem smaller when we remember the greatness of God.**

God asked Elijah to anoint three different people. The first was Hazael, as King of Syria. Elijah was to anoint an enemy king because God was going to use Syria as His instrument to punish Israel for all of its sin. Elijah was also to anoint Jehu who would be used by God later to destroy those who worshipped the false god, Baal (2 Kings 9-10).

The third person Elijah was to anoint was Elisha, the prophet who would come after him to carry on God's work. Elisha's job was to work in Israel, the Northern Kingdom, and help point the people

back to God. The Southern Kingdom, at this time, was ruled by Jehoshaphat, a king devoted to God.

God then revealed to Elijah that He still had 7,000 faithful followers in Israel who had not bowed before or kissed the idol Baal. Elijah's heart must have been encouraged to hear that he was not alone after all in his desire to stand against the wickedness in Israel. Sometimes, we have to trust that God sees things that we do not. Although we may think a situation is hopeless, God is still in control and has a plan.

When we consider how God displayed His power through Elijah with so many wonderful miracles, we might think that he was super-human. But, it is clear through this lesson that Elijah struggled with the same kinds of things we do. (See James 5:17.) The next time we are discouraged or find ourselves in the middle of a bad situation, may we remember how God gave renewed vision to Elijah. Despite the difficult circumstances we might encounter, God is greater than our circumstances. He is in control and has a plan and a future for us! **Troubles seem smaller when we remember the greatness of God.**

Every Step I Take!

This craft will help to emphasize to the children that God is always with us no matter where we go. Use the footprints made from this craft to decorate your classroom or bulletin board. The children will be drawing their own feet. You will need brown card stock, pencils, scissors, markers or crayons, and pins or a stapler.

Lay several sheets of poster board on the floor. Have each child stand on the poster board and trace their feet. Let the children cut out the outlines of their feet. Allow them to decorate their feet with crayons or markers. They can draw shoes if they like or draw toes. Leave enough space to write, "I want to walk in the Spirit!" on the footprints.

After the children are finished with drawing their feet, make sure they have their names written on them. Next pin or staple the footprints to the wall or bulletin board in the classroom to remind the students to walk in the Spirit.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to trust in the Lord in time of trouble. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.