

# ELIJAH

## Bible Verse

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and he will show you the right way.  
(Proverbs 3:5-6, GNT)

## Bible Story Reference

1 Kings 17:1-16; 19:8-13  
Psalm 46:10; Proverbs 3:5-6 (GNT)

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## MAIN IDEA

Elijah, a prophet of God, trusted God even when all things seemed impossible. We can trust in God too, and have hope.

## OBJECTIVES

Children will

- \* hear the story of the prophet Elijah;
- \* learn a definition of the term *prophet* and be able to locate stories about the prophet Elijah in the books of 1 and 2 Kings;
- \* hear examples of how Elijah trusted God and discover ways they can trust God in their lives;
- \* learn about some of the unlikely ways God cared for and provided for Elijah and recognize and be able to discuss ways God cares for and provides for them;

- \* discover ways that Elijah heard and talked to God and talk about ways they can listen for God and talk to God in their lives.

## FOR ALL YOUR VOLUNTEERS

Photocopy these sections for all your leaders:

- \* Main Idea; Objectives (page 3)
- \* Bible References; Bible Story (page 4)
- \* Bible Background (pages 5)
- \* Check Your Facts (page 6)
- \* About the Children (page 7)
- \* Shepherd Tips (page 8)

## BIBLE REFERENCES

1 Kings 17:1-16; 19:8-13  
 Proverbs 3:5-6 (GNT)  
 Psalm 46:10

## BIBLE STORY

1 Kings 17:1-16; 19:8-13

Elijah, a prophet of God, lived when the Promised Land was divided into two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Elijah was from Tishbe of Gilead in the Northern Kingdom. The king of the Northern Kingdom was Ahab, who had done more things to anger God than any other king before him (1 Kings 16:30, 33).

Elijah delivered a message from God to Ahab: "There shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word" (1 Kings 17:1). Then God told Elijah to hide near the Wadi Cherith. (A wadi is a rocky creek bed that would be dry except during the rainy season.) Elijah did as God said, and while Elijah was hiding, God sent ravens to bring meat and bread two times every day. Elijah drank from the wadi until the water dried up from the drought. Then God told Elijah to go to Zarephath, where a widow would give him food. Again, Elijah did as God said.

When Elijah arrived in Zarephath, he found the woman God had described. Elijah asked the woman for water and a piece of bread. The woman answered that she only had enough flour and oil for herself and for her son to have one last meal before they died of hunger. Elijah told the woman that everything would be fine. He asked her to bring him some bread and then fix a meal for herself and her son. Elijah told her of God's promise that neither her flour nor her oil would run out before God sent the rains to grow the crops. God kept this promise, and for nearly three years there was enough flour and oil to feed the woman, her son, and Elijah.

Years later, after God sent the rain, Elijah was hiding once again, this time from Jezebel, Ahab's wife. He hid in the desert south of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. God sent an angel to care for and feed Elijah on his journey into the wilderness. Elijah walked forty days to Mt. Horeb (also known as Mt. Sinai by those in Judah) where Moses had seen God and received the Ten Commandments many years before. Elijah climbed the mountain and spoke to God.

God told Elijah to stand on the mountain and wait for God to pass by. A great wind blew, breaking the rocks of the mountain. Then the mountain shook with an earthquake, and after the earthquake there was a fire. But God was neither in the great wind, nor in the mighty earthquake, nor in the fire. Then, quiet came upon the mountain like the sound of sheer silence. There, in the middle of the still silence, was God. Elijah covered his face out of respect and went out into the still silence before God.

# BIBLE BACKGROUND

Elijah was a prophet who spoke the truth about God's greatness during a time when it was unpopular. The kings of both Israel and Judah encouraged people to practice idolatry by creating and worshiping false gods. The most popular of these gods was Baal, who was associated with nature and seen in thunderstorms. Worshipers of Baal believed that Baal was responsible for creating and sending the rain.

Ahab, the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, worshiped God. However, after he married Jezebel, a princess from Sidon and a devoted follower of Baal, he also worshiped Baal. He built an altar to Baal and set up a sacred pole for the worship of a fertility goddess related to Baal. Those who refused to worship Baal and stood up for God were often killed by the order of Jezebel. According to 1 Kings 16:30 and again in 16:33, Ahab did more things to disobey God than any king who had come before him.

It was in this setting that Elijah, called by God, went to Ahab and said there would be no rain or dew until God said so. In this way, he directly challenged the power of Baal and asserted God's power as the one true God. God, knowing that Ahab and Jezebel would seek to kill Elijah, told the prophet to hide in the wilderness near the Wadi Cherith, a creek bed. There, God said Elijah could drink water from the creek until it dried up.

God sent ravens to bring bread and meat to Elijah twice a day. Ravens are scavenger birds that eat the carcasses of animals. For this reason, ravens were considered unclean, and the people of God were not to have contact with unclean animals. However, in this story God used these unclean birds to deliver God's care to his prophet Elijah.

When the water in the creek ran dry, God told Elijah to go to another unlikely place to find food and shelter. God sent Elijah to Zarephath, a town in Sidon, the very land where Jezebel's father was king. Zarephath was a foreign city filled with foreign people. God's people were told that to live with or interact with those outside the tribes of Israel was forbidden. Worse than that, Sidon was the area where the worship of Baal was perhaps the strongest. So God sent Elijah to a land where Baal was revered to find a poor, foreign widow who would give him food and shelter. Like so many other stories in the Bible, the widow, a non-Israelite and nonbeliever, showed more respect for the man of God than God's own people did.

When Elijah met the woman, he asked her for water, which she readily agreed to get for him. When he asked for bread, though, the woman hesitated, saying, "By the living Lord your God I swear that I don't have any bread." (1 Kings 17:12, GNT) This statement stands out for two reasons. First, without Elijah having said anything about God, the woman recognized him as a man of God. Second, it was not in the name of the god of her people, Baal, that she swore the truth of her statement. Instead, she invoked the name of Elijah's "living Lord" to make her oath.

Eventually, the woman put her faith in Elijah's God and did as God said. God kept the promise and made sure the small handful of flour and the small jar of oil never ran out. The woman, her son, and Elijah had enough to eat until the rains came and more food could be found.

The third story in this unit (1 Kings 19:8-13) took place more than three years later, when Elijah met God on Mt. Horeb (also known as Mt. Sinai). God once again cared for Elijah in an unusual way. An angel, sent by God, brought Elijah a single meal that then sustained him for the forty days it took for him to travel to Mt. Sinai. Just like Moses before him, Elijah was called by God to come to Sinai and be before the Lord. Elijah went and stood where God told him to stand and waited for God to pass by. First a mighty wind blew. Then came a powerful earthquake and finally a great fire, but God was not there. Then quiet fell on the mountain, and the air was filled with "the sound of sheer silence" (1 Kings 19:12). In that silence, Elijah found God the almighty. God came to Elijah not in a big powerful way, but in a still, quiet, completely unexpected way. The psalmist recalls this sheer silence by saying, "Be still, and know that I am God!" (Psalm 46:10).

If Elijah had relied on his own teaching and experience, he would have

- rejected the ravens as unclean;
- steered clear of the foreign land of Sidon and those who were said to worship Baal;
- searched unsuccessfully for God in the great wind, the mighty earthquake, and the fierce fire.

However, Elijah did not trust in what he knew. Instead, Elijah trusted God with his whole heart. Elijah remembered God in everything he did, and God showed Elijah the way along unexpected paths.

## CHECK YOUR FACTS

- The story of Elijah is in the books of 1 Kings and 2 Kings, history books in the Old Testament covering nearly four hundred years.
- 1 Kings begins with the end of King David's reign around 961 B.C. 2 Kings ends with the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.
- The nation divided into two kingdoms after the death of Solomon: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Elijah lived in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- 1 Kings and 2 Kings were originally written as a single book, but the book was arbitrarily divided into two scrolls when the Scripture was translated into Greek, possibly because the book was too long to fit on one scroll.
- 1 Kings and 2 Kings tell the story of how God remained faithful to God's people, but the kings turned away from God and led the people of God to destruction.

- ❑ Elijah, a prophet of God, stood up against Ahab and his son Ahaziah, two kings of the Northern Kingdom who worshiped Baal and went against God as the one, true God.
- ❑ People worshiped false gods such as Baal and believed that each of the different gods had power over particular things in nature. For each specific need, the people appealed to a different god. For example, people went to the sacred pole of Asherah to ask the goddess to give them fruitful crops.
- ❑ Ahab worshiped God, but he married the Sidonian princess Jezebel and became a follower of Baal too. He built altars and temples to Baal.
- ❑ The followers of Baal believed that Baal was responsible for making and sending the rain.
- ❑ Ravens were often seen as inhospitable birds of prey (Proverbs 30:17 and Isaiah 34:11).
- ❑ In Luke 4:24-26 Jesus commented on the irony of Elijah's going to a non-Jewish woman in Sidon for help.
- ❑ The Bible has many examples God using the faithfulness of non-Jews to serve the needs of God's people and help further God's plan.
- ❑ In ancient times, people believed strong winds, earthquakes, and fires were all the work of the gods and that the gods were present in the midst of these powerful forces of nature.
- ❑ According to 2 Kings 2, Elijah did not die. Instead, God sent a fiery chariot to take Elijah straight to heaven.
- ❑ Jewish tradition teaches that Elijah may return to earth to help the poor and needy.
- ❑ Jews set out a full cup of wine and an empty chair at the Passover meal in case Elijah should return to join the meal.
- ❑ According to Jewish tradition, Elijah is the one who comes to announce the arrival of the Messiah.

## ABOUT THE CHILDREN

Many parts of the Elijah story, especially some of those not contained in the Scriptures used here, contain disturbing and violent acts. The Scriptures used here are the ones considered to be age appropriate.

### Younger Children

Take time with younger children to explain the concept of trust. Trust is an abstract concept, and younger children need concrete examples of what trust is. Use specific examples from the stories to help children see how Elijah trusted God instead of relying on what appeared to be true. Encourage the children to think of times when they can trust God.

## Older Children

Older children can relate to the peer pressure in the story. Ask children to think about the pressure that Elijah might have felt to give in to the popular opinion of the king and the people. Talk about the difficulties Elijah faced standing up for God alone. Encourage children to talk about times when they have taken a stand. Assure children that God is with them in those difficult times just as God was with Elijah.

## SHEPHERD TIPS

- \* Pray each week for the children under your care.
- \* Model the behavior you want from the children.
- \* Assist the station leader as needed.
- \* Make sure the children use the tools and equipment in a safe manner.
- \* Talk to the church school superintendent or coordinator if you have any questions or concerns about the children in your care.

## Greet the Children

Help with nametags.

Thank the children for remembering to bring their offerings. Have the children place their offerings in the offering basket.

Take attendance. Note any children who are absent. Make plans to send absent children a note or card. Record names, addresses, and phone numbers of any children who are attending for the first time, and plan to call them or to send a welcoming card.

Read the **Talk Tips** in each of the station plans and support the station leader in helping the children explore the ideas of the unit.

## MISSION PROJECT

Directions for a CROP WALK are found in the Science Station. Children will learn about world hunger and work to fight hunger by recruiting people to participate in a CROP WALK or by organizing their own CROP WALK to raise money for Church World Service.

Information about CROP WALKS in your area can be found at [www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org). Click on the information about regional offices. Also, you can borrow the video *CROP WALK: You Can Make a Difference*. Click on Resources. Or you can call Church World Service at 1-888-CWS-CROP (1-888-297-2767).

# STAFF MEETING

## Prepare

Set up the room according to the Station Setup from the Stations.

Hang newsprint on the wall. Record the following information on a sheet of paper and hang it next to the newsprint:

The prophets of the Old Testament called people to remember their God and to live by God's sense of justice. They also warned of dire happenings if they did not heed God's ways. Imagine you are today's prophet. Write your prophetic statement on the newsprint.

## With the Participants

Welcome the staff to the meeting. Ask them to make a nametag and write a prophetic statement on the newsprint.

Introduce the theme of the unit, using information from the Bible Story, Bible Background, and Check Your Facts sections (pages 4-7).

Involve the staff in activities from various stations. You may choose to use the following:

- Play "Find the Story" from the Game Station (page 49).
- Read "About Elijah" from the Storytelling Station (page 78).
- Play "Widow, Tell Me the Story" from the Storytelling Station (page 75). (Encourage the leaders to become comfortable telling the story in their own words.)
- Have Sweet-Meal Muffins from the Creative Cookery Station (page 40) for a snack. Make lemonade or serve water to drink.
- Make posters describing the characteristics of a prophet. See the activity "A Prophet Needs. . ." from the Storytelling Station (page 77).
- Do the "Caring for Others in Famine and Drought" activity from the Science Station (page 69). Review the video and printed materials from Church World Service about the CROP WALKS, or review the hunger-fighting charity you have selected.

Review the Bible verses (Proverbs 3:5-6, GNT, and Psalm 46:10). Discuss how each verse relates to the story of Elijah.

Listen to the song "Be Still" from the *Elijah* MP3. Discuss ways to model good listening and quiet skills for the children.

Use the suggestions in the Closing for the Storytelling Station (page 78) as you close by reading Psalm 46.

## Resources

\* *Elijah* MP3  
CROP WALK materials from Church World Service or information about the mission project you have chosen

## Supplies

banner paper  
markers  
tape  
tables  
newsprint  
nametags  
supplies needed for the activities you choose  
cups and napkins  
MP3 player

## Note

See the individual stations for supplies you will need for specific activities. Adjust the activities as needed to fit the station options you will use.

## Resources

- \* *Elijah* MP3
- \* *Elijah* lyrics and sheet music
- Sweet-Meal Muffins from the Creative Cookery Station (page 40)
- CROP WALK: You Can Make a Difference* video from Church World Service
- Bible

## Supplies

- pledge sheets
- chart for keeping tracks of trips around the course
- tables, cups, water
- MP3 player
- TV and DVD player

# REFLECTION WEEK

Hold a mini-CROP WALK during Reflection Week. Invite others in the church to participate.

## Prepare

Make pledge sheets (or have the children make the sheets in the Computer Station) to use as the children collect pledges during the weeks leading up to Reflection Week. The children will ask people to pledge a certain amount of money for each time they walk around the mini-CROP WALK course.

Set up a mini-CROP WALK course around the outside of the church, or if weather is bad, be creative and designate a mini-CROP WALK course inside the church.

Make a chart to track the number of times each child goes around the mini-CROP WALK course.

Set up tables along the course with cups of water.

Prepare Sweet-Meal Muffins from the Creative Cookery Station.

Borrow the video *CROP WALK: You Can Make a Difference* from Church World Service. (See ordering information under "Mission Project" on page 8.)

## With the Children

As the children arrive, sing their favorite songs from the *Elijah* MP3.

Say the memory verses, Proverbs 3:5-6 (GNT) and Psalm 46:10, with the children.

**Say:** Elijah trusted God instead of believing in what he could see. Many people today live in hunger like the widow and her son did in the story of Elijah. We may not see how the little that we do can make a difference, but when we work together and follow God's lead, we can make a big difference. The money we each raise multiplies.

Let children do the mini-CROP WALK. When they finish, enjoy the Sweet-Meal Muffin snacks.

As time allows and if the children have not already seen the video, watch part or all of *CROP WALK: You Can Make a Difference*.

**Close With Prayer:** God, thank you for helping us learn how we can make a difference in other people's lives. Help us to remember to trust you and to live in hope because we know that you love us. Amen.