

Scripture



## 1 Kings 17:1-4,10-24

**1** Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.” **2** And the word of the Lord came to him: **3** “Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. **4** You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” ... **10** So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” **11** And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” **12** And she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” **13** And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. **14** For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.” **15** And she went and did as Elijah

said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. **16** The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah. **17** After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. **18** And she said to Elijah, “What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!” **19** And he said to her, “Give me your son.” And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. **20** And he cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?” **21** Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, “O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again.” **22** And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. **23** And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, “See, your son lives.” **24** And the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.”

## Unit .13

### Session .01

# The Pictures of God's Authority

## Intro Options



*Remember, this icon means there is a Leader Pack item that goes with the lesson. See Leader Pack for additional instructions.*

**Main Point:**  
**God's grace often comes  
in unexpected ways.**

## Option 1

When you're a kid you often want to eat at McDonald's because of the Happy Meal®. Kids enjoy the food, but they love the cheap toy inside even more. However, when you're a teenager you likely never ask your parents to pull into McDonald's for a Happy Meal! You want steak now! You have grown up.

A lot of people today look at the miracles in the Bible like Happy Meals—to be cherished as children but not when you grow up. These skeptics believe you should grow up and in turn view these stories as fictional. But should we discard the miracle stories of Scripture? Should we try to explain away God's miraculous provision for Elijah? Of course not! If you don't take the stories of Elijah as being historically accurate, then by extension you shouldn't take the Gospels' recording of the ministry of Jesus as historically accurate. Elijah's miraculous ministry points ahead to the Savior's, after all.

How would you describe your disposition toward the miracles recorded in the Bible?

**Rejection**

**Skepticism**

**Confident**

**Boldness**



As important as it is to affirm the wonders of Scripture, we must also not underestimate God's "ordinary provisions." Whether we get our provisions from a supermarket or bagels drop from heaven, it's the Lord who provides for us. The living God cares for us, normally through prayer and providence.

## Option 2

You'll need five pens, pencils, or small sticks. Sit so that the sticks are in front of you while your students are around you; they should be able to see you and the sticks clearly. Tell them you're going to think of a number between one and five; it's their job to guess the number. Arrange the sticks in front of you however you wish. You can make a square, a W, two rows and three columns, whatever you want. The sticks are actually a distraction that have nothing to do with what number you're thinking of (but don't tell that to the students!). After you've finished placing the sticks, discreetly hold a certain number of fingers extended on one hand (maybe put your hand against your leg, or on your side). However many fingers you have extended is the number you're thinking of. Let them guess the number, then tell them the accurate number. Repeat the process. As time goes by, make your fingers more obvious. Once students figure it out, tell them not to tell. Make your fingers increasingly more obvious until everyone has figured it out.

Debrief by telling the students the sticks were a distraction; you never actually said the sticks had anything to do with the number. They probably assumed there was a connection. In the same way, we often make assumptions about what miracles should look like. However, we'll see that sometimes God's miracles look differently than what we'd expect: for example, instead of supplying gobs of food, he consistently gives just enough food for each day.

## TEACHING PLAN

Elijah's context was one of national apostasy. During the reign of Ahab, who was married to Jezebel, the nation practiced idolatry. (1 Kings 16:29-33.) Worship of Baal, the false god of rain and fertility, was state-sponsored. God raised up Elijah, who came from an obscure place, Tishbe, to minister in this dark time.

### Read 1 Kings 17:1-4.



Elijah's name means "My God is Yahweh," an appropriate title for this spiritual leader. Elijah boldly confronted the king, proclaiming a drought (v. 1). The drought was actually a promise fulfilled. According to God's law, drought was the punishment for pagan idolatry. (Deut. 11:16-17; 28:23-24.) This is because God's people were to trust God alone for rain. If they turned to another god, then Yahweh would withhold rain. This specific judgment was very fitting since Baal was supposed to give rain. Notice also that not only will it not rain, but neither will there be dew. No one could claim "bad luck" or a "bad break." No rain and no dew demonstrated God's judgment.

#### ▪ What are some ways we try to find fulfillment apart from God?

Like Moses, Elijah fled to the east after an initial confrontation with Ahab, since he needed protection from the wicked king. He went to an inhospitable area east of the Jordan (vv. 3-5). There, Elijah drank from a brook and was fed by a raven (vv. 6-7), showing that God is sovereign over not only the rain but over all of creation as well. (Ps. 104). Further, notice that the bread and meat were provided every morning and evening. (Ex. 16:8,12-13). His needs were provided for on a daily basis.

All of this should encourage us. You can trust in God to provide for your daily needs. He might not supply you with the finest of meats every day, and He might not provide in such a miraculous way as He did with Elijah, but God nonetheless provides. No doubt the false prophets of Jezebel ate better than Elijah did, but God still provided for him. This, too, is a good lesson. Even the prophet suffered from this famine, showing he was not immune to suffering. However, he has the presence of God and the provision of God, and that is more than enough.

#### ▪ How have you seen God provide for your daily necessities, especially in a difficult season of life?

When the brook dried up (v. 7), God's provision for Elijah became more dramatic. Elijah went to a Phoenician town of Zarephath, which was Baal's territory (i.e., Jezebel's stomping grounds). Here, God promised to use an unnamed widow to provide for Elijah (vv. 8-9). Not only could Baal not stop the drought, but Yahweh's provision extended right into Baal's home turf.

### Read 1 Kings 17:10-16.



When Elijah approached this particular widow, he first asked her for some water (v. 10b). After her favorable response, he also asked her for a bit of bread (v. 11). Even though she wasn't an Israelite, she answered in the name of Elijah's God: "As the LORD your God lives." Then she told him that all she had was a handful of flour and a little jug of oil, which she had planned on using for the last meal before she and her son died (v. 12). Not exactly the best time to show up for dinner!

# COMMENTARY

**Main Point:**  
God's grace often comes  
in unexpected ways.

## 1 Kings 17

**1.** Like most of the other prophets mentioned in this book, Elijah simply appeared without any introduction. He must, however, have already been well known in Israel at the time he appeared to announce the judgment of God for the sins of Ahab and Israel (v. 1). The judgment was that there would be no rain or dew for some years as a punishment for the sins mentioned in the previous verses. Elijah must not be thought of as similar to African rainmakers. Stopping or making rain was not his main work. Rather, as a true prophet, Elijah could see or hear what the Lord was planning to do. James says that the rains stopped because the prophet prayed in faith. (Jas. 5:17-18.) The closing words of Elijah's prophecy left some hope that if the king and the people repented, the situation might change. But they did not, and Elijah had to leave and settle east of the Jordan River (1 Kings 17:2-3). By doing this he escaped death with the other prophets (1 Kings 18:4; 19:10) and had a supply of water from the Brook Kerith, which continued to flow for some time despite drought. The Lord took charge of meeting his need for food (1 Kings 18:4-6).<sup>1</sup>

**9.** Zarephath was located in Phoenicia, the heart and home of Baal worship and Jezebel's home. The story of Elijah and the widow demonstrates the Lord's sovereignty over Phoenicia as well as His grace and mercy even to Phoenician idolaters.

**10-12.** We now see that the drought has gripped even the home country of Baal, the rain-giver. Elijah met a widow and asked for just a little water and bread, but all she had was a handful of flour and a little oil (vv. 10-12). The quantities were so minimal that a few sticks sufficed to cook her food. This was the plight of a woman who was otherwise well-off enough to have a house with an extra guest room on the first floor. The verbs are ironically paired—eat and die. This was more like a funeral meal than one for sustenance. Elijah's prophetic authority now began to emerge, and the story portrayed it in two ways. First, with the command-compliance motif, Elijah directed the widow (v. 3) and she obeyed, even against the parental instinct to first attend to her son. As the Lord was to Elijah in the first episode, so Elijah was to the widow in the second episode. Second, while Elijah was the passive recipient of divine provision before, he was now an active collaborator with God. He spoke the oracle of God to make the miraculous provision possible (v. 14). As in the first episode, obedience was rewarded and the promise fulfilled (vv. 15-16).<sup>2</sup>




## 99 Essential Doctrines (p. 8, DDG)

### Miracles

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

# TEACHING PLAN

- **Share of a time when God used an unexpected person to provide for your needs? Was it convenient for them to help you during this time?**

Elijah tested the widow's faith and asked her to provide for him first, then for herself and her son (v. 13). He assured her that there would be enough for her and her son, and that her flour and oil would be sufficient to get through the drought (v. 14). The widow trusted in Elijah's promise, acted accordingly, and God provided. Every day the widow went over to her little barrel of flour and small jar of oil, and every day, there was enough to bake bread for one more day! 

The most unexpected people often find saving grace in the most unexpected places. God graciously provides daily bread to satisfy our physical hunger, and He has provided the bread of life in Jesus, who satisfies our spiritual hunger. Let us, as His beggars, tell other beggars where to find bread.

- **Have you ever seen God's provision come in unexpected, even miraculous ways? Explain.**

**Read 1 Kings 17:17-24.**



Up to this point, God's miraculous provision had kept everyone alive. But then we read of the widow's son becoming ill and dying (v. 17). The widow blamed Elijah for this tragedy (v. 18). But then Elijah took the boy in his arms (v. 19) and cried out to God in a prayer of lament (v. 20). Next, Elijah stretched himself upon the child three times, crying out to God to raise the child from the dead (v. 21). The Lord heard Elijah's prayer and brought the child back to life (v. 22). After the boy was raised, Elijah took the child and delivered him to his mother (v. 23). The widow affirmed her trust in Elijah's word and confessed her faith in the living God (v. 24).

- **When you face a trial, what is your first instinct?**

**Express Frustration**

**Panic/Worry**


**Make a Plan**

**Pray**



Stories of death surround us. At any moment, a loved one could take his or her last breath. Like in this story, just when things seemed to be working out wonderfully, death took someone. In this case, it's a precious child. But there is hope beyond the grave for every grieving believer: God raises the dead. God gives us a sign of His resurrection power in this Old Testament story.

In Luke 7:11-17, we read of a fascinating story of Jesus, which contains strong echoes of this scene in 1 Kings. However, there is one great difference: Elijah cried out for God's help in prayer. Jesus simply told him to get up (Luke 7:14). Elijah was great, but Jesus is greater.

God's power to raise the dead was demonstrated once for all in the resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 1:4). He has swallowed up death in victory (1 Cor. 15:54-57). Now, God gives life to spiritually dead people (Eph. 2:1-10), and we await the glorious, final resurrection when the dead in Christ will rise one day in the future (1 Thess. 4:16-18). 

# COMMENTARY

**Main Point:**  
God's grace often comes  
in unexpected ways.

## 1 Kings 17

**14-16.** We should marvel not only at God's provision but also at God's compassion and grace. We see His compassion in the fact that God cared for this poor widow. Throughout Scripture, we find God's concern for the vulnerable. (Ps. 68:5.)

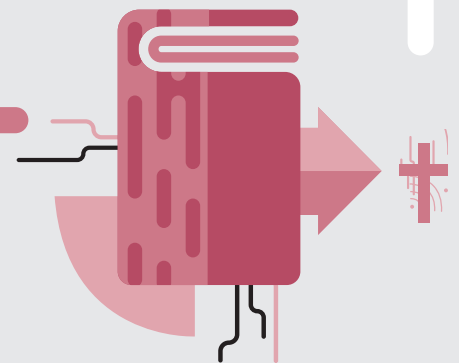
We also marvel at God's grace, as we see how His grace reached an outsider. God is not a tribal deity but the Lord over the nations. In response to Jesus' hometown rejecting Him (Luke 4:22, 28-30), Jesus used this story of the widow of Zarephath, an outsider, as a warning to the locals who were listening. He was the promised one who had come to save the world in fulfillment of Genesis 12:3.

**21.** Elijah stretched himself on the child, thereby seemingly transferred life from himself to the sick one. Regardless of the method used, the important fact is that God raised the boy from the dead. The child revived because Yahweh heard Elijah's plea, not because of the prophet's prowess. Yahweh is God, not Baal, not Elijah.

Still, the miracle helped the woman know that Elijah was a man who represented and was sent by the Lord. She understood that the same God who provided the oil provided life for her son. Baal may be dead, but Yahweh is not, nor is her son.... Death cannot thwart Yahweh's purposes.<sup>3</sup>

## (p. 10, DDG) Christ Connection

The miracles Elijah performed revealed that he was a prophet of the one true God and that the Lord's words were true. In a greater way, the miracles Jesus performed revealed that He is the Son of God, the true Word of God (John 20:30-31).



# Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

## Head



**What are some of the things that attract a person's loyalty in our current culture, thus compromising their loyalty to God?**

**How can we show others that loyalty and faithfulness to God are better than these worldly loyalties?**

## Heart



**Can you name any "false gods" in our day that consume our time and effort (in reference to both Christians and non-Christians)?**

**Why do these things take away so much of our time and effort?**

## Hands



**How can Elijah's faith and prayer life instruct and inspire us today?**

**What are some ways you can strengthen your prayer life this week?**

## **Main Point:** **God's grace often comes in unexpected ways.**



### **Head**

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The cultural context of Elijah's day is a reminder that no matter what century or culture you are in, one thing is for certain across the ages—humans will always worship, even if God isn't the object of their worship and devotion. That's why we see humans sacrificing their lives in worship of many different things today: hot-topic causes, sports, celebrities, politics, money, possessions, fashion, and so on. Though the modern Western mind sometimes thinks that worship was something done by ancient and ignorant people, we all end up in a worship-like state of something when we sacrifice our lives on the altar of that thing. This was what the people of Israel did during the time of Elijah, and it is what we do in very subtle ways today when we turn from God.

Spiritual disloyalty to God ultimately leads to spiritual drought and destruction. We constantly look for peace, love, and grace in things that are incapable of delivering those to us in a lasting sense. And when we do that, we end up worshipping the created instead of the Creator. It is only when our eyes are opened that we can clearly see that only the true God, and not the things He has made, is the source of all we need and desire.



### **Heart**

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When the people of God spend the majority of their time and energy on the things of this world, they quickly discover that the desire to join in God's ministry to others is reduced. This is because false idols use up our time and energy and deplete us, often demanding much of our physical and spiritual resources. The true God is the One who builds us back up and ministers to us, so that we have the potential to be effective witnesses to His power and grace.



### **Hands**

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One of the things we are challenged with in this account is the way Elijah responded when suffering and conflict arises. Instead of trying to fix the situation himself or shutting down out of anger, Elijah turned to God in prayer knowing that only God is able to fix what is broken. Of course, it is Elijah's faith in God that lead him to have a faithful prayer life. He was confidently able to turn to God in prayer because of his confident faith in God's character. And it is here we are challenged to emulate Elijah today, in both faith and in a life of obedient prayer.