

SUNDAY NIGHT

TELL/INTRODUCTION

Circumstances and situations in our lives can often be of a “stormy” nature. Sometimes, it can feel like all we do is survive one storm, just in time to experience the next storm.

In some ways, a mission trip can be like a string of storms. The days will be long, the work will be tough, things won’t go right and frustrations will rise. Although most of us know each other’s names, as a group we are not yet a *team*. So there will be the bumping into each other that comes with getting to know each other, learning to live with each other and making decisions together – that can also be stormy.

To reduce the effect of the storms that each day will bring, one of the things we’re going to do at the start of the day and at the end of the day is provide some time for us as a group to look at and think about what happened during the day. And, we’re going to use a (different) Bible story each day to help provide some context and structure to what we’re looking at, thinking about and sharing.

Every day (except today) after breakfast, we’ll read a short Bible story. There will be a few questions about the story, and then there will be a “challenge for the day” that encourages us to look for certain circumstances and occurrences within the “storms” and routines of the day. Overall, morning devotions will not take more than 15 minutes each morning.

Then, in the evening, we’ll have a longer time together where we’ll share some things that we experienced in the day and then we’ll review our observations within the context of the Challenge of the Day.

For tonight, we have a little bit of a different format than the rest of the week. We’ll read the Bible scripture, discuss it and then use that discussion to influence our sharing about today.

TELL (brief intro to the story)

- Storms (both weather related and life related) appear somewhat frequently in the Bible stories.
- We’re going to look at one of the stories right now.
- The character in today’s story is named Elijah and he’s a prophet who lived about 800 years before Jesus was born.
- He’s just won a competition against the prophets in another religion, but now the Queen of Israel (Queen Jezebel) wants to kill Elijah.
- Elijah does not like this development (who would!?) and has gone into hiding.
- He’s hiding in a cave in the wilderness and he’s been praying.
- Let’s see what happens next.

READ 1 Kings 19:11-16

11 [God said to Elijah], "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking 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; **12** and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. **13** When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" **14** Elijah answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." **15** Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazeal as king over Aram. **16** Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place.

ASK (answers in parenthesis)

- In verse 11, after God says that God is going to pass by – what passes by FIRST? (a great wind, an earthquake, and a forest fire or dry lightning...some sort of fire)
- For a generic title for these three events, let's call them storms. Did Elijah hear God in those three storms? (No – the story goes so far as to say that God is not in the storms)
- In verse 12, what does Elijah experience after the three storms? (sheer silence)
- In that sheer silence, what does Elijah hear? (God's voice)
- Note that God's voice is 99% likely to be INSIDE Elijah's mind – not an outloud, disembodied voice. What does God ask Elijah? (why are you here, Elijah?)
- What does God tell Elijah to do after Elijah has shared his concerns? (God gives him tasks that address Elijah's concerns – the anoint a new king [who in theory would be a king who would seek God] and to get a student, which means Elijah won't be the last of the prophets anymore)

TELL

- Storms are powerful things that force us to react to them.
- They destroy stuff, they scare us, they disrupt (air and car) traffic patterns, and we have little to no control over them.
- In the story we just read, we see that what God desires for us *is NOT* in those storms.
- God does not desire for Elijah to be the last prophet or for the people of Israel to lose contact with God.
- But if Elijah doesn't listen for and in the silence, then the only force/power that Elijah can respond to is the storm itself.
- And this is why the silence part in the story is so important. It is in that silence, in the quiet time, that Elijah becomes aware of God's desire for him and for the people of Israel.
- The same thing is true for us.
- There are stressors (i.e. pressure systems) that will occur this week that WILL RESULT in storms (possibly internal, possible external) this week.

- They might be storms of anger or frustration or sadness or things not going right or things getting lost.
- So our challenge *for the week* is to remember to do what Elijah did – that we make time and space to listen for God’s voice in the midst of the storms.
- As a group, that’s what we’ll be doing for 15 minutes every morning and 45 minutes every evening.

SHARING

- We’re going to go around the circle, now, and share with each other one thing that you did today that you keep thinking about, that surprised you or that made you uncomfortable.
- And then, like Elijah did in the story with God, share one thing you are concerned about regarding this upcoming week.
- When it’s your turn, start by saying your name.
- **RECOMMENDED FORMAT:** Adult leader starts. And then you proceed around the circle. Everyone is expected to share an answer to at least the first question. If someone can’t think of something, pass them by and then come back after everyone else has shared (“we’ll let you think about it some more and then come back to you, ok?”).

CLOSING PRAYER

Recommended format: Adult leader will start the prayer, and then say something along the lines of, “At this time, God, we lift to you our joys and concerns both outloud and silently.” This then provides opportunity for everyone in the group to pray. When it feels like enough time has passed, Adult leader then closes the prayer. **NOTE:** The introductory part of the prayer by the Adult leader can be pretty succinct – some naming of joys and thanksgiving. The closing part of the prayer can be a place where the Adult leader can lift up the concerns of the group that were raised in the sharing time. The closing part of the prayer can also be a good place to give thanks to God for the individuals in the group.

NOTE to adults: Overall Topic for the Week is “Increasing One’s Awareness”