

# Middle School Sunday School Lessons by



**Year 3: Session 2** – Getting to Know Elijah the Prophet

**Class 4: 1 Kings 18:21-29; 36-41** – Elijah competes with 450 Baal prophets

## CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- This lesson discusses the story of Elijah and his competition with the 450 Baal prophets using the context of:
  - Certain things work/fit/go well together – like Israel and God
  - Introducing something that is not like the other things can disrupt/stop the other things from working together – which is what happens to Israel when they introduce the Baal religion to their lives.
  - Elijah (with God’s help) removes that thing that doesn’t work (Baal/Baal prophets) and then it rains – this is similar to how our fairy tales end: The wicked witch dies and the land is restored to it’s rightful colors.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Movie clip and TV and player of the clip
- A large plastic or wooden spoon
- Some sort of table or tall flat surface for the spoon to sit on (I prefer a bar stool)

## THE LESSON

### OPENING PRAYER

### OPENING QUESTION

- Here’s the opening question for today’s class. One of the teachers will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, the teacher will answer first.
- Once the teacher answers the question, we’ll go around the circle.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- Here’s this week’s question: *What do you, or what does someone you know, do to get the attention of others?*

### OPENING ACTIVITY Which One Doesn’t Belong

- We’re going to split into two groups
- Set up looks a lot like family feud ([link to show example](#)).

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- Each team sends up one team member for each question.
- Leader will read the list of four words outloud.
- The team representative that grabs the spoon first gets to answer first (this is crude, but is much easier than creating a buzzer system)
- BE SURE TO NOT HIT YOUR HEADS TOGETHER
- A team representative may grab the spoon at any point once the teacher starts speaking.
- Once the spoon is picked up, the teacher will stop speaking.
- If the team representative answers correctly, then that team gets a point.
- If incorrect, then the team representative must replace the spoon and cannot answer again.
- If there are more words yet to be spoken, the teacher will, at this point, continue speaking the list of words.
- If the other team representative answers correctly, their team will be credited with TWO points (scoring is based on that whole “the last shall be first” type of thing)
- Any questions?

## DO OPENING ACTIVITY

- Here’s the questions (answers are in bold)

**Note:** Depending on how much time you have, doing all of the questions is probably unlikely. Will want to keep this activity to a total of 10 minutes which includes the explanation of it. Be sure, though, to include #'s 6, 10 & 21

1. necklace, **key chain**, ring, bracelet
2. **pants**, socks, shoes, sandals
3. steps, **basement**, ladder, stairs
4. bag, jar, **glue**, box
5. **pat**, spot, dot, cot (this one’s tricky: *pat* does not rhyme)
6. eggs, bacon, **orange juice**, pancakes (a liquid/drink instead of food)
7. bat, pumpkin, ghost, **circle**
8. sister, brother, **friend**, cousin
9. newspaper, **pencil**, book, magazine
10. spoon, fork, **plate**, knife
11. **dollar bill**, quarter, dime, nickel
12. coffee, orange juice, **apple**, water
13. **look**, eyes, feet, heart
14. breakfast, **cereal**, dinner, lunch
15. jelly beans, snickers, **pretzels**, M&Ms
16. **vest**, jacket, coat, sweatshirt (because a vest doesn’t have sleeves)
17. pineapple, **licorice**, orange, cherry
18. December, **Monday**, February, June
19. **dirt**, flower, grass, tree
20. **boat**, airplane, helicopter, jet
21. engine, transmission, fuel injection, **sand**

## ASK

- Was it mostly easy to tell which word didn't belong?
- Where there a few times where the last word changed what you thought the answer was going to be?
  - For example, with *spoon, fork, **plate**, knife* – at first you might be thinking “things on a dining room table” but then “knife” causes you to think, “OH! Its utensils! So....plate doesn't belong! Plate doesn't belong!” Another example would be: *eggs, bacon, **orange juice**, pancakes* -- at first you might be thinking “breakfast items” but then when pancakes shows up, then you're like “They're ALL breakfast foods...so that can't be it...but wait...orange juice is NOT a food!”
- So, in those cases, you needed all the information available in order to know what didn't fit.

## TELL

- Sometimes, like with *spoon, fork, **plate**, knife* – even though one of the four isn't the same type of thing, all four of the items work together.
- So when only three items work together and the fourth one really does NOT work with the other three, like: *engine, transmission, fuel injection, **sand*** then it was easier to guess which one didn't belong.
- Because if that fourth thing DID belong, then the other three things wouldn't work very well at all.
- In today's scripture story, we see how one thing doesn't belong...and once it is removed, everything else works better.

## TRANSITION & INTRODUCTION to Scripture Reading

- Today, we start a set of stories about the prophet Elijah.
- Elijah started his ministry around 860 B.C which was about 200 years after Samuel anointed King Saul (which was around 1040 B.C.).
- Elijah just “shows up.” We have no stories about him as a kid or where he came from. One day, he shows up and starts speaking against King Ahab – a king of Israel – who was an incredibly evil king.
- One of the things that King Ahab and his wife, Queen Jezebel did was encourage and support the religion of Baal.\*\* They put up temples for Baal and had prophets for Baal.\*\*
- Baal was the name of a god from another religion from a neighboring land.
- One of the practices of “worshiping” Baal was to sacrifice (read: Kill) young children
- Say what you want about killing cows as sacrifice, killing children is even worse, right?
- So why are the Israelites doing this?
- Remember how the Israelites wanted a king just like their neighbors?
- Now they want the same gods as their neighbors.
- But that's not who the Israelites are supposed to be. They are not supposed to be just like everyone else.
- They are supposed to be the people who show the world how life is better when you live it God's way.
- So God has sent Elijah to help get the people of Israel back on track.
- So when Elijah first shows up, he announces that a drought and famine will fall upon the land because of King Ahab.

- A number of years later, Elijah shows up again to tell King Ahab that the end of the drought/famine is near, but first they need to have a competition between gods.
- Today's story is about that competition:

**READ** 1 Kings 18:21-29; 36-41 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing. 22 Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the LORD's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. 23 Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. 24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire--he is God." Then all the people said, "What you say is good." 25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire." 26 So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "O Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. 27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." 28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. 29 Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. 39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!" 40 Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there. 41 And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain."

**ASK** (*answers are in parenthesis*)

- So, what happened? (Elijah had a competition with the Baal prophets. Elijah (with God's help) won the competition and killed the Baal prophets. And then, rain was on its way – the drought had ended!)
- So why have the competition? (To fully get the people's attention – like Elijah has said in verse 21 "How long are you going to waver between two opinions?")
- Did it work – did the competition get the attention of the Israelites? (yes it did)
- And as a result, at least for the moment, because the people stopped wavering between two opinions, and chose God, how did the Israelites express their "disapproval" of Baal and the Baal prophets? (killed the prophets!)
- Do you think this was too harsh?

- Once the competition was won and the Baal prophets were “removed,” what does Elijah tell King Ahab in verse 41? (there is sound of heavy rain)
- And what do you think that means? (It means the drought has ended; the land is going to have what it needs to grow crops again)

## TELL

- So what we see in today’s story is how King Ahab and the Israelites introduced something into their lives that didn’t belong. (Baal and Baal prophets)
- And because Baal didn’t belong, it was messing everything else up. Even to the point of the land and weather not working correctly anymore.
  - Just like engine, transmission, oil, sand, right? The sand messes everything up. It does not belong.
- So what do you do with something that does not belong and messes everything up when you include it? You remove it.
- So the story has the prophets killed. That’s an extreme way to remove something that doesn’t belong.
- But this idea shows up in the New Testament, too. Jesus at one point says, “If your eye causes you to sin, poke it out. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.”
- All of this is harsh language meant to get our attention. The message, though, is pretty simple: If something doesn’t belong, stop including it.
- And in today’s story, we see that God helps the people know what to include and what not to include by answering Elijah’s prayer with fire.
- Now, TO BE VERY CLEAR: We are not condoning violence. We are not encouraging you to kill people. EVER. But we are saying that there ARE ideas and ways of thinking that DO interfere with God’s better way of living that are best removed from one’s own personal life if you wish to live God’s better way.

## INTRODUCE MOVIE CLIP

- This removal of things that do not belong is not a new idea to us.
- Just think of Disney movies and fairy tales where the removal of the bad person makes the land green and sunshiny again.
- Or, like today’s movie clip, where the people stop listening to a bad idea and then reject the person who is encouraging the bad idea leads to the land being able to grow trees again
- The plot of the movie is that a corporation has built a city that sells air. And in order to sell air, it has to kill all the trees. And the town has gone along with this idea – thinks it’s a good idea.
- So we’re going to watch the end of the movie where the town finally wakes up and says no to this bad idea.

## VIEW MOVIE CLIP of The Lorax

### TELL

- So just like the Elijah story that we read today, there’s a crowd that seems to be of two opinions
- And then there’s the short guy who is like the Baal prophets, sharing ideas that interfere with the better way to live.

- And finally we have the boy who is like Elijah.
- Eventually, the boy helps the people see that the short guy and his ideas do not belong.
- Instead of killing the false prophet, they send him away with a....rocket hat.
- So, as we can see, the Elijah story lives on.
- It keeps being lived out and retold over and over again.
- However, unlike the fairy tales and movies, though, the Israelites do not live happily ever after.
- We'll talk more about why that is in next week's class.

## CLOSING PRAYER

*\*\*Footnote from Introduction to Scripture Section :*

Baalism involved the worship of Molech (the Ammonite counterpart to Baal), who demanded CHILD-SACRIFICE. "The central act of this worship was the sacrifice of the first-born of every woman's body. According to one tradition, there was an opening at the back of the brazen idol, and after a fire was made within it, each parent had to come and with his own hands place his first-born child (on the) white-hot, outstretched arms of Molech. According to this tradition the parent was not allowed to show emotion, and drums were beaten so that the babies' cries could not be heard as it died in the hands of Molech." [http://www.xenos.org/teachings/?teaching=1215#\\_ftn1](http://www.xenos.org/teachings/?teaching=1215#_ftn1)