

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by



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

Class 5: 1 Kings 19:1-4; 9-16 – God is not in the storms

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Exciting, top-of-the-mountain spiritual experiences (like Elijah’s “win” against the Baal prophets) are often followed by “valley” moments where everything seems to go wrong and a person becomes easily and strongly discouraged (like Elijah does in this lesson’s scripture story)
- It is difficult to see or hear God in the storms of life, which is why we have to practice listening for God in the still, calm moments (and have to cultivate/make room for this time)
- God’s response to our discouragement may not be what we’d expect. Which is why we have to listen instead of guess.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Movie clip, youtube clip – both of which are on the rfour.org site
- TV and player to show the clips

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: *Can you think of a time when you either wanted to quit something or did quit something? What was it and why did you want to quit?*

TRANSITION to Video Clip

- One reason we may want to quit something is because we thought we were doing really well just to find out that we were actually doing very badly.
- This happens quite a lot in the scripture stories -- it’s often portrayed as someone who is on a mountain top (when things are going well) and then goes down the mountain and experiences difficulty.

- These “mountain top experiences” being followed by “bottom of the valley experiences” happen in regular life as well.
- In today’s video we’re going to see an example of this.
- The clip is from Iron Man 3. In it, the main character, Tony Stark, has just injected some remote GPS-like transponders into his body that will then cause his Iron Man suit to attach to him automatically.
- We’re now going to watch his first attempt at trying this new technology out.
- Let’s see what happens.

WATCH Video Clip

ASK / TELL

- So at first, did the suit fit to Tony Stark very well? (Sort of. It was a little bit of a bumpy process)
- But once he slowed down the flying parts, the suit really started to attach itself to Tony pretty well, didn’t it? (yep)
- Right after he successfully “catches” the face mask, what does Tony Stark say? (I’m the best!)
- Then what happens? (the back-side piece that missed him at the beginning of the scene comes flying in from behind and knocks Tony down and knocks the whole suit off of him)
- This clip is a perfect example of what having a mountain top experience followed by a bottom of the valley experience looks like. It can be quite devastating.

TRANSITION to scripture reading

- Today, we start our second story about the prophet Elijah.
- Remember, Elijah lived about 200 years after the prophet Samuel and King David (and about 800 years before Jesus did).
- The Israelite king that Elijah has to deal with was King Ahab. He was the worst king that the Israelites had ever had.
- One thing that Ahab and Queen Jezebel did was introduce a neighboring country’s religion of Baal to the Israelites, for instance. This religion included child sacrifice. So if you’re a first born...the Baal religion would’ve had your parents kill you as a sacrifice to their gods. Nice, eh?
- In our previous lesson, with God’s help, Elijah had himself a successful day against the Baal prophets. He won a competition against them; the Baal prophets were gone, the Israelites were possibly returning to their ways of paying attention to God and the drought was about to end (rain was on the way).
- Which meant things were going good for Elijah
- But, despite these successes, as we’ll see in today’s story, Elijah is about to experience a set-back, just like Tony Stark did, only on a more serious note.

READ Scripture: 1 Kings 19:1-4;9-16 *(recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse)*

1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." 3 Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there. 4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."

9 At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" **10** He 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." **11** He said, "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** He 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 Hazael 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 are in parenthesis)

- So, overall, what happened? (Jezebel threatens Elijah's life. Elijah panics and wants to die. Storms flash before Elijah. Afterwards, in the following silence, Elijah hears instructions from God)
- What does Jezebel do in verse 2 after she hears the news about Elijah winning the competition against the Baal prophets? (sends a message to Elijah telling him that she is going to kill him)
- What is Elijah's response to this message in verse 3 and 4? (He is afraid and runs away. Then, he wants to die)
- In verse 10, why does Elijah say he wants to die? (because even though Elijah has done his job as a prophet, the Israelites do not pay attention to God and want to kill those who talk about God. Also, Elijah understands himself to be the last prophet, and is now a wanted man – the odds are against him and they are too great)
- In verse 11 and 12, what things pass by Elijah that God is not in? (a great wind that split mountains and broke rocks; an earthquake; a great fire)
- When is Elijah actually able to hear God? (in verse 13, when there is a "sheer silence.")
- After Elijah repeats his complaint, what does God tell Elijah to do? (v 15-16: anoint two new kings and go get a student, named Elisha)
- Do God's instructions to Elijah surprise you? Why/why not?

TELL

- When we experience set-backs right after a success, we can often be caught off-guard and the set-back might feel even worse than if we were just having a "bad" day.
- That's certainly what happens with Elijah in today's story.
- He first had this powerful experience winning against the Baal prophets, and was feeling really good, was "riding high" so to speak.
- And then, when he has this powerful threat levied against him by the queen of the country, he is brought really low. So low that he wants to die. This is quite a shift in outlook for Elijah.
- So, what these "storms" in verse 11 and 12 of wind, earthquakes and fire are meant to do are to remind both Elijah and us (the readers) that no matter how big the situation, be it good or bad, the presence of God is not to be confused with the actual events we experience.
- That's why we are told that God is not in the storms.
- So, once the distraction of the storms are gone, then Elijah is able to hear God's direction and instructions.

- What we see about God’s instructions is that they are about giving Elijah hope about the future and actions to make that hope come true: King Ahab won’t always be king. And Elijah won’t always be the only prophet.

TRANSITION to Activity

- We will all have big storms in our life
- And those big storms will often distract us or keep us from hearing and knowing God’s presence while they happen.
- For an example of what this might look like, let’s do the following activity.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- We’re going to watch another video
- And we’re going to do exactly what the video says: We’re going to very carefully count the number of passes that take place between the players with white shirts.
- While we are watching the video, do not yell out the answer or say anything to distract your fellow students
- After the video, we’ll compare answers and see who counted correctly.

DO ACTIVITY – view video here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo> *Be sure to stop the video before the video talks about the gorilla.*

ASK

- So who counted 10 or more passes?
- How about 11 or more? 12 or more? 13 or more? 14 or more? 15 or more? 16 or more?
- Okay. Good. Now...who here saw the gorilla?
- Yes! There *was* a gorilla – let’s watch the rest of the clip

SHOW the rest of the clip

TELL

- Just like some of us were so focused on the counting of the passes that we couldn’t see the gorilla, so too do we get so focused on the storms that we can’t see or hear God.
- This is why we need to give ourselves times of silence, where there are no distractions, so that we can refocus on God and be better able to hear what God is saying us to help us out.
- And, if we get really good at focusing on God during the silence, that will help us get better at focusing on God during the storms so that we’re not so discouraged afterwards.
- But that is really difficult. Because, as we saw, even Elijah got discouraged, right?
- In the next lesson, we will learn about Elijah’s new student, Elisha.

CLOSING PRAYER