

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

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

- Some way to play and show movie clip on rfour.org site for this lesson (from *Frozen*)
- 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 start today with an activity
- We’re going to split into two groups and do a “family feud-like” quiz

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- Each team will send a team member to the front of the room to answer a question.
- Between the two team representatives is this stool with a big plastic soup spoon on it. This is your buzzer!
- I/the teacher will read a list of four words outloud.
- The idea is to identify which of the four words do not belong
- The team representative that grabs the spoon first gets to answer first (this is a somewhat crude, but much easier version of a family feud-like 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.
- AGAIN, THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT: BE SURE TO NOT HIT HEADS WHEN BOTH OF YOU ARE REACHING FOR THE SPOON
- Once the spoon is picked up, the teacher will stop speaking.
- Team representative with the spoon gives their answer. If answer is incorrect, then the team representative must replace the spoon and cannot answer again (for that question).
- The other team representative gets to answer next, but if there are more words yet to be spoken, the teacher will, at this point, continue speaking the list of words.
- If the second 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) and the team representatives return to their team and new representatives go up front.
- If the first team representative answers correctly, then that team gets ONE point and the team representatives return to their team and new representatives go up front.
- 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. You 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.
- But, 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 shouldn't be included with the others.
- Because if that fourth thing *was* included, then the other three things wouldn't work very well at all: Everything would break.
- In today's scripture story, we will see how one thing is included in the Israelites lives that doesn't belong and is messing things up.
- AND, we'll see how once that thing 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 – the current king of Israel – who was an incredibly bad 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.** (see end of lesson for more info about Baal)
- Baal was the name of a god from another religion from a neighboring land.
- One of the practices of “worshipping” Baal was to sacrifice (meaning: *kill*) young children
- On top of that, there's been a drought in the land
- Elijah had told King Ahab previous to this story, that due to his choices, God was bringing drought to the land.

- So Elijah has returned to King Ahab. The drought is in full effect and as God's prophet, Elijah in today's story is challenging the Baal prophets to a competition to see which god is better so that the Israelites will stop wavering about which god to worship.
- Let's see what happens.

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*)

- Is there anything you find interesting or weird about this story? (you don't necessarily need to answer what they notice – sometimes just agree with a, “yep, that’s interesting” or a, “Yeah, I find that to be weird too”)
- Verse 21 – What is Elijah telling the people to do? (pick one god instead of waver between two)
- Verse 24 – What is the actual competition that Elijah suggests? (whichever prophet's sacrifice catches fire first -- and on its own – will prove which prophet represents the one true god)
- Verse 26-29 – What do the Baal prophets do to get Baal's attention? (they danced, they shouted, they cut themselves – maybe more extreme than some of our answers from opening question, eh?)
- Did it work, did they get Baal's attention? (No)
- Verse 36-37 -- What does Elijah do? (he prays, but in a calm way. No dancing, no shouting, no cutting of himself)
- Verse 38 -- Does it work? (Yes, fire falls from the sky)

- Verse 39 – What did the Israelites think -- did the competition convince them? (Yes, at least in that moment)
- Verse 40 – What happens to the Baal prophets? (They are seized and then killed)
- Do you think that 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 is soon to end; the land is going to have what it needs to grow crops again)

TELL

- In a lot of ways, today’s story reads a lot like how we wished life always went, doesn’t it?
- There’s a bad person (King Ahab) who gets away with things, but there’s one person who stands up to him.
- For a little while, it looks like the bad guy is going to get away with being who he is, but then the good guy challenges the bad guy and all the bad guy’s henchmen (in this case, the Baal prophets)
- Then the good guy wins and all the bad guys are removed...well almost all the bad guys since King Ahab remains king.
- The story ends with all the people rejoicing and the land is restored to its previous glory
- That’s certainly a way to read the story, isn’t it?
- But instead of thinking about “good” vs “bad,” I want to encourage us to think of the story being about what happens when a thing that doesn’t belong is included with things that are working together.
- 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.
- This is just like the *engine, transmission, oil, sand* example from earlier, 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 it is included? You remove it. You place it elsewhere.
- So the story has the prophets killed. That’s an extreme way to remove something that doesn’t belong.
- The message, though, is pretty simple: If something doesn’t belong, stop including it.
- 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.
- In other words, you don’t have to kill things that don’t belong, but you *do* have to remove them and place them elsewhere.

INTRODUCE MOVIE CLIP

- In today’s story, there is a realization by the people to turn to God and turn away from Baal.
- That realization leads to rain and a renewal of the land.
- This idea of renewal happening once people realize and act on what’s best for them is not a new thing.
- For instance, in today’s movie clip that we’re going to watch, Elsa realizes that protecting herself (with the cold) is no good for her or her people.

- But she doesn't realize this until her sister, Anna, gives up her life (or so it seems) to save her.
- Let's see what happens once Elsa understands what should be included and what should not be included.

VIEW MOVIE CLIP of *Frozen*

TELL

- So just like in the story that we read today, we see how the inclusion of things that don't belong (Baal or in the case of the movie, cold and snow) in certain places can make that land function incorrectly and hurt the people who live in those places.
- God encourages us to let go of those things that we include in our life, but don't work with the other things in our life.
- Sometimes, that message has to let go has to be really loud and forceful before we can hear it.
- For Elsa, her sister had to give her life to save Elsa's life before Elsa could understand that she had to let go of using the cold to protect herself.
- Elijah had to have a sacrifice showdown with 450 Baal prophets before the Israelites could understand to let go of Baal.
- And when the people have these realizations and remove what doesn't belong, then the other things can start to work well again and we can all live happily ever after...
- ...however, unlike the fairy tales and movies, 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 :*

“The god or gods called Baal normally required the sacrifice of children, often the first-born male child, by sacrifice by fire. It has been suggested that the famous story of Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac, when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son and then forbade the sacrifice at the last moment, was told by the ancients as a dramatic and instructive narrative which commanded the Hebrews not to follow the pagan cults of the land. It was as if to say that even the great patriarch himself did not sacrifice his son...and so, too, good Hebrews must not follow the practice of the people of the land however tempted they were.”

<https://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com/2007/01/11/baal-ashtoreth-and-molech-gods-old-testament-rivals/>