

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

Year 3: Session 2 – Getting to Know Elijah the Prophet
Class 6: 2 Kings 2:1-14 – Elisha, Elijah, and the chariot of fire

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Perseverance – Elisha is not dissuaded by Elijah or the other prophets – nor is he afraid to ask for too big of a thing. And because he perseveres, he stays with Elijah all the way and receives double Elijah’s spirit
- Why to persevere – If we don’t give up on God, if we keep seeking God and being in relationship with God, despite obstacles and difficulties, then we experience an increase of God’s spirit that we can then share with others. And if we keep persevering, then a pretty significant increase in understanding of God in the up and coming generations will take place.
- Highlight the similarities between this story and the ascension of Jesus story

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Some way to play and show movie clip on rfour.org site for this lesson (from *Despicable Me*)
- Warheads candy – or another very sour candy that eventually turns sweet (these are not easy-to-find candies. I can usually find them at the dollar store or sometimes at Walmart. Be sure to buy the hard candies (not the chewy kind) if buying Warheads. Plan for at least two pieces per person in the class.
 - *Warning:* They ARE sour and some students will gag on them (not badly, but enough that they’ll spit it out). Have a wastebasket handy for such an occasion.
 - *Optional:* A camera to film the students’ faces as they eat the warheads.

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: *Would you rather receive one million dollars right this minute or 1 penny that is doubled every day for 30 days (i.e. first day is one penny, second day is two pennies, third day is four pennies, fourth day is 8 pennies, etc).*
- *[Once everyone has given their answer, share with the class the total amount of money they would’ve received if they had chosen the doubling of a penny option: On day 7 = \$0.64 On day 14 =*

\$81.92 On day 21 = 10,485.76 On day 28 = 1,342,177.28 On the 30th day, you would receive a total of: **\$5,368,709.12**]

TRANSITION to Video Clip

- In the last two classes, we've been talking about the prophet Elijah.
- We'll wrap up our session about Elijah with today's story about him.
- Except, it's not just about him. It's also about his student, Elisha.
- And in today's story, we learn something about Elisha. We learn that he has the ability to persevere.
- Perseverance is when you keep doing something despite the difficulty of the thing you are doing.
- Sometimes the difficulty is so high that you might be pretty sure that you'll never succeed – but if you choose to keep trying, then you are practicing perseverance
- To help us think about what this perseverance might look like, let's watch the following movie clip from the movie, "Despicable Me."
- In it, the main character, "Gru," is trying to break into his arch-nemesis' fortress to steal his shrink-ray.
- Let's see if Gru successful on his first or even second attempt

WATCH Video Clip

ASK

- Was Gru able to break in and steal the shrink ray on his first attempt? (No)
- How about on his second attempt? (No)
- Did he keep trying despite his previous failures? (yes, he did)
- Did he keep trying the same approach or different approaches? (different)
- Was he *ever* successful at his goal in this clip? (Nope)
- Despite his failures, was he ready to give up by the end of the clip? (No, not at all)

TRANSITION TO SCRIPTURE STORY

- Gru's determination despite all his setbacks is a good example of what perseverance can look like.
- In our previous lesson, we saw that Elijah didn't have much perseverance in him.
- Things were going badly for him (the Israelites weren't listening to him, there were no other prophets like him, the queen wanted him dead) and he was ready to just give up because of those difficulties.
- But, Elijah took his despair to God in prayer and one of the things that Elijah heard was that he was to go and call a student by the name of Elisha.
- In between that story and today's story, Elisha agrees to be Elijah's student. And for at least four years, Elisha went where Elijah went and did what Elijah did (very similar to how the disciples followed Jesus).
- Today's story, then, is about Elisha and Elijah saying goodbye to each other and Elisha taking over for Elijah.
- Let's see what happens.

READ 2 Kings 2:1-14 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

1 Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. **2** Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. **3** The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent." **4** Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. **5** The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the Lord will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent." **6** Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. **7** Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. **8** Then Elijah took

his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground. **9** When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." **10** He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." **11** As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. **12** Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. **13** He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. **14** He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

ASK (*answers are in parenthesis*)

- Is there anything you find interesting or weird about this story? [*to teachers: You don't necessarily need to answer what they notice or have questions about – sometimes just agree with a, "yep, that's interesting" or a, "Yeah, I find that to be weird, too" works*]
- Verse 1 – What is God planning to do? (Take Elijah to heaven in a whirlwind – kinda weird, yeah?)
- Verse 2 – What does Elijah tell Elisha? (to "stay here")
- Verse 2 still – Does Elisha listen? (No)
- Verse 3 – What do the prophets in Bethel want to tell Elisha? (That God is taking Elijah)
- Verse 4 – What does Elijah tell Elisha, again? (to "stay here")
- Verse 4 still – And does Elisha listen this time? (No)
- In verse 6 and 7, the same pattern of events happens for a third time but then once they get to the Jordan river, what does Elijah do in verse 8? (took his mantel – like a thick scarf – and used it to part the water of the Jordan river)
- Verse 9 – What does Elijah ask of Elisha? ("What can I do for you before I go?")
- So there were a lot of opportunities for Elisha to leave Elijah alone. But, if Elisha had not persevered with staying with Elijah, do you think Elisha would've been asked this question by Elijah? (seems unlikely)
- Verse 9 still – How does Elisha answer Elijah's question? (He says, "I want a double share of your spirit")
- Any thoughts on what Elisha is asking for, here? (seems like he's saying he wants to be like Elijah and whatever it is that makes Elijah the way that he is, Elisha wants as much as possible of that thing)
- Verse 11 – What happens? (Elijah "dies")
- Verse 13 – What does Elisha pick up? (Elijah's mantle)
- Verse 14 – What does Elisha do with the mantle? (strikes the river and parts it like Elijah did)
- So what do you think – did Elisha receive double Elijah's spirit?

TELL

- So one way to think about this “doubling of the spirit” is to think about what it means to truly be someone’s student.
- For Elisha, this means he has learned everything that Elijah knew/had learned about God.
- So you take all of that understanding and put it into someone who is much younger, and still has a lifetime to live, but now has all of this extra understanding from someone much older and wiser and it’s like the essence of who Elisha is has been doubled.
- Elisha is no longer just some 20-something prophet.
- He’s a 20-something prophet who has learned everything that Elijah -- the old-school, hard-nosed prophet -- knew.
- And, then, if you think about the penny question from the beginning of class, just imagine if Elisha did the same thing and eventually taught a student everything HE knows to the student.
- Then it’s like that student would be receiving even more, right? And just imagine if that student had a student and so on?
- There is a story that is *very* similar to the Elijah and Elisha story; it’s the story of Jesus and his disciples
- Throughout Jesus’ ministry, there are disciples who follow him (and not always nearly as well as Elisha followed Elijah in today’s story) through good times and some very difficult times
- And then, Jesus’ time with the disciples ends very much like today’s story ends.
- We call it the ascension story where Jesus... floats away
- But before he floats away, he tells his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit
- Once the disciples receive the Holy Spirit, then they start doing the very same things that Jesus did.
- We refer to that story as Pentecost and consider it the birth of the Church.
- In today’s story and the ascension/Pentecost story, we see a passing on of what the teacher knows to the student because the student persevered and stayed with the teacher, through easy and difficult times.

TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- The following activity is meant to help us think a little bit more about how perseverance can be difficult when things aren’t going all that well.
- I’m passing out a “warhead” candy to everyone.
- Once everyone has a warhead candy, we’re going to unwrap it.
- Once everyone has unwrapped their candy, we’re going to eat our warheads.
- Now I’m going to warn you – these are *very* sour candies
- The idea is to put the Warhead candy in our mouths at the same time and then see how many of us can keep the candy in our mouths for at least 30 seconds.
- I’ll join you because...this is going to be fun!
- Ready? Set? Go!

DO ACTIVITY of Eating Warhead Candy

(and take pictures!!!)

ASK

- What was your experience when you first put the candy in your mouth?

- What words would you use to describe the experience? (Really sour! Painful! Explosive! Burning! Horrible!)
- So...would any of you like another Warhead?
- [*Act surprised when they say "YES"*]
- Why would you want another one after you just told me how horrible it was? Why do you want the really sour, painful, explosive, burning candy? (because it gets better)
- [*pass out more candy to students who desire it...or want to give it to their younger brother*]

TELL

- So it sounds like you are now understanding a little bit of what perseverance means.
- Even though the candy was really sour at first, after a little while, it became sweet and tasted better.
- The bad feelings at the beginning were worth the good feelings at the end – at least for some of us.
- But you only know that because you actually made it to the end.
- We see the same thing in today's scripture story: That Elisha went through the sour stuff to get to the sweet stuff.
- But what makes Elisha's perseverance so impressive is that he didn't even know if there would be anything sweet at the end of his perseverance.
- He kept going because he trusted God and wanted to honor Elijah.
- The same will be true for us, too, when we're paying attention to God and learning about God.
- Things will sometimes be harder, not easier for us.
- But if you hang in there and keep turning to God, today's story reminds us that we will receive from God what we need (and more) to keep going.
- And, then we can pass on what we know about God to others with the hope that they'll eventually learn even more than we know.

CLOSING PRAYER