

1 Kings 17:1-16

January 8, 2023



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Would you rather go without food for a day or Wi-Fi for a week?

Would you rather sleep for ten hours at night or spend the whole night on social media?

Would you rather go without any new clothes and shoes for a year or spend a week outside in extreme temperatures?

We like our physical and emotional comforts, don't we? To even think about doing without them for any length of time causes intense reaction and makes us want to protect those comforts. The thing is, God promises to provide for His children. He wants us to depend on Him and seek His wisdom, in every circumstance. In today's study, we'll look at a story in 1 Kings 17 that shows how God provides for the needs of those who put their faith in Him.

DISCUSSION

🌿 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 KINGS 17:1-7.

How do you think you would have felt if you were Elijah in this situation?

What did the Lord do for Elijah to demonstrate His faithfulness and care?

How did this show God's faithfulness even in the unexpected?

🌿 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 KINGS 17:8-14.

Elijah was willing to go wherever God led him. What can we learn from his obedience?

What about the widow? What was her response in this terrible situation?

How might she have responded otherwise?

In what circumstances are we tempted to question what God calls us to do?

What limits do we place on our view of God's sovereignty and authority in our lives? Why do we do this?

We might have no trouble believing God is powerful and created and governs the world but struggle to believe He can meet our physical needs. Why is this the case?

Reread Elijah's request in verse 13. How would you respond if you barely had any food and a total stranger asked you to feed him before yourself or your baby brother or sister?

 **ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 KINGS 17:15-16.**

What do these verses teach you about what real faith looks like? Can faith be passive, or does it require activity on our part?

What are some ways our faith needs to be active today?

What evidence do we have that God keeps His promises to those who obey?

APPLICATION

What is the biggest obstacle that keeps you from trusting in God fully?

What has God done to show His faithfulness to you?

What changes would take place in your life this week if you were to truly give God your everything?

PRAYER

As a group, thank God that He is always trustworthy to provide for your needs. Ask Him to help you remain obedient to Him so that your faith and generosity will reveal His power in your lives.

LOOKING AHEAD

Next Sunday is Christmas Day. We will have worship at 9:00 and 10:30 but small groups will not meet.

January 1, 2023 --- Colossians 1:9-14 State of the Church/Vision for the New Year

COMMENTARY

3:6. Although Paul was firm, he was still affectionate. He did not swing his weight as an apostle, but rather he appealed to the Thessalonians in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, Paul was confident that Christ's authority and concerns lay behind his concerns. To keep away from implies that the situation required "church discipline," withholding fellowship from out-of-line members so they may repent and be restored.

3:7. Paul was not merely instructing in a "do-as-I-say" manner. He had lived among the Thessalonians, so he wrote, "Do as I do." He personally had modeled the behavior they were to imitate. He and the others on his ministry team were not irresponsible, or, to put it positively, they had worked conscientiously.

3:8. The hard work of the missionaries was well known. Eating bread is a figure of speech referring to everything necessary for sustaining life (food and shelter). Paul never freeloaded on the Thessalonians.

Instead, he labored and toiled . . . night and day, referring both to the long exertion and to the long hours he put in. No doubt he worked as a professional tentmaker (Acts 18:3). In fact, Paul typically followed this procedure and declared he was not a burden financially to the Thessalonians or to other churches he planted (1 Cor. 9:1-18; 2 Cor. 11:7-12). In today's terms, Paul was as a bi-vocational missionary.

3:9. Paul intentionally served as an example of financial responsibility, an emphasis repeated from verse 7. He meant for the believers to imitate him. At the same time the apostle did not oppose a church providing financial support to those who labored in ministry. He considered this a right, but one he voluntarily gave up for a larger cause.

3:10. During his original ministry in Thessalonica (while we were with you), Paul's lips as well as his life had pointed toward the importance of responsible behavior. He then repeated in writing what he orally had commanded. His teaching was meant to rebuke persons who were able but unwilling to work. He did not have in mind those unable to support themselves. On one hand, Christianity has always emphasized the importance of caring for the poor and

indigent (Jas. 1:27). On the other hand, it has equally emphasized that we all are to take as much responsibility as possible for our upkeep (Col. 3:23).

3:11. Verses 6-10 were directed toward faithful Christians, those who had been following Paul's instructions. Paul next turned to those who had neglected his teaching. We do not know how he learned some were living irresponsibly. A minority (some, not most) had quit working for a living. Even worse, these people were interfering with the work others wanted to do.

3:12. To these out-of-line believers Paul spoke by the Lord Jesus Christ (compare to v. 6). He told them they needed to be quietly working, ending their indulgence in irresponsible behavior. They were to follow Paul's example of working so they could eat their own bread, thus providing for their own support. Those who did so would not only earn their own living but also would earn the respect of those outside the congregation.

3:13. Paul shifted his attention from those who had misbehaved back to the church as a whole, as the word brothers implies. Those who live consistently and keep doing the right thing may be tempted to give up, especially if others are getting away with irresponsible behavior. To keep on keeping on, day in and day out, can indeed be challenging. Thus, Paul encouraged the majority not to grow weary in doing good.

3:14. What if the busybody slackers did not own up to their responsibility to change their behavior? They could not plead ignorance after they heard Paul's instruction in this letter, which certainly would be read aloud to the entire congregation. If the slackers refused to shape up, the church was to act lovingly but firmly in an attempt to make them ashamed of themselves. Then if they would repent, they could return to the full privileges of Christian fellowship. With the words don't associate with him, Paul was implying a certain level of church discipline—peer pressure applied in the right way.

3:15. We do not know the mechanics of church discipline in the early churches, but we do know what should be at the forefront of people's thinking: restoration of the erring members. These people were not to be treated as an enemy, for they were not hostile to the gospel message, nor were they living in blatant immorality. The brother or sister who gets out of line in such an area of life should be lovingly but firmly warned as a family member.

3:16. Paul began his final greeting of the letter with this verse, yet his words are linked to the concerns he had just noted. A congregation facing the likelihood of disciplining members will need the Lord of peace among them to make sure peace prevails. Opportunities for division can multiply, but when church members are aware of the Lord's presence, they will respond in a more peaceful and loving way.

3:17. The apostle was ready to sign off. Because the process of writing with paper and ink was so painstaking, Paul used a professional scribe or secretary. As he came to the end, he took the pen personally in hand and affixed his signature: Paul. Here he noted he planned for this to be his standard practice in every letter. For this letter, Paul's signature was especially important because the Thessalonians may have received a fake letter (2 Thess. 2:2; see 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; and Philem. 19 for other instances in which Paul's own handwriting played a role in the letter).

3:18. Paul concluded with a benediction of grace, a hallmark of all 13 letters bearing his name. He had covered much in a short letter: prayer, the second coming, the man of lawlessness, encouragement, and dealing with irresponsible members. God's favor was essential for them to assimilate the letter and to follow through.

Paul had opened the letter with a greeting of grace and peace (1:2). Here he concluded by praying that these same two virtues would be with the Thessalonians.