

1 Kings 17:17-24

January 15, 2023



SCRIPTURE

¹⁷ Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. ¹⁸ She said to Elijah, “What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?”

¹⁹ “Give me your son,” Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. ²⁰ Then he cried out to the LORD, “LORD my God, have you brought tragedy even on this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?” ²¹ Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried out to the LORD, “LORD my God, let this boy’s life return to him!”

²² The LORD heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned to him, and he lived. ²³ Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, “Look, your son is alive!”

²⁴ Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.”

COMMENTARY

Elijah’s training was not finished. In the mysterious providence of God, the widow’s son became ill and died. The heartbroken mother lashed out in grief at Elijah, complaining that the presence of the prophet, the man of God, had directed God’s attention to her family, reminded God of her sin, and drawn divine retribution. This was the language both of grief and of pagan concepts of God, but Elijah was in no mood to defend God. He was also perplexed with this turn of events. Why would God allow this to happen to the woman who had spared him from death?

The prophet took the boy from his mother, carried him into his special room, and poured out his confusion to the Lord. But Elijah had also learned by now that there was no realm in which the Lord was not present with power. He stretched himself over the boy three times and then prayed as no one in previous biblical history had prayed: O Lord ... let this boy’s life return to him!



What followed was the first recorded restoration to life in the Bible. The writer of 1 Kings is careful to attribute the miracle not to Elijah but to God: The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him. In the heart of Baal territory, God had displayed his incomparable power. In the Baal myths, Baal was subject to the laws of nature; he died each year during the dry season. But God is not subject to death; he is Lord over it.

In the widow's eyes the miracle proved that Elijah was God's true prophet. It also served to authenticate the message that he gave as the true word of the Lord: the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth. We are not told the effect of the miracle upon Elijah, but it must have given him an even deeper sense of confidence in God as the Lord of life and death, a confidence born in the midst of enemy territory. His courage to stand alone for God was born in these profound experiences of the glory and greatness of the Lord. He was now ready for the next step

MAIN POINT

Our faith has made us part of a bigger family. Through the avenues of prayer, availability, and action we can minister to the family of God in times of need.

INTRODUCTION

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

When was the last time your family surrounded you and helped you in a time of need?

When was the last time your church family did the same?

God promises to provide for His children, and God often enacts that provision through His people. Our faith has made us part of a bigger family, and God calls us to minister to one another in times of need.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

- ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 KINGS 17:17-24.

After Elijah went to the widow and performed a miracle, her son became gravely ill. In her confusion, she questioned Elijah.

Have you ever witnessed God do something incredible in a very difficult time, only to walk through grief and suffering once again? What does this kind of experience do to your faith?



The widow thought this happened because of her own sin. While our sin may bring consequences, it is important to remember that suffering is often not always directly tied to our personal sin but a result of the brokenness of the world marred by sin in general.

Sin's curse on the earth is felt by every person who ever lives. While there are sometimes earthly consequences for personal sin, there are consequences for the condition of sin on the earth every moment of every day. Like us today, Elijah and the widow hadn't escaped those earthly consequences.

How was Elijah's faith tested?

What can we learn from Elijah's response?

The region of Sidon, where Elijah was at the time, was thought to be controlled by Baal, the popular pagan god.

How did the one true God use this encounter to show His superiority over false gods?

What did the widow learn as God worked through Elijah?

The boy's death became an opportunity for God to display His love and power to a Sidonian woman in a country given over to the worship of Baal. When the woman saw that her son was alive, she made two observations. She said she knew Elijah was a man of God and that the word of God that came through Elijah's mouth was true. God had already done several miracles for Elijah. Now, He had done a miracle through Elijah.

What did Elijah do to bring about this miracle in the son's life? What does it teach us about the means God uses to bring His light into our lives?

How can we serve as vessels for God's work as a witness to others?

How can we use ordinary means to extend grace to members of our faith family when they are experiencing a moment of crisis?

God has given believers "very great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1:4). He also is a God of miracles today. Sometimes He acts directly in a situation of need. More often, He acts through impressing fellow believers and/or family members to give generous help.



APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Do you see it as your responsibility to walk with and pray for hurting people in our church? Why should you make it your responsibility?

How well do we minister to one another in this group? What is one way we can grow in this?

What word of advice would you give new Christians who are struggling to trust in God's provision?

PRAYER

Thank God for calling us to step out in faith as we trust His ability to provide for our needs and provide for the needs of others through us. Ask Him to help us remain obedient to Him in times of testing so that our faith and generosity will reveal His power in our lives.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage as we continue our study of the life of Elijah.

January 22, 2023 --- 1 Kings 18:16-40

