


THE ELIJAH SERIES · PART ONE OF THREE

# The Drought

*The Jar That Did Not Run Out*

| SCRIPTURE | WATCH FREE | FILM |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 Kings 17:1-24 | phillacolla.com/biblestories | About 10½ minutes |

Cover: a still from the film. Visuals in this series are AI-generated under the director's guidance.

*A Companion Guide for Families, Groups & Students*

# Choose Your Track

*One story, five ways in. Use one track or several. Each is complete on its own.*


I **Family Study** — PAGE 3
For parents, grandparents, and kids at home. Watch together, hear the story, talk, play, and pray.
The story simply told · Questions for ages 4-7, 8-12, and teens · Activity · Memory verse · Prayer

II **Kids Ministry** — PAGE 5
For children's ministry teachers. A complete 45-60 minute lesson for grades K-5, with preschool notes.
Teacher prep · Story script · Game · Object lesson · Craft · Small groups · Take-home page for parents

III **Youth Ministry** — PAGE 9
For youth leaders. A 60-75 minute night for middle and high school students.
Hook · Leader talk · Discussion · Breakouts · Reflection · Weekly challenge · Hard questions

IV **Bible Study & Small Group** — PAGE 12
For adult small groups, classes, and Bible studies. A complete 45-60 minute session.
Leader prep · Opener · Watch · Discussion questions · Application · Prayer · Leader notes

V **Deep Dive** — PAGE 15
For teachers, preachers, and anyone who wants to dig deeper into the text.
History and culture · Structure · Commentary · Hebrew key words · Interpretive views · Christ · Further study


### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Start by watching the film. Families can go straight to Track I and spread it over a few evenings. Children's and youth leaders will find ready-to-teach plans in Tracks II and III, including a take-home page for parents. Adult groups will find a complete session in Track IV, and Track V is for anyone preparing to teach or wanting to go deeper.

Above all, read the passage itself. The film and this guide are meant to send you back to Scripture, where God speaks.

### WATCH THE FILM

phillacolla.com/biblestories
Free on YouTube · about 10½ minutes

Scripture quotations are from the World English Bible (WEB), current edition as published at eBible.org (public domain); older WEB printings differ in a few words. Hebrew words are cited from the Masoretic text of 1 Kings. This guide is free to print, copy, and share for non-commercial ministry use. Bible Stories Brought to Life · youtube.com/@BSBTLFilms

TRACK ONE

# Family Study

*For parents, grandparents, and kids of every age. Watch together, read the story, talk, play, and pray.*



*"The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening..." (1 Kings 17:6, WEB)*

## The Story, Simply Told

Part One of the Elijah Series, retold from 1 Kings 17. Quoted words are paraphrased for children. In this story a boy stops breathing and God gives him his life back (17:17-23).

Our last story took place in Persia, in Queen Esther's day. This one happened centuries earlier, in the northern kingdom of Israel. King Ahab did more evil than all the kings before him. He married Jezebel, a Phoenician princess, and built a temple for the false god Baal, who people believed sent the rain.

Then God's prophet Elijah told the king, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, there will be no dew or rain these years unless I say so." God sent Elijah to hide by the brook Cherith. Every morning and evening, ravens brought him bread and meat. But with no rain, the brook dried up.

So God sent Elijah to Zarephath in Sidon, Jezebel's home country. At the town gate a widow was gathering sticks. Elijah asked her for water and some bread. She said, "I have only a handful of flour and a little oil. I am making one last meal for my son and me, and then we will die." Elijah said, "Don't be afraid. Make me a little cake first, then make some for you and your son. God says your flour and oil will not run out until He sends rain." She did what Elijah said, and the flour and oil did not run out, just as God had promised.

Later the widow's son became so sick that he stopped breathing. His mother was heartbroken. Elijah carried the boy upstairs to his own bed and cried out to God. Three times he stretched himself over the child and prayed, "Please let this child live again!" God heard Elijah's prayer, and the boy breathed again! Elijah brought him down and said, "Look, your son is alive." And the widow said, "Now I know you are a man of God, and that God's word from your mouth is true."

*When the brook dried up, God wasn't finished providing.*

## Talk Together

**AGES 4-7**

1. What did the ravens bring Elijah?
2. What did the widow have left in her jars?
3. How do you think the mother felt when her son was alive again?

**AGES 8-12**

1. The brook dried up even though Elijah obeyed God. What did God do next?
2. Why was it hard for the widow to make Elijah's cake first?
3. Elijah told God exactly how he felt (17:20). What can you tell God when you're upset?

**TEENS**

1. People believed Baal sent the rain, but Elijah said the rain would come only by God's word (17:1). What do people today trust to take care of them?
2. Jesus pointed to this foreign widow (Luke 4:25-26). What does that show about who God cares for?
3. After her son was restored, the widow said, "Now I know..." (17:24). How have hard times shaped your faith or your questions? You may pass.

## Try This Together

**Empty Jar, Full Thanks** 5 MINUTES A DAY Set an empty jar on the table. Each evening this week, everyone writes or draws one way God provided that day and drops it in. At the end of the week, read the slips aloud and say the memory verse together as a thank-you prayer.

**Share Together** 10 MINUTES The widow shared from the little she had, trusting God's promise. Choose one thing your family can share this week (a meal, food for a pantry, a visit, a kind note), do it, then talk about how it felt. Time and kindness count as much as things.

**MEMORY VERSE**

"It is because of Yahweh's loving kindnesses that we are not consumed, because his mercies don't fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness."

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23, WEB

*Younger children: learn "...Great is your faithfulness."*

**A FAMILY PRAYER**

*Dear God, thank You for Your love and faithfulness, new every morning. Please help everyone who doesn't have enough today, and show us how to help. When things run low or feel hard, help us trust You and tell You honestly how we feel. Thank You for Jesus, the bread of life, who is stronger than death. In Jesus' name, amen.*

TRACK TWO

# Kids Ministry

*A complete 45-60 minute lesson for elementary classes (about grades K-5), with notes for preschool and a take-home page for parents.*

THE BIG IDEA

**God takes care of His people, and He hears us when we pray.**

### LESSON PLAN

| | 45 MIN | 60 MIN |
|---|---|---|
| Welcome and opening game | 8 | 10 |
| Bible story (told or film) | 10 | 12 |
| Object lesson | 5 | 6 |
| Craft | 10 | 15 |
| Small groups | 7 | 10 |
| Memory verse | 3 | 4 |
| Prayer and goodbye | 2 | 3 |

### THE STORY IN PLAIN WORDS

Elijah told King Ahab there would be no rain. God fed Elijah with ravens, then sent him to a widow whose flour and oil did not run out. When her son stopped breathing, Elijah prayed, and God gave him life again.

### READ BEFORE CLASS

1 Kings 16:29-17:24 and Luke 4:25-26. If you will show the film, watch it all the way through first. Lesson times include transitions and cleanup.

## What Kids May Ask

**"Can birds really bring food?"** God "commanded the ravens" to feed Elijah (17:4). Say: *God made the ravens, and He can use anything He made.*

**"Did the boy die?"** The Bible says "there was no breath left in him" (17:17) and that God brought his life back (17:22). Say: *He stopped breathing, and God made him alive again.*

**"Was he sick because his mom did something wrong?"** She wondered that (17:18), but the Bible doesn't say so, and Jesus taught that sickness isn't always someone's fault (John 9:2-3). Say: *Being sick doesn't mean God is punishing you.*

## Telling the Story

YOU'LL NEED two empty containers labeled FLOUR and OIL, a bundle of rolled-up newspaper "sticks," a large paper raven, and a small blanket for the bed. *SAY lines are a dramatized paraphrase for children; READ lines quote the WEB.*

**DO** Teach the cues. When you hear "rain," wiggle your fingers down like raindrops. When you hear "ravens," flap your arms. When I say "Don't be afraid," everyone says *God takes care of me!*

**SAY** Long ago, King Ahab of Israel built a temple for a false god named Baal. People thought Baal sent the rain. But God sent His prophet Elijah to the king.

**READ** 1 Kings 17:1 aloud: "As Yahweh, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

**SAY** The rain stopped. *(Freeze.)* God sent Elijah to hide by a brook, and every morning and evening the ravens brought him bread and meat! *(Hold up the raven.)*

**SAY** But the brook dried up. God sent Elijah to Zarephath, where a widow was gathering sticks. *(Pick up the sticks.)* She said, *I have only a handful of flour and a little oil. This is our last meal, and then my son and I will die.* Elijah said, *Don't be afraid! (Kids: God takes care of me!) Make me a little cake first. God says your flour and oil will not run out until He sends rain.*

**READ** 1 Kings 17:16 aloud: "The jar of meal didn't run out and the jar of oil didn't fail, according to Yahweh's word, which he spoke by Elijah."

**SAY** *(Softer.)* Later, the widow's son got so sick that he stopped breathing. Elijah carried him upstairs to his bed *(lay down the blanket)* and cried out to God. Three times he stretched himself over the child and prayed, *Please let this child live again!*

**READ** 1 Kings 17:22 aloud: "Yahweh listened to the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived."

**SAY** The boy was alive! Elijah brought him downstairs and said, *Look, your son lives!* And his mother said, *Now I know you are a man of God, and God's word is true.*

**ASK** How did God take care of Elijah, the widow, and her son? What can you ask God to help you with this week?

**USING THE FILM INSTEAD.** The film runs about 10½ minutes. Preview it first and set your stop points before class. The opening has the widow saying she and her son will eat "and die" (17:12), and later the boy lies still after he stops breathing (17:17). Nothing graphic is shown, and he lives again within about a minute. For grades K-2, start at the title card at 0:27 (this skips the cold open, where the widow says "that we may eat it, and die") and **STOP AFTER THE NARRATOR SAYS THE MEAL AND OIL DID NOT RUN OUT "JUST AS GOD HAD PROMISED" AT 4:57,** before the next scene, where the boy falls sick (4:59). Then tell 17:17-24 from the script above. For grades 3-5, show 0:27 to 6:34, through the widow's words "Now I know that you are a man of God..." (17:24). If a child has recently lost a family member, talk with the parent first. Times are from the film's final caption file.

## Opening Game: Raven Relay

Make two teams. Each "raven" walks a paper "bread" on a paper plate to a leader, "Elijah," sitting on the floor, then walks back and hands the plate on. Call "Morning!" or "Evening!" to start each round. Dropped bread? Pick it up and keep going. No one is out.

**Wrap up:** *God sent ravens with food every morning and every evening. Today we'll see how God kept taking care of Elijah, even when things ran out.*

## Object Lesson: The Dry Sponge

**YOU'LL NEED** a dry, stiff kitchen sponge, a bowl, a cup of water, and a towel.

Let kids feel the dry sponge. Ask: *Can it make itself wet?* (No.) **Say:** *People said Baal sent the rain. But when God said "no rain," no one could make it rain.* Read Jeremiah 14:22: "Are there any among the vanities of the nations that can cause rain?" Pour water on the sponge in the bowl; let kids feel it go soft. *Only God sends the rain and gives life. He took care of Elijah and the widow, and He takes care of you, even when life is hard.* Wipe up together.

## Craft: The Jar That Didn't Run Out

Kids glue a paper jar onto construction paper along the sides and bottom only, making a pocket, and write **God takes care of me.** on it. On large pre-cut cards, they draw or write ways God cares for them (food, helpers, friends, Jesus) and tuck them in. Grades 3-5 can copy the memory verse on the back. Send a few blank cards home to add one a day.

**SUPPLIES (PER CHILD)**

- Two sheets of construction paper
- A jar shape and 3-4 large cards, pre-cut by leaders
- Crayons or markers
- A glue stick
- No scissors for children; leaders do any cutting before class

## Small Groups

GRADES K-2

1. Who brought Elijah food by the brook?
2. What was left in the widow's jars, and what happened to it?
3. What are some ways God takes care of you?

GRADES 3-5

1. The brook dried up (17:7). What did God do next?
2. Why was it hard for the widow to share first?
3. What does Elijah's prayer in 17:20 teach us about talking to God when we are upset?
4. The widow lived outside Israel. What does Jesus say about her (Luke 4:25-26)?

## Memory Verse Practice

MEMORY VERSE

**"It is because of Yahweh's loving kindnesses that we are not consumed, because his mercies don't fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness."**

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23, WEB

*Motions: hug yourself on "loving kindnesses," stretch on "new every morning," point up on "faithfulness." K-2: learn "...Great is your faithfulness."*

## Prayer

Invite kids to name one way God takes care of them, out loud or silently; anyone may pass. Pray: *Dear God, thank You for taking care of us every morning and every evening. Thank You for hearing us when we pray. Thank You for Jesus, who is stronger than death. Amen.*

**If a child has lost someone,** be gentle: *God doesn't bring everyone back now, but Jesus promises that everyone who trusts Him will live with Him forever* (John 11:25). Don't press for details; tell the parent, or follow the safeguarding steps below if you're worried.

CLASSROOM TIPS

- **Attention signal:** say "Rain!" and kids wiggle their fingers; say "Dry!" and they freeze and go quiet.
- Pair younger kids with an older buddy for the relay.
- Use only large, safe items: no coins, rocks, beads, or small objects. No real flour or oil; check allergies before any snack.
- **Safeguarding.** If a child or teen tells you about abuse, neglect, self-harm, harmful drinking or drug use at home, or anything else that makes you worried for their safety: stay calm, listen, and thank them for telling you. Don't promise to keep it secret, don't question them for details or investigate, and don't confront anyone involved. Write down what they said as soon as you can, and report it the same day to your church's designated safeguarding lead, following your church's safeguarding policy and any mandatory-reporting law that applies to you. If anyone is in immediate danger, stay with them and call emergency services. Telling a church safeguarding lead does not replace any report the law requires you to make directly to child-protection authorities or police.

FOR PRESCHOOL (AGES 3-5)

- Plan 20-25 minutes: story, sponge, pre-cut craft, prayer.
- Tell it as *God sent ravens with food, kept the widow's jars from running out, and made the boy alive again.* Keep the sickness to one sentence.
- Questions: *Who brought Elijah food? Who took care of the widow?*
- Practice "...Great is your faithfulness."

TAKE-HOME PAGE · FOR PARENTS

*Today in Kids Ministry*

# The Drought

1 KINGS 17

## WHAT WE LEARNED

God stopped the rain, just as Elijah said, and fed Elijah with ravens by a brook. Then God sent him to a widow whose flour and oil did not run out. When her son stopped breathing, Elijah prayed, and God gave the boy his life back. **Big idea:** *God takes care of His people, and He hears us when we pray, even when His answer isn't what we hoped.*

## TALK ON THE WAY HOME

1. What part of Elijah's story do you remember most?
2. What is one way God took care of our family this week, maybe through someone who helped us?
3. What is something we can pray about together?

## MEMORY VERSE

**"They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness."**

LAMENTATIONS 3:23, WEB

## TRY THIS AT HOME

Make an "Empty Jar, Full Thanks" jar: each evening, everyone adds a card naming one way God provided that day. At the end of the week, read them together and thank God.

## Watch the film together

Scan, or visit phillacolla.com/biblestories. Free, about 10½ minutes, listed there from release day. Parents, preview the film first: the widow's son stops breathing and is brought back to life (17:17-22). Nothing graphic is shown.

## GO DEEPER AS A FAMILY

The **Family Study** track of this companion guide, on page 3, has the story, questions for every age, an activity, and a prayer. Get the full guide free at phillacolla.com/biblestories. Next in the series: *Fire on Carmel* (1 Kings 18).

## PRAY TOGETHER

*God, thank You for taking care of us every day and for hearing every prayer. Help us trust You when things run low. In Jesus' name, amen.*

KIDS: DRAW THE RAVENS BRINGING ELIJAH BREAD

Bible Stories Brought to Life · Scripture from the World English Bible (public domain) · Free to copy for church and family use

TRACK THREE

# YOUTH MINISTRY

A 60-75 minute youth night for middle and high school students: a hook, a talk, discussion, breakouts, and a challenge for the week.

THE BIG IDEA

**When the brook dries up, God isn't finished. His word is true: He provides in unlikely ways, He hears honest prayer in grief, and He alone gives life, as He did for the widow's son.**

NIGHT PLAN

| | 60 MIN | 75 MIN |
|---|---|---|
| Arrival and hook | 8 | 11 |
| Watch the film | 11 | 11 |
| Leader talk | 15 | 17 |
| Large-group discussion | 8 | 10 |
| Small-group breakouts | 12 | 16 |
| Reflection | 4 | 6 |
| Challenge and prayer | 2 | 4 |

THE HOOK: RUNNING ON EMPTY

Ask: *What's something that ran out on you at the worst possible time?* A phone battery before a ride home, gas, time on a test, your voice at a game. No phones needed, and no one has to answer. Take a few answers, then ask: *What do you do when something you depend on runs out?* Bridge: *Tonight we meet a prophet who obeyed God and still watched his brook dry up, and a widow down to her last meal.*

**Low-prep option:** *What Do People Trust?* Students rank, on paper or out loud, what people their age rely on most to feel secure: money, grades, friends, family, looks, being liked, God. Ask why.

## LEADER TALK

1 **A WORD AGAINST THE STORM GOD.** King Ahab "did more yet to provoke Yahweh, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him." (16:33) He built a temple for Baal, worshiped in that region as the god of storms and rain *(historical background from outside the Bible)*. Elijah's first words go straight at that claim: "As Yahweh, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." (17:1) The living God, not Baal, holds the rain.

2 **HIDDEN AND FED.** God sent Elijah to hide by a brook: "I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." (17:4) Obedience took Elijah out of the spotlight and into a place where he depended on God every morning and every evening.

3 **WHEN THE BROOK DRIES UP.** "After a while, the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land." (17:7) The text gives no hint that Elijah had done wrong; the drought he announced reached his own cup. Following God doesn't exempt us from dry seasons, but God had a next step ready when the old supply stopped.

**4** **THE LAST HANDFUL.** God sent Elijah to a widow in Sidon, Jezebel's home region (16:31; 17:9). She had "only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a jar" (17:12). Elijah said, "Don't be afraid." (17:13) She trusted God's word enough to give first, and "The jar of meal didn't run out and the jar of oil didn't fail…" (17:16) Jesus later pointed to her as a sign of God's grace reaching beyond Israel (Luke 4:25-26).

**5** **THE HARDEST LOSS.** Then her son became sick until "there was no breath left in him" (17:17). Elijah took the boy upstairs and brought the hardest question straight to God: "Yahweh my God, have you also brought evil on the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" (17:20) Honest prayer is not a lack of faith. "Yahweh listened to the voice of Elijah…" (17:22), and the boy lived. The widow said, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that Yahweh's word in your mouth is truth." (17:24)

**6** **JESUS.** *(A gospel parallel; Luke 7 doesn't cite 1 Kings 17, though its wording echoes it.)* At the gate of a town called Nain, Jesus met a widow carrying out her only son. He said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" (Luke 7:14) Elijah prayed and waited; Jesus spoke, and death obeyed. He is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), and for everyone who trusts Him, death is not the end.

## DISCUSSION

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

1. Why would a drought be a direct challenge to people who believed Baal sent the rain?
2. Elijah obeyed God, and his brook still dried up. Have you ever done the right thing and still had it get hard?
3. The widow gave first from the little she had. What makes sharing hard?
4. Elijah told God exactly how he felt (17:20). What keeps us from being honest with God?

### HIGH SCHOOL

1. Read Deuteronomy 11:16-17. How does Elijah's drought fit what God had warned?
2. God provided through ravens and a foreign widow, sources no one would have expected. How might God provide through unexpected people today?
3. Read Luke 4:25-29. Why did Jesus' mention of this widow make his hometown so angry?
4. After her son was restored, the widow said, "Now I know…" (17:24). How do hard seasons shape faith?

### BREAKOUT GROUPS

1. Where has a "brook" run dry for you, something you relied on that stopped? Keep it private or pass if you'd rather.
2. Who has God used to help you when you didn't expect it?
3. What would it look like to pray as honestly as Elijah did this week?
4. Who could you help or share with this week? Time and kindness count too.

#### REFLECTION: TWO OPTIONS

**Phones down.** Hand each student an index card titled *My Brook*. They write one thing they rely on that could run dry, and one way God has provided for them before. Have them keep the card.

**Phones out (no social media).** Students privately set a morning reminder labeled *New every morning* for each day this week. No one shows a screen or says what they wrote.

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

### NEW EVERY MORNING.

Each morning this week, before you check your phone, read Lamentations 3:22-23 and name one way God provided for you yesterday. Next time your small group meets, share how it went, if you want to. Anyone may pass.

## LEADER NOTES ON HARD QUESTIONS

**"WHY DID GOD LET THE BOY DIE?"** The text doesn't say. The widow's words suggest she feared her sin had been brought to memory (17:18), but the narrator never says her sin caused his death, and Jesus warned against assuming that suffering is punishment for someone's sin (John 9:2-3). What the text shows is that God heard Elijah's honest prayer, gave the boy his life back, and the widow came to know that His word is true (17:24). Be gentle: some students have lost people who were not brought back. God's final answer to death is Jesus (John 11:25-26).

**"IS IT OKAY TO BE UPSET WITH GOD?"** Elijah's prayer in 17:20 is a raw question, and Scripture is full of prayers like it (Psalm 13:1-2). Bringing grief and questions to God is an act of faith. Elijah prayed to God, not away from Him.

**"WHY DOESN'T GOD FEED EVERYONE WHO'S HUNGRY?"** Jesus said there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's day (Luke 4:25), and the famine was real (1 Kings 18:2). Scripture doesn't explain every case, but it calls God's people to share (James 2:15-16). If a student's family is struggling, connect them quietly with your church's care team; never single anyone out.

**"DID THIS REALLY HAPPEN?"** 1 Kings presents it as history. An Assyrian inscription names King Ahab, and Josephus reports a drought in Phoenicia in the reign of Jezebel's father; see the Deep Dive, page 15. Archaeology can't test the miracles themselves, and its silence doesn't settle the question. This guide, with many evangelical scholars, reads 1 Kings 17 as the account of real events it presents itself to be.

**CARE LINE.** The widow expected to "die" (17:12), and her son died. Grief, hunger at home, or hopelessness may come up. If a student says they want to hurt themselves or don't want to live, stay with them and get help now: follow the safeguarding steps below, and in the US they can call or text 988, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

**SAFEGUARDING.** If a child or teen tells you about abuse, neglect, self-harm, harmful drinking or drug use at home, or anything else that makes you worried for their safety: stay calm, listen, and thank them for telling you. Don't promise to keep it secret, don't question them for details or investigate, and don't confront anyone involved. Write down what they said as soon as you can, and report it the same day to your church's designated safeguarding lead, following your church's safeguarding policy and any mandatory-reporting law that applies to you. If anyone is in immediate danger, stay with them and call emergency services. Telling a church safeguarding lead does not replace any report the law requires you to make directly to child-protection authorities or police.

#### PRAYER

Give students a moment of silence to pray Lamentations 3:23: "They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness." Then close: *Faithful God, You hold the rain and You give life. When our brooks run dry, help us trust Your word. Teach us to pray honestly, give generously, and look to Jesus, the resurrection and the life. Amen.*

TRACK FOUR

# Bible Study & Small Group

*A complete session for small groups, classes, and Bible studies, with leader preparation and notes. Plan on 45 to 60 minutes.*

## Leader Preparation

THE BIG IDEA

In a land that credited Baal with rain and harvest, the living God showed that He holds the rain, the bread, and life itself. His word is true. He cares for His people, often by unlikely means and one day at a time, though not always in the way we expect, and He hears honest prayer in grief.

> *"Now I know that you are a man of God, and that Yahweh's word in your mouth is truth."*
> 1 KINGS 17:24, WEB

### BACKGROUND

- **Setting.** The northern kingdom of Israel under Ahab, about 874-853 BC *(approximate)*, centuries before the Esther films. The capital was Samaria (16:24, 29).
- **The king and queen.** Ahab married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, "king of the Sidonians" (16:31), and built a house of Baal in Samaria (16:32).
- **Baal.** Worshiped in the region as a storm god who sent rain *(background from Canaanite texts, not from 1 Kings)*; see the Deep Dive, page 15.
- **The covenant warning.** God had warned that serving other gods would shut up the sky (Deuteronomy 11:16-17; compare 1 Kings 8:35).
- **Elijah.** From Gilead, east of the Jordan (17:1). His name means *my God is Yahweh*.
- **The series.** Part One of three. Next: *Fire on Carmel* (1 Kings 18), then *The Whisper* (1 Kings 19).

### SESSION PLAN

| | 45 MIN | 60 MIN |
|---|---|---|
| Welcome and opener | 5 | 8 |
| Watch the film | 11 | 11 |
| Read 1 Kings 17:1-24 | 6 | 6 |
| Discussion (choose 4-5) | 15 | 23 |
| Application and prayer | 8 | 12 |

### BEFORE YOU MEET

Read 1 Kings 16:29-17:24 and Luke 4:16-30. Preview the film: the widow's son stops breathing (17:17) and is restored; nothing graphic is shown. Read the leader notes on page 14.

## The Session

1 **Open.** Tell about a time something you depended on ran out. What did you do?

2 **Watch.** Play *The Drought* (phillacolla.com/biblestories, about 10½ minutes). Ask the group to notice every time the film mentions Yahweh's word.

3 **Read.** Read 1 Kings 17:1-24 aloud together, changing readers at verses 8 and 17, where the three scenes begin.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 What image or moment from the film stayed with you?

2 Elijah's first recorded words are an oath: "As Yahweh, the God of Israel, lives..." (17:1). Read Deuteronomy 11:16-17. What connections do you see between this warning, Elijah's drought, and Baal worship?

3 God commanded ravens to feed Elijah (17:4) and a widow to sustain him (17:9). What do these unlikely sources teach about how God provides?

4 Elijah obeyed, yet "the brook dried up" (17:7). How do you respond when obedience leads into a dry season?

5 Compare the widow's words in 17:12 with Elijah's in 17:13-14. What did it cost her to make his cake first? What promise from Yahweh did Elijah give her before she acted?

6 Read Luke 4:25-29. Why does Jesus point to a widow from Sidon, and why did it anger his hearers?

7 Compare the widow's cry in 17:18 with Elijah's prayer in 17:20. How do grief and faith show up in each?

8 The chapter ends with "Now I know..." (17:24). Read Luke 7:11-16. How does Jesus show Himself greater than Elijah?

## APPLICATION

- **Name your dry brook.** Tell God plainly what has run out, and ask Him for wisdom, help, and grace, trusting Him with how He answers.
- **Give freely.** As you are able, share food, time, or practical help this week, not to earn a reward and without neglecting those in your care. The widow acted on a specific promise from Yahweh (17:14); trust His word, not a formula.
- **Pray honestly.** Bring your hardest question to God this week, as Elijah did, and keep praying.

## PRAYER

Pray Lamentations 3:22-23 together, thanking God that His mercies are new every morning. Then pray for anyone in the group facing loss, illness, or a lean season, and for those in your community who lack daily bread (James 2:15-16).

# Leader Notes on the Questions

**Q2, DROUGHT AND BAAL.** Canaanite texts portray Baal as the storm god who brings rain; his absence meant drought (see the Deep Dive). Elijah's oath claims the opposite: Yahweh lives, and rain comes only by His word. The drought also enacts the warning of Deuteronomy 11:16-17 and the situation Solomon prayed about in 1 Kings 8:35.

**Q3, RAVENS AND A WIDOW.** Ravens were unclean for Israel to eat (Leviticus 11:15), and the widow was a foreigner with almost nothing. The same Hebrew verb, "to sustain," is used of both (17:4, 9). God isn't limited to the channels we expect. On reading "ravens" as "Arabs," see the Deep Dive.

**Q4, THE BROOK.** The text gives one reason: "there was no rain in the land" (17:7). The text gives no sign that Elijah was being punished; he shared the drought he announced. Be slow to claim you know why God allows a particular hardship.

**Q5, THE WIDOW'S TRUST.** Elijah's request rested on God's promise: "For Yahweh, the God of Israel, says..." (17:14). The point is trusting God's word, not a rule that giving guarantees getting. Steer away from any idea of a spiritual transaction, and never press people who are struggling to give what their household needs.

**Q6, LUKE 4.** Jesus' hometown expected special treatment. He answered that God had sent Elijah to a Gentile widow, and they "were all filled with wrath" (Luke 4:28). God's grace has always reached beyond the people who assume it belongs to them.

**Q7, GRIEF AND FAITH.** The widow's words link her son's death to her sin (17:18); the text never says her sin caused it. Elijah's question is lament, not unbelief (compare Psalm 13). If someone in your group is grieving, let the text's honesty give them room, and don't rush to fix their pain.

**Q8, NAIN.** Luke's words "he gave him to his mother" (Luke 7:15) match the Greek Old Testament of 1 Kings 17:23 word for word, and the crowd says, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" (Luke 7:16) Elijah stretched himself on the child and prayed; Jesus touched the coffin and spoke.

TRACK FIVE

# Deep Dive

*A closer study of 1 Kings 17 for teachers, preachers, and anyone who wants to dig in: history, language, structure, interpretation, and Christ.*

**How to read this section.** Where scholars disagree, the major views held by orthodox Christian interpreters are set side by side and labeled. Scripture is quoted from the World English Bible (WEB), which renders God's personal name as *Yahweh* (many English Bibles print "the LORD"). Hebrew words are given in Hebrew script with a simple transliteration. Verse numbers in 1 Kings 17 are the same in Hebrew and English.

## 1. Historical and Cultural Background

### AHAB AND THE HOUSE OF OMRI

Omri founded a dynasty and built Samaria as Israel's capital (16:23-24). His son Ahab reigned twenty-two years (16:29), about 874-853 BC on Edwin Thiele's widely used chronology *(scholars' dates differ by a few years)*. Outside the Bible, the Kurkh Monolith of Shalmaneser III (British Museum, ME 118884) names *Ahab the Israelite* among the kings who fought Assyria at Qarqar in 853 BC and credits him with 2,000 chariots and 10,000 soldiers. The Mesha Stele (Louvre AO 5066; ninth century BC, exact date debated) names Omri as the king of Israel who oppressed Moab and mentions "his son" without a name. Neither inscription mentions Elijah or a drought.

### JEZEBEL AND PHOENICIA

Ahab married "Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians..." (16:31). *Sidonians* can stand for Phoenicians more broadly, though context decides: Solomon tells Hiram, king of Tyre, that no one cuts timber "like the Sidonians" (1 Kings 5:6). Josephus, drawing on the Phoenician historian Menander of Ephesus, calls Ethbaal (Ithobalus) a king of Tyre and a priest of Astarte who seized the throne (*Against Apion* 1.123; *Antiquities* 8.317). With the marriage, Phoenician Baal worship came into Israel's capital. Ahab "raised up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria." (16:32)

### BAAL, THE STORM GOD

1 Kings does not describe Baal's mythology. Texts from ancient Ugarit (Ras Shamra, Syria; excavated from 1929, from about the 14th-13th centuries BC) portray Baal as a storm god, *the rider of the clouds*, whose rain made the land fertile. In the tablets about Baal and Mot (Death), Baal goes down to the underworld with his clouds and rain, and the furrows of the fields are parched until he returns *(one widely held reading; how far the myth reflects a yearly seasonal cycle is debated)*.[1] Ugarit is earlier and farther north than Ahab's Israel. Which Baal Jezebel served is debated (often proposed: Melqart of Tyre, or Baal Shamem, "lord of heaven"). Against this background, a drought declared in Yahweh's name, food supplied in Baal's homeland, and a child restored from death read as a direct challenge. *(A widely held interpretation; see section 2.)*

### DROUGHT IN THE LAND

Israel's harvest depended on "the early rain and the latter rain" (Deuteronomy 11:14), and on dew in the dry summer. The Law warned that serving other gods would bring a shut sky (Deuteronomy 11:16-17), and Solomon prayed about that very situation (1 Kings 8:35-36). Josephus quotes Menander for a lack of rain lasting about a year under Ethbaal of Tyre, ended after the king's supplications (*Antiquities* 8.324), and identifies it with Elijah's drought. That is a late, secondhand report of a one-year drought, so it is suggestive, not confirmation. 1 Kings speaks of "the third year" (18:1), the New Testament of three years and six months (Luke 4:25; James 5:17); see section 5.

### CHERITH AND ZAREPHATH

The brook Cherith was "before the Jordan" (17:3), usually taken to mean east of it, near Elijah's home region of Gilead. Its site is unknown; a later tradition placed it in the Wadi Qelt, west of the Jordan. Zarephath (Greek *Sarepta*, Luke 4:26) was a Phoenician town on the coast between Tyre and Sidon, at modern Sarafand in Lebanon. James B. Pritchard's excavations there (1969-1974) uncovered pottery kilns and a small Phoenician shrine.

## 2. Literary Structure

### THREE SCENES, ONE WORD

The Elijah stories (1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 2) are built around the word of Yahweh. Chapter 17 moves through three scenes, each larger than the last, framed by Elijah's word in 17:1 and the widow's confession in 17:24:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | 17:1 | The word announced: no dew or rain except by Elijah's word |
| 1 | 17:2-7 | Word, obedience, provision: ravens feed one man |
| 2 | 17:8-16 | Word, obedience, provision: meal and oil feed a household |
| 3 | 17:17-23 | **Death, prayer, life: the widow's son restored** |
| A′ | 17:24 | The word confirmed: Yahweh's word in Elijah's mouth is truth |

The refrain "Yahweh's word..." (17:2, 5, 8, 16, 24) runs through every scene. Many interpreters also read the chapter as a deliberate polemic against Baal: Yahweh withholds rain, gives grain and oil (compare Hosea 2:8), works in Baal's own territory, and gives life back from death, the very powers claimed for Baal (Leah Bronner, 1968). *(A widely held interpretation.)*

### THE SHAPE OF CHAPTER 17

| | |
|---|---|
| 16:29-34 | Ahab, Jezebel, and Baal (the setting) |
| 17:1 | Elijah's oath before Ahab |
| 17:2-7 | The brook Cherith and the ravens |
| 17:8-12 | The widow at the gate |
| 17:13-16 | The jar of meal and the jar of oil |
| 17:17-18 | The son's death and the mother's grief |
| 17:19-23 | Elijah's prayer; the child revived |
| 17:24 | "Now I know..." |

## 3. Commentary

**16:29-34, THE SETTING.** Ahab is judged worse than all before him (16:30, 33). Marrying Jezebel and serving Baal is set beside "the sins of Jeroboam" as something worse (16:31). The note on Jericho (16:34) shows Joshua's word fulfilled (Joshua 6:26), just before a chapter about the reliability of Yahweh's word. *(A common observation.)*

**17:1, THE OATH.** Elijah appears with no introduction beyond his origin. The phrase *mittōšābê gil'ād* (מִתֹּשָׁבֵי גִלְעָד) can be read "of the settlers of Gilead" (WEB) or, with different vowels, *from Tishbe in Gilead* (the Greek Old Testament); Tishbe's site is uncertain. His oath names the living God and his own place as a servant "before whom I stand". Elijah's "but according to my word" is not a boast. James says Elijah "prayed earnestly that it might not rain" (James 5:17).

**17:2-7, THE BROOK.** Yahweh says, "hide yourself" (17:3), which protected Elijah from Ahab's search (compare 18:10). Some also see the word of God withdrawn from Israel *(an interpretation)*. "I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." (17:4) Elijah obeys exactly: "So he went and did according to Yahweh's word..." (17:5). Bread and meat morning and evening (17:6) may recall the manna and quail in the wilderness (Exodus 16:8, 12). *(An interpretation.)* Then "the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land." (17:7) The prophet shares the judgment he announced.

**17:8-12, THE WIDOW AT THE GATE.** God sends Elijah to Zarephath, "which belongs to Sidon" (17:9), the homeland of Jezebel's father. "I have commanded a widow there to sustain you." (17:9) The verb is the same one used of the ravens in 17:4. Widows were among the most vulnerable people in the ancient world, and God's law commanded care for them (Deuteronomy 24:19). Her oath, "As Yahweh your God lives..." (17:12), calls Elijah's God "your God". Her words are stark: "that we may eat it, and die." (17:12)

**17:13-16, THE PROMISE.** "Don't be afraid." Elijah's request to be fed first rests entirely on Yahweh's word: the jar of meal "will not run out" and the jar of oil "will not fail" until rain returns (17:14). She obeys, "and she, he, and her household ate many days." (17:15) The fulfillment repeats the promise almost word for word, "according to Yahweh's word, which he spoke by Elijah." (17:16) The text gives no mechanism and doesn't describe the jar's level.

**17:17-18, DEATH IN THE HOUSE.** The widow's son becomes sick until "there was no breath left in him" (17:17). *Nĕšāmâ*, "breath," is the word used in Genesis 2:7 for the breath of life. The mother cries, "What have I to do with you, you man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to memory, and to kill my son!" (17:18) Her words suggest she fears the holy man's presence has brought her sin to God's notice. The narrator never says her sin caused the death, and the restoration confirms Yahweh's word without explaining why the child fell ill.

**17:19-21, THE PRAYER.** Elijah takes the boy "out of her bosom" to the upper room where he stayed and lays him on his own

bed (17:19). He prays twice. The first prayer is a hard question: "Yahweh my God, have you also brought evil on the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" (17:20) The verb *hărēʿôtā* means "you have brought harm," calamity, not moral wrong. He stretches himself on the child three times (17:21), which the text doesn't explain. Compare Elisha (2 Kings 4:34) and Paul (Acts 20:10). Then he asks, "Yahweh my God, please let this child's soul come into him again." (17:21)

**17:22-24, LIFE AND THE WORD.** "Yahweh listened to the voice of Elijah..." (17:22): the power is God's, not the prophet's technique. Elijah's words are simple: "Behold, your son lives." (17:23) The widow's confession closes the chapter and its frame: "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that Yahweh's word in your mouth is truth." (17:24) In canonical order this is the first raising of the dead recorded in Scripture. Hebrews 11:35 likely has this scene and 2 Kings 4 in view *(a common reading)*: "Women received their dead by resurrection."

## 4. Key Words

| WORD | TRANSLITERATION | MEANING AND USE |
|---|---|---|
| אֵלִיָּהוּ | *ʾēliyyāhû* | Elijah, "my God is Yah(weh)" (17:1). His name states the chapter's claim. |
| חַי־יְהוָה | *ḥay-YHWH* | "as Yahweh lives," an oath (17:1, 12). The living God against a god said to die and return. |
| טַל וּמָטָר | *ṭal ûmāṭār* | "dew nor rain" (17:1): both sources of water for crops withheld |
| הָעֹרְבִים | *hāʿōrĕbîm* | "the ravens" (17:4, 6). On the reading "Arabs," see section 5. |
| לְכַלְכְּלֶךָ | *lĕkalkelkā* | "to feed you, sustain you" (17:4); the same verb is used of the widow in 17:9, in its pause form לְכַלְכֶּלְךָ (*lĕkalkĕlekā*) |
| אִשָּׁה אַלְמָנָה | *ʾiššâ ʾalmānâ* | "a widow" (17:9-10), one of the people the law singled out for protection |
| כַּד הַקֶּמַח | *kad haqqemaḥ* | "the jar of meal" (17:12, 14, 16); with the oil, the grain and oil of Deuteronomy 11:14 |
| נְשָׁמָה | *nĕšāmâ* | "breath" (17:17), as in "the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7) |
| נֶפֶשׁ | *nepeš* | "soul, life" (17:21-22): the child's life returned |
| וַיִּתְמֹדֵד | *wayyitmōdēd* | "he stretched himself" (17:21), a rare verb form, literally "he measured himself" |
| אֱמֶת | *ʾĕmet* | "truth" (17:24), from the root *ʾmn*, "to be firm": Yahweh's word holds |

## 5. Interpretive Questions

**RAVENS, OR SOMETHING ELSE?**

The Hebrew consonants for "ravens" (*ʿrbym*) could be vowelled as "Arabs," and a few interpreters, ancient and modern, have proposed Arabs, traders, or people of a place called Oreb. The Hebrew text as vowelled, the ancient translations, and the chapter's theme of miraculous provision all point to birds, and this guide reads it that way. Ravens were unclean for Israel to eat (Leviticus 11:15), which makes God's choice of messenger striking.

***THE THIRD YEAR*, OR THREE YEARS AND SIX MONTHS?**

1 Kings 18:1 dates God's word to Elijah "in the third year"; Jesus and James speak of three years and six months (Luke 4:25; James 5:17). Evangelical interpreters have proposed that "the third year" counts from Elijah's move to Zarephath, or from his stay at the brook, rather than from the drought's start; or that the dry season before 17:1 belongs to the total. No proposal is settled. Note that 18:1 dates a word from God, not the full length of the drought, so the two need not conflict.

**WAS THE BOY TRULY DEAD?**

The text says "there was no breath left in him" (17:17); the mother says Elijah came "to kill my son" (17:18); Elijah speaks of "killing her son" (17:20); and the child's soul "came into him again" (17:22). A few interpreters have suggested deep unconsciousness. Most read a real death and restoration, as the language and Hebrews 11:35 suggest, and this guide follows that reading. Either way, the boy lived because "Yahweh listened to the voice of Elijah..." (17:22), not because of a technique.

## 6. Cross-References

- **Deuteronomy 11:13-17; 1 Kings 8:35-36**: rain as covenant blessing; a shut sky as warning.
- **Hosea 2:8**: "For she didn't know that I gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil..." (WEB)
- **Jeremiah 14:22**: "Are there any among the vanities of the nations that can cause rain?" (WEB)
- **2 Kings 4:8-37**: Elisha and the Shunammite's son.
- **Luke 4:25-26**: Jesus points to the widow of Zarephath.
- **Luke 7:11-17**: Jesus raises a widow's son at Nain.
- **James 5:17-18**: Elijah was "a man with a nature like ours"; he prayed, and it didn't rain.
- **Lamentations 3:22-23**: "They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness." (WEB)

## 7. How 1 Kings 17 Points to Christ

*Grace beyond Israel.* Here the New Testament itself draws the connection. In Nazareth Jesus said, "Elijah was sent to none of them, except to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow." (Luke 4:26, WEB) God's mercy to a Gentile widow anticipated the gospel going to the nations.

*A widow's son given back. (A widely noted echo; Luke doesn't cite 1 Kings here.)* At Nain Jesus raised a widow's only son, and Luke's words "he gave him to his mother" (Luke 7:15) match the Greek Old Testament of 1 Kings 17:23. The crowd said, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" (Luke 7:16, WEB) Elijah prayed for the boy's life; Jesus commanded, and the dead man sat up.

*Bread in a time of famine. (A gospel parallel.)* God fed Elijah and a widow's household day after day. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Give us today our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11, WEB) and said, "I am the bread of life." (John 6:35, WEB)

*Life that does not die again. (A theological reflection.)* The widow's son was restored to mortal life. Jesus rose never to die again: "Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more." (Romans 6:9, WEB) He is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25, WEB).

*Elijah and the one who was to come.* Malachi promised, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet..." (Malachi 4:5, WEB), and Jesus identified John the Baptist as that Elijah (Matthew 11:14), the forerunner who prepared the way for Him. *(The New Testament's own link.)*

## 8. For Further Study

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## NOTES

1. The Baal Cycle, KTU 1.1-1.6 (Baal and Mot: 1.5-1.6; clouds and rain, 1.5 V 6-8; parched furrows, 1.6 IV). Translation of all six tablets: Mark S. Smith, "The Baal Cycle," in Simon B. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (Scholars Press, 1997), 81-180. Commentary: Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1, KTU 1.1-1.2 (Brill, 1994); Smith and Wayne T. Pitard, vol. 2, KTU 1.3-1.4 (Brill, 2009).

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