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 track.
- **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 3.

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.