

Learning to Trust

Elijah: Part 2
1 Kings 17:7-24

Discussion questions:

1. What season or "classroom" is God using right now to teach you and stretch your faith?
2. Has God ever asked you to step into an uncomfortable or unexpected situation? How did you respond?
3. Is there an area in your life where you feel God saying "arise and go," but you are hesitating to take the next step?
4. Why is it so difficult to trust God when your physical, financial, or emotional resources feel completely exhausted?
5. What specific promise from Scripture do you need to hold onto during your current season of fear or uncertainty?
6. How do unexpected life crises test whether you truly trust God's promises versus just knowing them intellectually?
7. How do you handle the temptation to believe that being faithful to God should make life easier or protect you from suffering?
8. What holds you back from bringing your raw pain, confusion, and unanswered questions directly to God in prayer?
9. How does the ultimate hope of Christ's resurrection change the way you navigate current loss, sickness, or hardship?
10. When you cannot figure out what God is doing in your life, what specific truths about His character help you trust Him?

Summary

The start of a new school year always brings a swirl of emotions. Students navigate a mix of disappointment that summer freedom is ending, nerves about new classroom dynamics, and excitement to re-connect with friends to see who grew taller or changed. Parents experience their own range of feelings, balancing relief that routine has returned with wonder at how quickly the calendar moved. At the start of a school term, teachers typically ease students in with orientation and a syllabus review. However, once those preliminary days pass, the real coursework begins, driving toward tests and final exams.

A similar progression occurs in the life of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 17. Elijah's grandest test lies ahead in chapter 18, where he will stand alone on Mount Carmel against hundreds of state-sponsored prophets of Baal. Yet, before God leads Elijah to Mount Carmel, He takes him to school. Through sequential, real-world trials, God systematically builds Elijah's faith, preparing him for the ultimate test ahead.

The Context: Judgment, Drought, and Divine Isolation

To understand Elijah's journey, it is vital to recall how he first appeared on the biblical scene. Elijah boldly confronted the wicked King Ahab with a dramatic declaration: there would be neither dew nor rain across the land except at Elijah's word. This announcement was far more than a forecast; it was a devastating sentence of severe economic and physical judgment. Without rain, crops would fail, and food and water supplies would rapidly deplete.

This divine judgment was directly provoked by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, who had led the northern kingdom of Israel into widespread Baal worship, turning the nation away from Yahweh and into deep moral corruption and sexual immorality. Centuries earlier, God warned His covenant people in Deuteronomy 11 that turning to idols would cause the heavens to be shut up. The drought was both a covenant response and a direct challenge to Baal, who was revered as the god of rain, storm, and agricultural fertility. By cutting off the rain, God exposed Baal as entirely powerless while mercifully calling Israel to repent.

Immediately after delivering this bold message, God commanded Elijah to go into hiding at the Brook Cherith, east of the Jordan River. There, God sustained his prophet through miraculous daily provision: ravens delivered bread and meat every morning and evening, and Elijah drank from the brook. Eventually, however, the effects of the nationwide drought caught up with Elijah's sanctuary, and the brook dried up.

Lesson 1: Faith Learns to Go Where God Sends

When the brook dried up, God gave Elijah his next assignment: "Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food" (1 Kings 17:9).

[Cherith / Jordan River] ---> ~100 Miles (5 Days on Foot) ---> [Zarephath in Sidon]

This instruction required Elijah to undertake a rigorous 100-mile journey on foot, lasting approximately five days. The distance, however, was not the most shocking aspect of the command—the destination was.

- **The Epicenter of Opposition:** Zarephath was situated in Sidon, the home territory of Queen Jezebel.
- **Hostile Territory:** Jezebel was actively conducting a campaign to execute the prophets of Yahweh while advancing Baal worship across Israel.
- **Uncomfortable Obedience:** God was sending His lead prophet directly into enemy territory and the very stronghold of the cult of Baal.

Despite the obvious danger and discomfort, Elijah obeyed without hesitation. Following God repeatedly demands taking the next step of obedience, even when the direction leads into circumstances or locations one would never choose independently.

Lesson 2: Faith Learns to Trust What God Promises

Upon arriving at the gates of Zarephath, Elijah encountered the widow gathering sticks. He asked her for a small cup of water, and as she turned to get it, he added a request for a piece of bread. While custom dictated hospitality toward strangers, the woman was forced to refuse the request for food.

She explained her desperate circumstances: she possessed only a handful of flour in a jar and a tiny drop of olive oil in a jug. She was gathering sticks to prepare one final meal for herself and her young son before they succumbed to starvation.

In response, Elijah made a request that might seem insensitive on the surface: "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have... and then make something for yourself and your son" (1 Kings 17:13). Elijah was putting her faith to the test—asking her to put God's word ahead of her visible circumstances.

Elijah anchored this request on a specific divine promise: "The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land"

(1 Kings 17:14). The phrase "Do not be afraid" was justified precisely *because* the God of Israel had spoken.

The widow chose to trust God's word over her immediate plight. She prepared the meal for Elijah first, and as promised, God miraculously replenished the jar of flour and jug of oil day after day.

This reliance mirrors modern tests of faith. When facing alarming real-world diagnoses or financial collapse, believers are challenged to move beyond intellectual agreement with Scripture and actively rest on God's foundational promises—such as His pledge never to leave His people and to provide sufficient grace in times of need.

Lesson 3: Faith Learns to Hope in the God Who Makes All Things New

For roughly two to three years, Elijah resided in the widow's home, supported by the daily miracle of endless flour and oil. However, this period of peaceful provision was abruptly shattered when the widow's son fell severely ill and died.

Grief-stricken, the widow questioned whether Elijah's presence had brought divine judgment upon her household for her past sins. Her tragedy highlights a critical reality of the Christian walk: walking faithfully with God does not exempt believers from the painful realities, illnesses, and losses inherent to a fallen world.

Elijah did not offer platitudes. Instead, he took the lifeless boy into his own upper-room quarters, laid him on his bed, and brought his honest grief and unanswered questions straight to God in prayer:

"Lord my God, have you brought tragedy even on this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" (1 Kings 17:20)

Elijah stretched himself over the child three times—a symbolic action depicting life being placed over death—and pleaded for the boy's breath to return. God heard Elijah's cry, and the child was restored to life. Elijah carried the living boy downstairs and presented him to his mother.

The Point of the Miracle: The Ultimate Resurrection Hope

While God graciously worked a miracle for this widow, Scripture does not guarantee that every earthly loss will be immediately reversed in this life. This account represents the very first recorded resurrection in the Bible, establishing a thematic drumbeat that echoes across Scripture:

- **Preview Miracles:** Jesus echoed this event during His earthly ministry by raising Jairus' daughter, the widow's son at Nain, and Lazarus from the grave.
- **The Ultimate Victory:** These restorations served as historical previews of Jesus' own victory over the grave through His death and resurrection.

- **The Future Restoration:** The believer's ultimate hope is anchored in the complete restoration of all creation—a future where death, mourning, and pain will be permanently undone.

As theologian Charles Spurgeon observed, "When you cannot trace God's hand, trust God's heart". In seasons of darkness, uncertainty, or sorrow, faith looks past immediate circumstances to the proven love of God in Jesus Christ, trusting that He will ultimately make all things new.