

Elijah: A Confronter of Kings, Who Could Hear God in the Stillness

I Kings 16–19; 2 Kings 2

This lesson comes from Volume 6 of *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*. The lessons in Volume 6 are all Old Testament Extension Lessons. We generally introduce these lessons to children who have spent at least three years working with the Core Lessons in Volume 2 and are now developmentally ready for more.

The prophet Elijah challenged the kings of Israel for their idolatry and immorality. As a result he was not very popular and spent much of his time as a prophet in hiding. At the end of his life, a whirlwind carried him up into heaven in a fiery chariot. Elisha picked up Elijah's "mantle" and continued Elijah's work. We have no writings from either of these two prophets, but we have their stories in 1 and 2 Kings.

How to Use This Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense relives—the experience of today's lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today's story?

Just listen. This is not a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about their own

creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to listen in a supportive way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. Whether you read the lesson or simply listen as your child shares what was received in today's lesson, ask the Wondering questions printed in the left column. Remember, there are many right answers! Be open to what the presentation can mean to you and your child. God will teach you new meanings every day. Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

The Presentation

King Ahab, who ruled over Israel, married Jezebel from a different land. She made Ahab worship her god, a god called Ba'al, and he told the people they had to worship Ba'al. The prophet Elijah told the king that this was not right, so there would be no rain in the land for three years. This made the king very angry, so Elijah had to hide.

Elijah went to a valley where there was a little river. God sent ravens to feed him. Still there was no rain, so the river dried up. Elijah went to a town called

Wondering

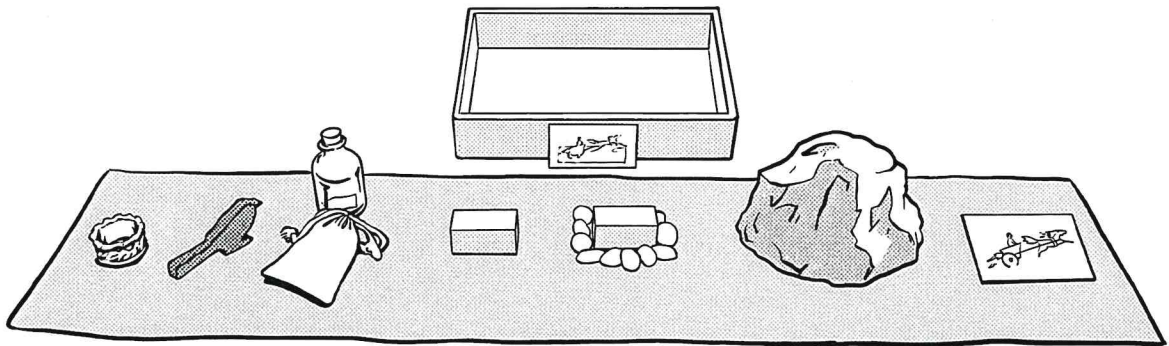
- **I wonder** what part of this story you like the best?
- **I wonder** what part of this story is the most important?
- **I wonder** where you are in the story and what part is about you?

Zarephath and asked a woman for food. She told him that she had just enough for herself and her son. Elijah told her if she shared her food with him, they would not go hungry. She did and it came true.

After three years, Elijah returned and told the king to gather the priests of Ba'al to make a sacrifice to God. The priests prayed all day long, but nothing happened. Finally, it was Elijah's turn. Fire fell from the heavens and burnt up the offering.

Ahab and Jezebel were even angrier with Elijah, so he ran away to the holy mountain of God. God said, "What are you doing, Elijah?" Elijah answered, "I have done everything you asked, but the people are killing all your prophets. I am the only one left." God said, "Go out and stand on the mountain. I will come to you." The wind blew, an earthquake shook the ground, a raging fire came, but God was not in any of it. Then there was only silence. Elijah heard a still, small voice and knew it was God. God told him to go back to the people. Ahab and Jezebel died, but Elijah was a prophet in the land of Israel for the rest of his days.

When Elijah was about to die, he went with Elisha, his friend, into the wilderness. A chariot of fire appeared. Elisha watched as Elijah was taken up into heaven in the chariot. Elijah's mantle—a kind of scarf—fell to the ground. Elisha picked it up, and knew God's spirit was with him. Elisha became a great prophet.



Godly Play **Silence**

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. Today we will discuss the importance of silence in a Godly Play room. This seems timely since in the story of Elijah, God speaks to the prophet in the silence.

In a Godly Play session, we work to provide as much silence (space for thinking and wondering) as is possible. This is very counter-cultural. Most children's programs are

jam-packed with activities, but contemplative silence permeates the way that everything is done in the Godly Play.

It is particularly noticeable during the telling of a story. The storyteller does not rush through, but leaves space between the words for the meaning to sink in. Silence is also important during the Wondering to leave plenty of time for the children to look and think about the questions that are posed.