

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

## Sunday Morning

Study 2

*The Ravens and the Widow*

# The Ravens and the Widow

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

**Objective** To show the students how God protected and provided for Elijah, and that He does the same for us today.

## Key Verses

1 Kings 17:1-16—Main Teaching Passage

Matthew 6:25-34

Luke 4:24-26

**Memory Verse** - Luke 12:24

"Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?"

## Hook

Review last week's memory verse, James 5:17.

Ask the kids if they have can remember a time God provided something that they or their family needed (a job for a parent, a car, food, healing, etc.) Have them share.

Think about God's faithfulness in your own life. Has God ever provided for you in a time of need? Share your example while the kids are thinking.

Today we are going to see how God provided food and water for Elijah during the drought.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

# BOOK

Remember, it was during the reign of the wicked king Ahab that Elijah the prophet declared, “The LORD God of Israel lives.” He said that by the word of the LORD, there would be a terrible drought for years, and after delivering this message to Ahab, God told Elijah to hide at a brook called Cherith. There he would live for a time, receiving food from ravens and drinking from the brook. Eventually, the brook dried up because there had been no rain, so Elijah again received instruction from the LORD to leave from there and go to Zarephath, where he would again be provided for, but this time by a widow.

As Elijah arrived in Zarephath, he saw a widow gathering sticks. He asked her for a drink and some food, but she said that she was gathering sticks for a fire to prepare what little food she had left for her and her son before they died, since they had nothing else left to eat. Elijah told her not to fear, but to fetch him a drink and share some food with him, declaring that the LORD God of Israel would not let her oil or flour run out until it started to rain again. She went and did this, and it was as Elijah said. They were able to eat day after day. The flour never got used up, and the oil jar never ran dry, just as the LORD had promised.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

# LOOK

Maybe you have heard it said, “Where God guides, God provides.” This was certainly true of Elijah, and it remains true for us today. Elijah’s name means, “The LORD is God.” His name and his message were the same. He had reminded King Ahab that the God of Israel was the living God, and that even if the rest of the country bowed to Baal, Elijah would stand before the LORD. As we stand before the LORD and live for Him, we can be assured of His provision and blessing in our lives. This is an important point. Elijah was provided for in his obedience to God’s leading. If Elijah had not gone to the brook Cherith, he would not have had anything to eat or drink. The same applies if he hadn’t gone to Zarephath. Where God guides, God provides.

But God doesn’t always do things the way we would do them. We trust His ways are best, but no doubt Elijah would not have chosen ravens to deliver his food, as ravens were among those animals that were listed as unclean in the Law, and no doubt he would not have gone to Zarephath, which was enemy territory, and arguably very dangerous. But whether we are in the midst of enemies, in our homes, or anywhere in between, we are never safer than when we are living in God’s will, and never in more danger than when we are outside of it.

# LOOK (Continued)

We soon see why Elijah was sent to this widow in particular. She and her son were on the brink of starvation! But God had another plan. Part of that plan was to provide food and drink for Elijah, and the other part was to show this woman and her son that the LORD God of Israel was the true and living God and cared for them very much. God often leads his people into situations that they might find hard or uncomfortable, but remember, He doesn't just have a plan to prosper *you* to give *you* a future and a hope. He also has a plan for your neighbor, and your friend, your unsaved family member, and over seven billion other people on the planet. Sometimes, you will get to be a part of God's plan for someone else, so even in difficult circumstances we trust His ways are best.

It's hard for us to imagine what it would be like to depend on God for our food and water every day. Most of us don't worry about where our next meal will come from. If anything, we worry about what that meal will be and whether we will like it or not. But at the brook, Elijah waited for the ravens twice a day for food, and at the widow's house, they depended on the Lord to keep filling the flour and oil. But the lesson remains: it is God who provides our daily needs to us.

The same God who feeds the ravens can use the ravens to feed His people, and the same God who can multiply fish and bread to feed thousands can multiply flour and oil each day to feed a widow and her son. Jesus told us not to worry about what we will eat or drink or wear, but to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and to pray for God's daily provision for the things we need. He may provide for us in ways we would not have chosen, but His ways will always be better, and a fridge that always has food is just about as remarkable as a replenishing pot of flour and oil, and it should cause our hearts to praise our God who provides.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

# TOOK

As a class, memorize Luke 12:24.

**Pray:** Ask the Lord to continue to provide for your needs and thank Him for taking care of you. Thank Him for breath in your lungs, clean water to drink, food to eat, and for everything else He has provided for you today.

**Parent Question:** How did God provide food and water for Elijah?

# FURTHER STUDY

## Commentary on 1 Kings 17:1-16 by David Guzik

A. Elijah prays for drought and experiences God's provision.

1. ([1Ki 17:1](#)) Elijah tells of the Lord's judgment.

**And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."**

a. **Elijah the Tishbite:** At this crucial time in the history of Judah and Israel, the Prophet **Elijah** suddenly appeared. He became the dominant spiritual force in Israel during the dark days of Ahab's apostasy.

i. The name **Elijah** means, *Yahweh is my God*. In the days when Ahab's government officially supported the worship of Baal and other gods, even the *name* of this prophet told the truth.

ii. It was a crucial time in the history of Israel. It looked as if the worship of the true God might be completely eliminated in the northern kingdom. "The land swarmed with the priests of Baal and of the groves – proud of Court favour; glorying in their sudden rise to power; insolent, greedy, licentious, and debased. The fires of persecution were lit, and began to burn with fury." (Meyer)

iii. "The whole land seemed apostate. Of all the thousands of Israel, only seven thousand remained who had not bowed the knee or kissed the hand to Baal. But they were paralysed with fear; and kept so still, that their very existence was unknown by Elijah in the hour of his great loneliness." (Meyer)

b. **There shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word:** This was a dramatic demonstration against the pagan god Baal, who was thought to be the sky god, the god of the weather. Elijah showed that through his prayers to the God of Israel, Yahweh was mightier than Baal.

i. "The old religion against the new; the child of nature against the effeminate child of the courts; camel's hair against soft clothing; moral strength against moral weakness." (Meyer)

ii. Elijah was not merely the *prophet* of this drought – in the sense of prayer, he was *the cause* of the drought. He prayed and it happened. [James 5:17-18](#) makes this clear: *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.*

c. **As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand:** This statement of Elijah shows the source of his strength. It is specifically said *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours* ([James 5:17](#)). Yet he showed a strength greater than most of us in our life with God. We must pay attention to these indications to the source of Elijah's strength.

i. **As the Lord God of Israel lives:** Everyone else felt that the Lord was dead, but for Elijah the Lord lived. He was the supreme reality of Elijah's life.

ii. **Before whom I stand:** He stood in the presence of Ahab, but he was conscious of the presence of someone greater than any earthly king. Gabriel himself could not choose a higher title ([Luke 1:19](#)).

2. ([1Ki 17:2-5](#)) Elijah escapes to Cherith.

**Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it will be *that* you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” So he went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan.**

a. **Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith:** The drought announced by Elijah in the previous verse was a great threat to the northern kingdom of Israel and the reign of Ahab. Therefore his life was in danger, and God sent him to **the Brook Cherith** for his own safety.

i. God led Elijah one step at a time. He did not tell him to go to Cherith until he first delivered the message to Ahab. He did not tell him to go to Zarephath until the brook dried up at Cherith. God led Elijah by faith, one step at a time, and Elijah followed in faith.

ii. **Hide by the Brook Cherith:** Through this God taught Elijah the value of the *hidden* life. He had just become famous as an adversary of Ahab, so mighty that his prayers could stop the rain. At the moment of his new-found fame, God wanted Elijah to **hide** and be alone with God. “We must not be surprised, then, if sometimes our Father says: ‘There, child, thou hast had enough of this hurry, and publicity, and excitement; get thee hence, and hide thyself by the brook – hide thyself in the Cherith of the sick chamber; or in the Cherith of disappointed hopes; or in the Cherith of bereavement; or in some solitude from which the crowds have ebbed away.’ ” (Meyer)

iii. “Elijah could not be alone, so long as he had God and himself to converse with. A good man is never less alone, than when alone.” (Trapp)

b. **And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there:** The escape to the Brook Cherith was for more than protection. It was also to train Elijah in dependence upon the Lord. In a season of drought, he had to trust that God could keep this brook flowing. He also had to accept food from **the ravens**, which were unclean animals.

i. The name **Cherith** comes from the ancient Hebrew root meaning, *to cut away, to cut up or off*. This shows that God had some cutting to do in the life of Elijah during this period.

ii. **I have commanded the ravens to feed you there:** There is an emphasis on the word **there**. God promised that the ravens would feed Elijah as he stayed at Cherith. Of course, theoretically the ravens could feed him anywhere – but God commanded that it be at Cherith. Elijah perhaps wanted to be somewhere else, or be preaching, or doing anything else. Yet God wanted him **there** and would provide for him **there**.

3. ([1Ki 17:6](#)) Elijah’s provision.

**The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.**

a. **The ravens brought him bread and meat:** Every bit of food that came to Elijah came from the beak of an unclean animal. Elijah had to put away his traditional ideas of clean and unclean or he would die of starvation. Through this, God taught Elijah to emphasize the spirit of the law before the letter of the law.

i. Charles Spurgeon drew two points of application from this event, likening the food the ravens brought to spiritual food. First, he recognized that God may bring a good word to us through an unclean vessel, a spiritu-

ally unclean like a raven. Second, that one can bring spiritual food to others and still be unclean spiritually themselves. "But see, too, how possible it is for us to carry bread and meat to God's servants, and do, some good things for his church, and yet be ravens still!" (Spurgeon)

b. **Bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening:** As faithfully as He provided manna for Israel in the wilderness, God provided for Elijah's needs. He came to trust more than ever in the miraculous provision of God.

i. "A little boy, having read this incident with his widowed mother on wintry night, as they sat in a fireless room, beside a bare table, asked her if he might set the door open for God's ravens to come in; he was so sure that they must be on their way. The burgomaster of that German town, passing by, was attracted by the sight of the open door, and entered, inquiring the cause. When he learnt the reason, he said, 'I will be God's raven'; and relieved their need then and afterwards." (Meyer)

4. ([1Ki 17:7](#)) Elijah and the dry brook.

**And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.**

a. **After a while that the brook dried up:** Elijah saw the flow of the brook slow down until it **dried up**. His source of water was gone.

i. "Ah, it is hard to sit beside a drying brook – much harder than to face the prophets of Baal on Carmel." (Meyer) Meyer also mentioned different kinds of drying brooks we might experience:

- The drying brook of popularity, ebbing away as from John the Baptist.
- The drying brook of health, sinking under a creeping paralysis, or a slow consumption.
- The drying brook of money, slowly dwindling before the demands of sickness, bad debts, or other people's extravagance.
- The drying brook of friendship, which for long has been diminishing, and threatens soon to cease.

ii. "Why does God let them dry? He wants to teach us not to trust in His gifts but in Himself. He wants to drain us of self, as He drained the apostles by ten days of waiting before Pentecost. He wants to loosen our roots ere He removes us to some other sphere of service and education. He wants to put in stronger contrast the river of throne-water that never dries." (Meyer)

b. **Because there had been no rain in the land:** This was the drought Elijah prayed for. He did not pray for rain to come again, even for his own survival. He kept the purpose of God first, even when it adversely affected him.

B. God provides for Elijah through a widow.

1. ([1Ki 17:8-9](#)) God calls Elijah to go to Zarephath.

**Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."**

a. **Arise, go to Zarephath:** God led Elijah from the dry brook to a *Gentile* city. This was an unusual and challenging move for Elijah to make.

i. God kept transplanting Elijah: From home, to Jezreel, to Cherith, to Zarephath. This transplanting made him stronger and stronger.

ii. We should also remember that this was the general region that the wicked queen Jezebel was from. "Elijah

was visiting enemy territory and showing the power of God in an area where Baal was worshipped, though ineffective through drought.” (Wiseman)

b. **See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you:** Widows were notorious for their poverty in the ancient world. God told Elijah to go to a Gentile widow and receive provision; it probably seemed to make more sense to wait beside a dry brook.

i. When He was rejected by His own people, Jesus used this example of Elijah’s coming to the widow of Zarephath as an illustration of God’s right to choose a people to Himself: *Then He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.”* ([Luke 4:24-26](#))

2. ([1Ki 17:10-11](#)) Elijah addresses a widow.

**So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink.” And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, “Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.”**

a. **Indeed a widow was there gathering sticks:** This showed that she was a poor woman, gathering meager scraps for firewood. Elijah perhaps thought that God would lead him to an unusual *rich* widow, but God led him to a poor Gentile widow.

i. “You learn this from the fact that she had not even firewood. Now, there was no reason why she should not have had that even in time of famine of bread, for there was no famine of wood, unless she had been extremely poor.” (Spurgeon)

ii. God told Elijah ([1 Kings 17:9](#)) that He *commanded* a widow to feed the prophet. Yet this woman seemed unaware of the command. This shows how God’s unseen hand often works. “She does not appear to have been at all aware that she was to feed a prophet. She went out that morning to gather sticks, not to meet a guest. She was thinking about feeding her son and herself upon the last cake; certainly she had no idea of sustaining a man of God out of that all but empty barrel of meal. Yet the Lord, who never lieth, spoke a solemn truth when he said, ‘I have commanded a widow woman there.’ He had so operated upon her mind that he had prepared her to obey the command when it did come by the lip of his servant the prophet.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Please bring me a little water in a cup... Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand:** Elijah boldly put this request in faith. Common sense and circumstances told him that the widow would not give so generously to a Jewish stranger, but faith made him ask.

i. “This was certainly putting the widow’s faith to an extraordinary trial: to take and give to a stranger, of whom she knew nothing, the small pittance requisite to keep her child from perishing, was too much to be expected.” (Clarke)

ii. God indeed chose this woman, but He chose her for more than a miracle. He chose her for *service*. “The choice of this woman, while it brought such blessedness to her, involved service. She was not elected merely to be saved in the famine, but to feed the prophet. She must be a woman of faith; she must make the little cake first, and afterwards she shall have the multiplication of the meal and of the oil. So the grace of God does not choose men to sleep and wake up in heaven, nor choose them to live in sin and find themselves absolved at the last; nor choose them to be idle and go about their own worldly business, and yet to win a reward at the last for which they never toiled. Ah, no! the sovereign electing grace of God chooses us to repentance, to faith, and afterwards to holiness of living, to Christian service, to zeal, to devotion.” (Spurgeon)

3. ([1Ki 17:12](#)) The response of the widow of Zarephath.

**So she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I *am* gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.”**

a. **As the Lord your God lives:** This polite address showed that she respected God, yet recognized that the God of Israel was *Elijah’s* God and not her own.

b. **I do not have bread:** Elijah quickly found out that she was not only poor, but *desperately* poor. Elijah found her right before she was going to prepare her last morsel of food for herself and her son – and then resign themselves to death.

4. ([1Ki 17:13-14](#)) Elijah’s words to her.

**And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go *and* do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring *it* to me; and afterward make *some* for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.’ ”**

a. **Do not fear:** This was God’s first word to the widow through Elijah. Her present crisis rightly made her afraid, and God wanted her to put away fear and replace it with trust in Him.

b. **Go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first:** This was an audaciously bold request from the prophet. He asked this destitute widow to **first** give *him* something from her last bit of food. This seemed like the worst kind of predatory fund-raising.

c. **The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth:** This shows why Elijah could make such an audacious request. It was because God told him that He would provide a never-ending supply of food for the widow, her son, and Elijah himself. He asked the widow to put her trust in this great promise of God.

5. ([1Ki 17:15-16](#)) The widow’s obedience and God’s great blessing.

**So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for *many* days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah.**

a. **So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah:** The widow actually did it – she willingly gave at great risk, based on her trust in the promise of God.

b. **She and he and her household ate for many days:** God fulfilled the promise to the widow, her son, and Elijah. God used her as a channel of supply and her needs were met as a result.

i. “Why did not God give her a granary full of meal at once, and a vat full of oil instantly? I will tell you. It was not merely because of God’s intent to try her, but there was wisdom here. Suppose he had given her a granary full of meal, how much of it would have been left by the next day? I question whether any would have remained, for in days of famine men are sharp of scent, and it would soon have been noised about the city, ‘The old widow woman who lives in such-and-such a street, has a great store of food.’ Why, they would have caused a riot, and robbed the house, and perhaps, have killed the woman and her son. She would have been despoiled of her treasure, and in four and twenty hours the barrel of meal would have been as empty as it was at first, and the cruse of oil would have been spilled upon the ground.” (Spurgeon)