

Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

Elijah and Elisha



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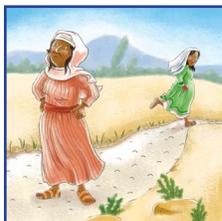
Introduction	2
Unit Overview	3
Intergenerational and Home Ideas	4



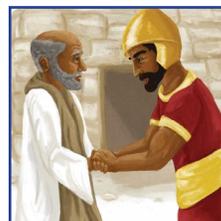
The Widow of Zarephath
1 Kings 17:8-24



I Will Not Leave You
2 Kings 2:1-15



What Are You
Doing Here?
1 Kings 19:1-21



Elisha the Healer
2 Kings 5:1-19

The free At-Home Kit Guide provides instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download it at www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum or www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum. Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page for this unit.

© 2021 Westminster John Knox Press

First edition
Published by Westminster John Knox Press
Louisville, Kentucky

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Printed in the United States of America

Goal: To explore how God provides for us through one another and how we can articulate our own needs.

Connecting with the Biblical Text

Our story picks up mid-drought, while Elijah was hiding from King Ahab. As you read, notice God's directions to Elijah and Elijah's interactions with the widow from Zarephath, a poor woman who wasn't an Israelite. Pay attention to the promise Elijah makes to the widow. As Elijah prophesied to Ahab, the drought has now become dire. The widow who had enough food left for only one last meal for her son and herself is now asked to provide for her unexpected guest. God provided enough oil and flour to last until the drought was over. Then the widow noticed her son was sick and was getting worse. The woman sought help from Elijah, asking if it was her fault because it was common in her culture to assume that an illness was caused by sin. Elijah spoke to God. Notice the reversal in 1 Kings 17:22: God listened to Elijah, and the boy was healed. How interesting that God, who asked people to listen to prophets, is pictured here as the one who listens. This story about providing, listening, miracles, and healing gives us a glimpse of God and God's care for humankind.

For additional reading on this text, visit bit.ly/GLIKings17.

Connecting with the World

- As you prepare to teach this session, think about the strangers you have met this week or those who have offered you hospitality. How have you been changed by their actions?
- What groups in your community offer food, drink, and shelter to immigrants, refugees, and people experiencing homelessness? How is your church involved in this work?

- Think about the people from whom you are most different—by culture, class, sexual orientation, political affiliation. Who is God sending you to listen to and hear their story?
- Explore ways to get involved in hunger action at bit.ly/GLPresbyterianHunger or go to your denominational website. Visit bread.org to learn about Bread for the World and their programs that work to affect legislation and policy concerning feeding people.

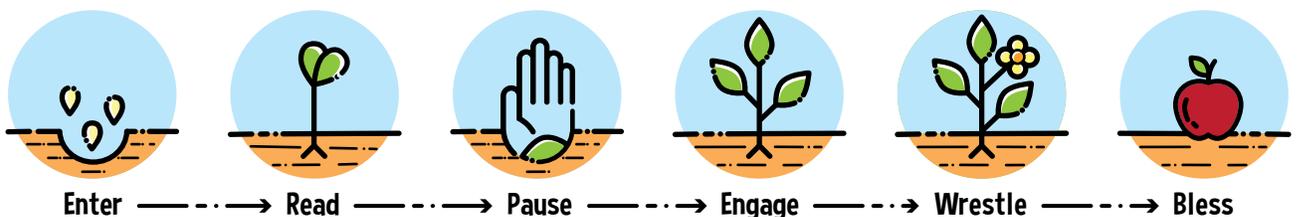
Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

This will probably be a story from the Bible that children have not heard about. There is a lot going on in this story, with the miracle of the flour and oil and the healing of the widow's son. We support children's growth in faith when we encourage their questions. In this story, God provided for Elijah, the widow, and her son so that they would not starve, and they would live. This would be a good time to share stories about how we can be involved in sharing food. In this way, children will see how ancient stories are still relevant today.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

Just as with nature, we experience times of bounty and flourishing and times of dryness, famine, and drought in our lives. Everything is good until something happens. Perhaps you or a family member or friend may become hungry or thirsty. Recall a time when you were able to provide for someone else. What gifts did God give you? Thinking about the dry times in your life, how did God provide? Who was there to sustain you? Our faith in God is sustained when we are able to both give and receive care from one another.

God, open my eyes to the strangers I will meet this week. How can I meet them with a generous spirit and a kind heart? Amen.



Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✓ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✓ Battery-operated candle
- ✓ Drawing supplies
- ✓ Play dough
- ✓ *Glory to God* hymnal, hymnal with “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying,” or internet-connected device
- ✓ *Babbit and Joan, a Rabbit and a Phone* by Denise Turu (Flyaway Books, 2020) or internet-connected device

Preparing to Lead

Read the story from the Bible, 1 Kings 17:8–24. As you read, make notes of any questions you have about the story. Think about your own experience with this text.

- ✓ If you have heard this story before, when?
- ✓ How do you relate to it?
- ✓ How might this story play a role in your own life right now?

Read the story “The Widow of Zarephath” in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 84). Think about how children might react when hearing this story for the first time. Be mindful of how you read this story aloud to them. Some questions you might want them to consider are:

- ✓ Who are the characters in this story?
- ✓ What role does God play?
- ✓ What kinds of emotions might the widow feel about being asked to provide for Elijah when she has so little?
- ✓ How do the characters listen to one another?
- ✓ How do each of the characters provide for one another?

Prepare a table in the middle of the space. Place your candle in the center with any other supplies you might need throughout your time together. Make sure you have places where children can sit comfortably at a table with a hard surface. As children enter the space, offer them a piece of play dough.

If you have any older children or additional helpers, have them read the different stories with the children while everyone gathers.



Enter into sacred space together.

As you hand participants their play dough, explain that you will be talking about a story where a woman makes bread. Ask the children how they might knead their dough and form their own loaves.

Once everyone is present, invite them to gather around the space you have set up and turn on your candle. Tell the children that the candle is there to represent God's light in the world and to remind us that God is always present and will always listen to the things we need. Invite the children to sing “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” (*Glory to God* hymnal, #469), or show the YouTube video “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying Lyric Video (Ken Medema)” (bit.ly/GLLordListen, 2:39) and invite the children to sing along as the words become familiar.

Ask the participants to share their play dough loaves with the group. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ✓ Who would you like to share your loaf with?
- ✓ Why did you shape your loaf of bread as you did?
- ✓ What do you think bread looked like in the Bible?
- ✓ What other Bible stories are there where people share what they had? (*some ideas might be: the people and animals on the ark with Noah, the boy who shared his lunch and Jesus shared the food with the crowd, believers in the early church who shared all they had with one another*)



Read a story of God's people.

Read aloud the story “The Widow of Zarephath” from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 84). Invite the children to pay attention to how the characters in the story listen to one another.

If you have older children or youth, invite them to read the story aloud or have them act it out as you read.

Leading



Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Give the children a moment to pause and reflect on what they heard, inviting them to think about what it means to listen to someone and what it means to be listened to by someone.



Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- What are some reasons that we might have a hard time listening to what others need from us?
- When was a time you asked for help but no one heard you?
- When was a time you asked for help and someone heard you?

Explain to the children that in the Bible there are many stories in which people listened to God when it wasn't convenient or easy. When Elijah listens to God, he finds the widow. When the widow listens to Elijah, God provides for her and her son with enough to eat. Then God listens to Elijah and saves the widow's son. It wasn't easy, but a lot of good came from all that listening!

As children explore what it means to listen to the needs of those around them, discuss what it means for others to hear them when they need something.

○ Listening to God

- Invite the children to listen to more stories about listening from *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*. Form small groups or work together as one. Assign one of the stories listed below to each group, or choose two or three stories to read as one group. Invite volunteers to read the stories, as appropriate with your group(s). Have the children reflect on how each of the characters in the stories listened.
 - "Deborah, a Wise Prophet" (p. 72)
 - "The Hardest Thing" (p. 86)
 - "Moses and the Special Holy Place" (p. 90)
 - "Samuel Tells a Hard Truth" (p. 106)
 - "God Asks Solomon a Question" (p. 124)
 - "Jonah Runs Away" (p. 132)
 - "God Gives the Ten Commandments" (p. 166)
 - "How Can This Happen?" (p. 186)
 - "A Prophet Is Born" (p. 188)

- "Shhh, Listen!" (p. 200)
- "The Widow and the Judge" (p. 220)
- "The Short Man" (p. 242)
- "Friends Who Help" (p. 250)
- "Jesus at the Pool" (p. 262)

• After reading the stories, invite the children to respond to the questions below. Have another adult or helper create a list of the answers for everyone to see.

- Who listened in this story?
- Who didn't listen?
- What happened because they listened or didn't listen?



Wrestle with our place in God's story.

Talk with the children about how it is not always easy for us to listen to the needs of others, but it is important that we work at doing it all the time. Comment that it's important for us to say what we need and to be heard. Wonder together about ways we can listen in the world. We can all have different needs and different ways of listening. Invite the children to share what helps them listen. Emphasize to the children that some of us need quiet things to do when we listen, while others might need to run around. Just as God takes care of each of our needs, we want to take care of the needs of one another.

Choose one or both options.

○ Expressing Feelings

- Highlight for the children that sometimes saying what it is we need is not easy, especially when it comes to our feelings. Share that when we can name our feelings, we can determine what we need.
- Show the YouTube video "Sesame Street: Dave Matthews and Grover Sing about Feelings" (bit.ly/GLGrover, 3:59). After watching, invite the children to wonder together using some of the following prompts:
 - What are some of the words that you use to express the things you need?
 - When you express your feelings, how do you know when someone listens to you?
 - What are some ways in which we try to express our feelings that make it hard for people to hear them?
 - How do you feel cared for when others listen to you?

Leading

○ Listening to the Needs of Others

- 🌿 Tell the children they will hear a story about Babbit, a rabbit, and Joan, her phone. Invite the children to pay attention to how Babbit listened to Joan when she said she needed to take a break. Even though Babbit was worried about trusting Joan, just like the widow hesitated before helping Elijah, Babbit listened and had a wonderful adventure. Read aloud the book *Babbit and Joan, a Rabbit and a Phone* by Denise Turu to the children, or show the YouTube video “Babbit and Joan, a Rabbit and a Phone Read by Judy Gardner” (bit.ly/GLBabbit, 8:14).
- 🌿 Have a conversation with the children about the book using the following questions:
 - Why might it have been hard for Babbit to listen to what Joan needed?
 - When Babbit listened and did as Joan asked, what happened for Babbit?
 - How do good things happen for us when we listen to what others need?
 - How do you think it was hard for the widow to listen to what Elijah had to tell her about what God said?



Bless one another with God's grace.

As you end your time together, use the same song you began your time together with. Invite the children to think about how God listens to us all the time as you sing “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” (*Glory to God* hymnal, #469) or show the YouTube video “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying Lyric Video (Ken Medema)” (bit.ly/GLLordListen, 2:39).

Close with a prayer, inviting the children to repeat after you as you pray:

Dear God, /
you know our needs /
even before we do. /
Help us to listen /
to the needs of others /
and express our needs /
so that people can hear them. /
Thank you /
for taking care of us. /
Amen. /



Grow with more.

○ Listening Closely

- 🌿 Invite the children to play Telephone, a game where listening to each other is really important.
 - Have the children sit in a circle and whisper a word or phrase into the ear of the first participant. Then have that person whisper to the person on their other side, and so on. Once the final person has been told the secret word or phrase, have them share what they were told. Typically, the word or phrase changes as it gets passed down.
 - Children can ask for the word to be repeated to them, but they cannot ask someone else to tell them.
- 🌿 Have a conversation about their experience using questions like these:
 - How is it that sometimes what we hear or think we hear isn't what is actually said?
 - Why is it important to listen clearly and to tell others the things we mean to say?
 - What are the ways that we can be better listeners?