

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 9, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



“A Miracle in the Home”
1 Kings 17:17-24

¹⁷ Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸ So she said to Elijah, “What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?” ¹⁹ And he said to her, “Give me your son.” So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰ Then he cried out to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?” ²¹ And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, I pray, let this child’s soul come back to him.” ²² Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. ²³ And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, “See, your son lives!” ²⁴ Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth.”-1 Kings 17:8-16 (NKJV)

While many people like to stick with the New Testament when it comes to reading the Bible, I must confess that the Old Testament has a special place in my heart. I love reading the testimonies of faith heroes like Abraham, Moses, David, Esther, Joseph and more. Their lives are so inspiring and if we're honest, filled with enough drama and conflict to keep me on the edge of my seat. One of my all-time favorite testimonies in the Bible is that of the Prophet Elijah, that we have been looking at the last few weeks as we began our study on his life.

This man was on fire for God. Literally at his request the Lord answered with a consuming fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:36-38). Elijah was sent on mission from God to turn the Israelites hearts back to their One True God. When we first read of Elijah, the Israelites have been worshiping both

the God of their ancestors, who is the One True Living God, and the false God Baal. Enough was enough. God sent Elijah to confront their wavering faith and lead them to make a decision.

4 Key Facts About Elijah to Remember:

- (1) **We don't know much about his past** - When Prophets are first introduced in the Bible, we are usually given some family lineage. Not so with Elijah. We only know he comes from a town called Tishbe... a relatively unknown place. We don't actually know its exact location today. Archeologists have never been able to find it. It was so small and perhaps insignificant that what did exist as a town/community is buried beneath the sands of time and/or no longer exists. It's almost like Elijah comes out of nowhere. However, he could not have come at a better time. At this point the Israelites are the furthest from God that they had ever been. They desperately needed Elijah's ministry more than his history. ***What significance might this have for our own lives?***
- (2) **Elijah became depressed to the point of wanting to die** - After that miraculous consuming fire on Mount Carmel (that we will get to in a few weeks), Elijah enters an extreme depression. So much so, he wants to die. (1 Kings 19:3-4) Elijah was hoping that Mount Carmel would cause a national change in Israel but it didn't. Not like he thought it would and now the Queen at the time, Jezebel, plotted to kill him. Not quite the outcome he was expecting at all. He lost hope, passion, and the desire to live. However, God encourages Elijah and speaks with Him on Mount Horeb. (1 Kings 19:9-18) After this Elijah is able to get out of this severe funk and continue on with his ministry even better than before.
- (3) **Elijah never died** - As I just shared with you, one of the reasons Elijah wanted to die was because he was afraid Queen Jezebel was going to kill him. But Jezebel's threat was a straight out lie. She would never kill Elijah. In fact, Elijah never even died. He was whisked up into Heaven by a whirlwind. (2 Kings 2:11).
- (4) **Elijah's key strategy was prayer** - Elijah performed miraculous acts in the name of the Lord, but James 5:17-18 reminded us that he was an ordinary man just like us. ***"Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit."*** - James 5:17-18ESV There was one strategy Elijah used that empowered him beyond belief and that was prayer. One time while living with a widow and her son, the son died and Elijah prayed over the boy and he was brought back to life. (1 Kings 17:21-22) When Elijah called on the Lord for fire on Mount Carmel he said a simple prayer. (1 Kings 18:36-37)

Elijah reminds us any life that trusts in God through prayer will make a significant impact in the Kingdom of God despite our history, who we are, or how we feel. If there is anything we learn from Elijah it's that prayer is truly powerful.



It is difficult – almost impossible – to read of Elijah in 1 Kings 17 without feeling somewhat sorry for this one who would become such a great man of God. Things definitely didn't seem to be going his way after he delivered God's message of judgment to Ahab and Jezebel. He found himself out in the middle of nowhere being fed by birds and drinking from a brook that eventually dried up, then traveling across hundreds of miles of enemy territory to a widow who God promised was going to take care of him, only to find himself in the "smelting pot" at Zarephath as the woman and her son were about to starve of malnutrition. Although a prophet and dedicated without reservation to his Lord, he underwent a period of extreme suffering and deprivation (misery)

which, from a human perspective, seems terribly unfair. “His holy, obedient life should have been rewarded,” we feel. But God had other plans. The cross must precede the crown... pruning must precede the bearing of fruit.

READ: John 15:1-8 *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”*

- (1) What does God/the Father/Vinedresser do with those in Him (branches) that bear fruit? (see verse 2) He prunes it.
- (2) What do you think he is telling us when he says he prunes us?
- (3) Why does He prune us?
- (4) What is the key to us being used/useful in his kingdom? Abide in him even in the midst of the pruning
- (5) What promise(s) do you see here for those who have been pruned and therefore prepared for use by God?

Elijah went to Cherith (the name literally means “cutting, to cut down, to cut off”), then to Zarephath (meaning literally “to smelt, to refine” or “crucible”) as his training intensified. IN the previous study we examined the first of two tests at Zarephath... the initial absence of enough food... they were starving to death. In this study, Elijah faced the most difficult test of all, the death of the widow’s son. God used this event as a “final examination” before elevating Elijah and placing him back into the flow of public attention.

CONTEXT AND ATMOSPHERE (1 Kings 17)

Let’s again set the stage for the events Elijah was about to encounter. Let’s view the scene from two different vantage points.

2 Different Vantage Points to View Elijah Life at This Point:

- (1) **Physically... hiding place** – His first place of seclusion was at the brook Cherith (vv.3-8); his second place of seclusion was in Zarephath (vv.9-24). *As a whole, how great were these places of hiding? [Not so great! Cherith may have been pretty good if you like to eat food from a scavenger bird, and don’t forget that he brook dried up! And Zarephath was an impoverished smelting pot, and the widow God provided to take care of Elijah was dying of starvation along with her son]* Then in **2 Kings 18:1** God commanded him to end his season

of hindering... *"Go, show yourself to Ahab..."* You can bet that wasn't a welcome show of himself. Ahab and Jezebel wanted him dead.

- (2) **Spiritually... a period of testing** – Perhaps the most eloquent words of this passage (1 Kings 17:17:24) are "Now it came about after these things..." (v.17a). What things? His first appearance before Ahab, announcing the drought (v.1); his seclusion at the brook Cherith, where God initially began reshaping his life (v.2); his experience with a dried-up brook (vv.2-7); his move to Zarephath for additional refinement (vv.8-10); and his encounter with the widow and her son (vv.8-16). Thus, after "these things" another test came, perhaps the greatest of all. That test? That widow's son became ill and died.

SICKNESS AND DEATH (1 Kings 17:17-18)

¹⁷ Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸ So she said to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?"

The child became severely ill, and we're told that "there was not breath left in him." In response to his death, his distressed and disillusioned mother said in sarcasm to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, O man of God?" Blaming him, she added, "Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?" Throughout the time the prophet had lived in her home, they had lived on the edge of starvation. Now the ultimate had occurred... death touched her home. Elijah's response to her accusation should be noted. ***He was silent and non-defensive...***

Timely Application: The woman had been exposed to God's work for a number of months perhaps. She had witnessed miracles, and she may have even told others about them. But she really had not learned to apply what she'd seen and that to which she'd been exposed.

THE DO'S & DON'TS OF HELPING OTHERS THROUGH GRIEF

Handling Grief is Hard for Most of Us

How do we help those who are grieving? How can we be a help and not a hinderance to one's grief? The truth is that most of us have no idea how to handle grief, so most of us do not handle it well. We try our best to be there for the bereaved, but all too often our well-meaning gestures are awkward and uncomfortable at best, and perhaps unhelpful and maybe even harmful in some ways at worst. Our grief-stricken friends, neighbors and maybe loved ones are often feeling isolated, judged, misunderstood, and alone. And though grief is deep and personal, it is not meant to be experienced all alone. In fact, families and friends who are able to share their grief find they have gained a depth to their relationship that would never otherwise have been found. Also, as believers/Christians, our compassionate care in times of grief to other may open the door for God to do a work in the lives of those grieving drawing them to Christ in relationship. So let's take a look at these practical and helps thoughts about what is probably not the best way to respond and help... some things to be cautious with if your are trying to help. And we'll also look at what to do to help those grieving.

What NOT to Do... Common Grief Misperceptions & Barriers:

So, what are some of the common misperceptions of grief that get in our way, and what can we do about them?

1. ***We don't always need to say "something"*** - The truth is, when someone has just experienced a major loss, there is usually nothing that can or needs to be said. Just being with them is good enough.
2. ***Trite reassurances do not usually help*** - "They're in a better place," "At least they're no longer suffering," or "Time heals all wounds," though well-meant, are better left unsaid. Trite saying are usually just that... trite, meaning they can sound so cliché that can seem insensitive to someone who is hurting, and those who are grieving may not always be ready to hear these words. Trite reassurances usually come from a good place, but are often spoken from a place of awkwardness... by those who don't really know what to say. Again, the best policy is if you don't know what to say, say that or nothing and just be with the person. Be present!
3. ***Talking about our own loss experiences is not usually a good option*** - Sharing our experiences with loss—saying "I know exactly how you feel," or "I understand completely"—usually makes the griever feel as if you are minimizing their experience or pain. I would qualify this one a bit by saying that sometimes the one who has lost a loved one will ask about your own experience with loss and may in fact want to hear how you handled your grief. The rule of thumb here is let the grieving one dictate when the time for this conversation is appropriate and when they may be ready to talk about it.

Because of these misconceptions and others, many bereaved find it difficult to feel supported. In fact, research shows that often the bereaved's circle of friends significantly changes through their grief process. We tend to filter out friends or family members who were emotionally insensitive, who seemed to lack depth or perspective or who were simply absent in our time of need. Sadly, I myself and my family fell away from some of our closest family friends through our most intense years of grief. It wasn't because we were angry or hurt, or no longer loved them... we still do. Our relationship just changed because they simply weren't there for us or our loved one in their time of need and the relationship changed, and that is okay. Though I still love them for the friendship of our past, we realized that the years had me and my family and our relationship perhaps wasn't what we thought it was. Though it hurts, you count it as a part of our grief and you move on.

For all of these reasons, seeking support through grief can be a challenge.

- Family members may not be available, due to their own grief
- Or they may expect the bereaved to continue to perform their "role" in the family system though they may not be up to yet (and may never be).
- Friends may or may not be capable of pushing aside their own fears about death and grief to be there for the bereaved.
- Church and community support can sometimes fall short too, because of fear or uncomfortableness of the situation... not knowing what to say, or the awkwardness of intruding or feeling like you are anyway.

The truth is... community and church support can help if the bereaved feels comfortable reaching out and trusts those who are there to help. Sometimes professional counseling is the only place to turn, but it is important the person you turn to is familiar with grief work, allowing you to simply be in the emotions of grief without trying to turn the grief into something more “familiar” to them, like depression or relationship issues. The point is to keep trying until you find the support that is right for you.

What TO Do... The Best Ways to Support Those Who Grieve:

Then, what is the best way to support someone through grief? It's simpler than you'd think.

1. **Just be there** - Listen... as a matter of face, learn to be a good listener. Let them talk and cry and talk and cry without putting a time limit on it and without judging.
2. **Don't get tired of hearing them tell their story** - Encourage expression of the facts, details and emotions related to the loss; it is a simple but profound method of healing. We sometimes think they need to get their mind off of it and talk about something else, so we try to change the subject, or get them to talk about something else... deflect attention. That is exactly the wrong things to do and can seem insensitive... like we don't care about their loved one or what they have just gone through. The truth is their loved one is the most important person/thing in the world to them at that moment and they want to talk about them and about even their loss of this person in their life, so give them space to talk about it... but do let it be at their own instigation and in their own timing.
3. **Check in on them** - Say, “I'm just calling to see how you're doing today.” No pressure or expectations, simply a friend checking in. Remind them that they are in your thoughts and prayers and offer if you can do anything to help in this time.
4. **Hold your tongue** - When you feel the urge to say something trite, like, “This too shall pass,” don't. Instead, just say, “I'm so sorry,” let them cry, and cry with them.

FAITH AND PRAYER (1 Kings 17:19-21)

¹⁹ And he said to her, “Give me your son.” So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. ²⁰ Then he cried out to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?” ²¹ And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him.”

Having deep compassion for the widow, and knowing that none of that which had happened was his own fault, Elijah demonstrated his faith with a *calm* and *wonderful* response.

3 Parts to Elijah's Response to the Widow's Grief:

- (1) **Horizontal response (v.19)** – *¹⁹ And he said to her, “Give me your son.” So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed.*
- (2) **Vertical response (v.20)** – There in his room, with the boy's body on the bed, Elijah got alone with God and talked to Him... verse 20 give us his prayer, *²⁰ Then he cried out to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?”* In privacy he expressed his own disappointment, discouragement and

confusion to God, rather than in the presence of the grieving woman, thus avoiding adding to her anguish. That is interesting. He didn't want to damage or discourage her faith, though his own may have been shaken a bit as reflected in his private prayer before God. *What does this tell us about how we ought to properly respond and react to those who are grieving (remember there is a proper and correct way to respond)?*

- (3) **Again... Horizontal response (v.21)** – It must be kept in mind that no one had ever before been raised from death... so Elijah's actions here were unique, but at the same time, a genuine demonstration of his faith in God. Placing his body atop the boys in a stretch-out fashion (perhaps face-to-face, feet-to-feet), he called out to God. With persistence he did this three times. Now, according to Mosaic Law, one who made such contact with a corpse was considered ceremonially unclean. But, Elijah saw this as a unique situation and forewent the technical details of the law. Note his prayer appeal of faith to a God whom he deeply trusted... notice it in verse 21, ²¹ *And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him."*

MIRACLE AND PRAISE (1 Kings 17:22-24)

²² *Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived.*²³ *And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives!"*²⁴ *Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth."*

The most exciting part of this account is to follow. The prophet had prayed and a miracle was performed by God, who'd listened to His man's appeal

3 Things to Take Note of in this Miracle:

- (1) **God's answer (v.22)** – ²² *Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived.* The text informs us, "... the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived."
- (2) **Elijah's reaction (v.23)** – ²³ *And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives!"* Taking the child down to his mother he reported, *"See, your son lives!"* Note that he did not call any attention to himself. God alone was the agent of the miracle. Elijah prayed... God responded. **Application:** We must give proper glory (credit) in situation where God has worked, not encroaching upon His rightful glory. The miracle occurred up in the room... in quiet. Elijah could easily have taken all the praise and credit of the boy's resurrection, but he did not... again he said, *"See, your son lives!"*
- (3) **Widow's response (v.24)** – ²⁴ *Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth."* She said, *"Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth."* What Elijah was by heart and character had been authenticated in her mind. He had effectively demonstrated the qualities of godliness before the woman.

CONCLUDING APPLICATION (Luke 6:44-46)

⁴⁴ *For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.* ⁴⁵ *A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings*

forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. ⁴⁶ *“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? ” -Luke 6:44-46 (NKJV)*

Elijah lived out his belief in his God... Jehovah. How about you? Knowing the common human problem of hypocrisy... statement of belief unaccompanied by demonstration... Jesus asked a probing question that is as relevant now as the day it passed His lips, *“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Load,’ and do not do what I say?”* A stinging question, isn’t it? How far off from Elijah’s example are you? Note his consistency...

Demonstrations of Elijah’s Consistency of Faith that We Need to Make Note of:

- (1) **Elijah demonstrated calmness and contentment** - Do you demonstrate calmness and contentment in trying times and situations?
- (2) **Elijah demonstrated gentleness and self-control** - Do you demonstration gentleness and self-control in the midst of the stress and anxiety of our day?
- (3) **Elijah demonstrated undiminished faith** – Do you demonstrate undiminished faith even in the most challenging circumstances?
- (4) **Elijah demonstrated humility**- Do you demonstrate humility as you approach life at its toughest?