

Earth, Wind, and Whisper...Elijah Encounters God

How do we know what God is like? Can we know without seeing Him what His traits are? Why don't we hear His voice loud and clear? In this story, Elijah has an opportunity to feel the full presence of God and be refreshed by His spirit. As Christians, it can be frustrating to feel as though God is far from us or doesn't answer things as we'd imagine, but in wonderful moments He comes to us.

Lesson focus: God is not always what we expect, but He works in mysterious and marvelous ways to comfort and reassure us of His splendor.

Passage: 1 Kings 19:1-13

Target Audience: Kindergarten-6th Grade (adaptable older or younger)

Materials Needed: cardstock and paper, straws, decorative material, hair dryer or fan, Ping-Pong ball or pom-pom, Bibles.

Lesson Opening: Wind power...Since today's tale involves wind, start out with a blowing race. Provide students with a straw and a small item such as a pom-pom or Ping-Pong ball. Two or three at a time (depending on space), have the students race to see who can maneuver the ball from one mark to another-- using only the straw and aiming their air at the ball. For younger students, have them hold up a hand to feel the air coming through. Explain that we are going to talk a little about wind. Do we see wind? No, but we know it is there because we see the effects of it as trees bend and sway or hair blows about wildly. In this story, we get to witness Elijah's experience of God's presence and power.

Alternatively (or additionally), start off with a discussion of how even the strongest of human bodies have their weaknesses. Tell students a little bit about the sport of "ultra marathon" running. An ultra marathon is a race that is usually longer than 40 or 50 miles. That's an hour long car ride. On foot! In one of these events, called the Badwater, contestants go from the bottom of Death Valley in California, which is the lowest point in the United States, up to Mount Whitney, which is the highest. It is 135 miles total. How do people run that far, for that long? Do you think they would get tired? Hungry? How would they prepare for such a thing? Show students pictures (a few are included) or facts about the races. Explain that today we will be talking about someone who did something very hard, for a very long time, and felt rather wiped out and exhausted. Fortunately, God was there to take care of him!

Bible Lesson:

Note: If you choose, make this story interactive by performing the suggested addendums in parentheses.

Remind students of who Elijah was (especially if following up on previous introductory lesson).

Discuss his conflict with the wicked king and queen; how God cared for Him at the river and also with the widow; and how he defeated the false priests of Baal.

After the whole priest-expunging incident, King Ahab was all the more feverish about having Elijah's head, so he was again forced to flee. (have students go under a table or in a corner). At this point, the prophet was extremely discouraged and exhausted, and quite willing to just give up. Have you ever felt this way? Elijah wondered why he was the only prophet of God left. But God hadn't abandoned Him...

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." Elijah was afraid[a] and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, ⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

⁷ The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." ⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. ⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night. -1 Kings 19:3-9

God made us with physical needs. He knew that Elijah could not continue without nourishment, and provided for his stamina with miraculous encouragement. (At this point, walk around handing students a cracker or other small item to nibble).

And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

¹¹ The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." -1 Kings 19:9-11

God was getting ready to do something wild for Elijah. We cannot experience God and walk away the same. Elijah had to prepare himself for meeting God, and must have wondered what was coming.

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" -1 Kings 11-13

(At first, come around with a blow dryer blowing kids for the "wind"). A rushing wind blew through; surely God would be present there, but no...then an earthquake came by (if possible, shake the table or scootch the kids). But although it was remarkable, this was not the Lord either. Instead, He appeared in a soft real whisper. Sometimes we wait for how we expect or hope God will act, or we think He must be a huge booming force. But perhaps the Lord will present Himself in the smallest and simplest of ways...

Craft:

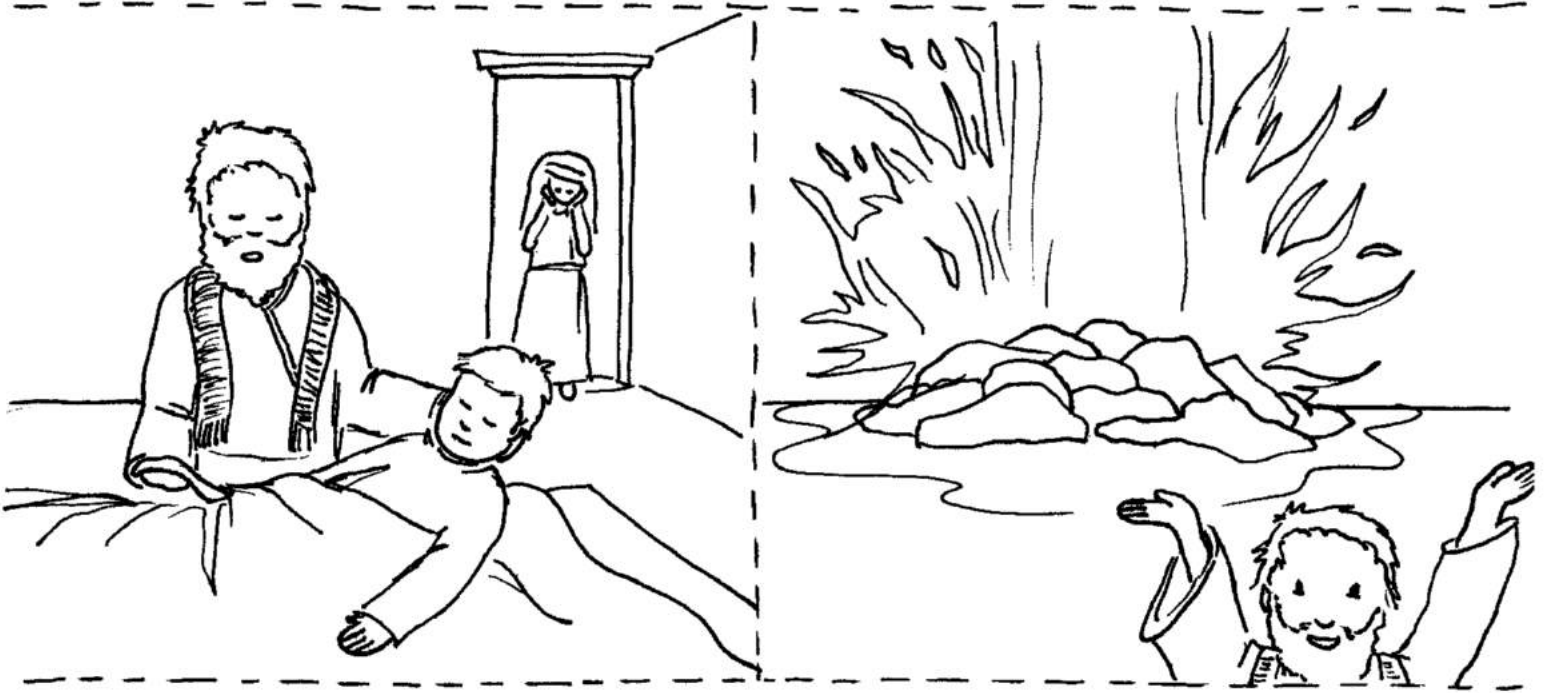
Wind-Powered...provide students with more straws and papers. Allow them to color or decorate their card/paper pieces, and demonstrate how to fold them into a pinwheel shape. Pin the wheel to straw or eraser of a pencil. For younger students, help them fold the paper accordion-style into fans.

Close with prayer and reminder of God's work in our lives. Ask God for wisdom and strength in making choices, and also for gratitude in what He has already granted. Ask God to help us honor Him in all that we say and do.



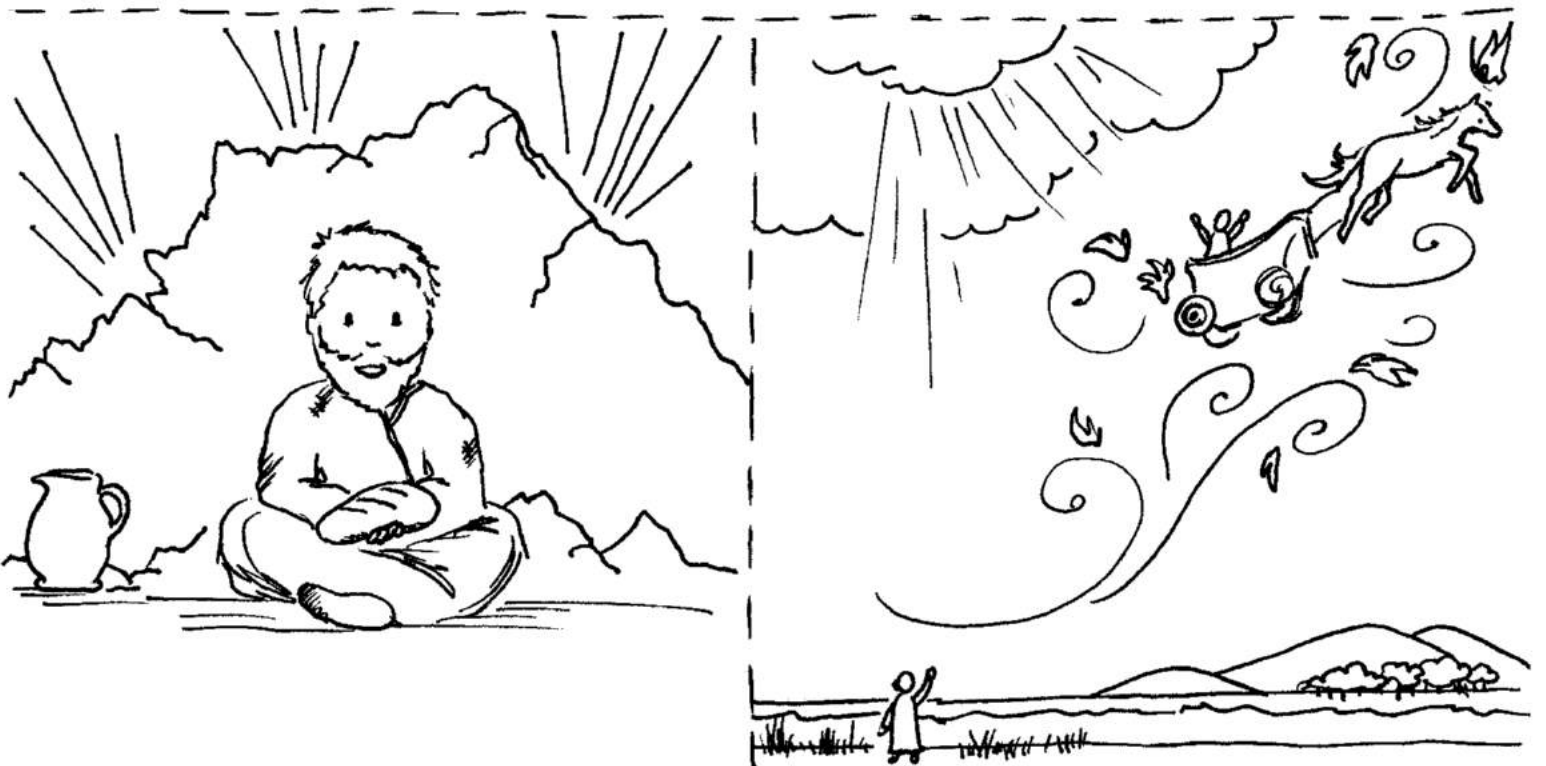
9 THINGS YOU NEED TO DO BEFORE YOUR FIRST ULTRAMARATHON





Elijah speaks God's truth...

1 Kings - 2 Kings



3.

Elijah is fed
by the Angel of
the Lord

4.

Elijah is taken
up to heaven.

1.

Elijah prays
for the widow's
son.

2.

Elijah prays.
The prophets of Baal
are defeated.

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