

Session 2

August 1, 2021

SERVE WITH TRUST

1 Kings 17:7-16

One day, Elijah will end up battling the pagan priests on Mt. Carmel. But before that could happen, the prophet had to be prepared...and preparation for God's service always means learning to trust Him.

I'm not sure where I came up with the outline I used this week, but regardless of where it came from, I think it fits!

God guides one step at a time (vv. 7-8). Good people are not immune to hard times. Elijah did exactly what he was told, yet the same drought that Elijah prayed down upon King Ahab fell upon himself. That cool refreshing brook that provided so well had slowed to a trickle before stopping altogether. I can only imagine what Elijah must have thought. Perhaps there was doubt. What was he thinking going head-to-head with the king? Perhaps he was fearful. The stream was dry, and the sun was hot. Perhaps there was some resentment. Perhaps, like the children of Israel fleeing from Pharaoh, Elijah wondered if he had been brought into the wilderness to die. He was in hiding. No one knew where he was. But God knew. The stream dried first; "Then the word of the Lord came to him" (v. 8). For reflection: *Remember, God rarely lays out his entire plan at once. Rather than overwhelm us, He gives us what we can handle...and that is most often just one step at a time!*

God uses one person at a time (v. 9). Zarephath was a gentile city located on the western side of the region along the coast of the Mediterranean, far north and far west of Elijah's dried up riverbed. In fact, it was nearly 100 miles away...across a bleak and hostile land. But most importantly, Zarephath "belonged to Sidon." This was wicked queen Jezebel's neighborhood! (see 16:31). God had sent His prophet into very hostile territory. But there was someone there waiting for him. The word *commanded* means more here than "ordered." It means *appointed*. God did not simply press this widow into service. Rather, in His divine sovereignty He placed her exactly where He wanted her in both time and circumstance, to accomplish His purpose. For reflection: *Think about the most influential people in your life. Have you ever considered that God, in His sovereignty, maybe placed them in your life to accomplish His perfect plan in you?*

God provides one cup at a time (vv. 10-12). It is often said, "God does not guide where he does not provide." But it never says *how much* He provides! Elijah's trust was truly put to the test in this episode; and so was the widow's. Elijah's first request (a drink of water) was asking quite a bit in a land already ravaged by drought. But the dear widow went to oblige. It was the second request (a piece of bread) that stopped her in her tracks. Notice the honesty and frankness of her response. In it (v. 12), we see five realizations: she recognized Elijah as a prophet; she recognized that he served the God of Israel; she was honest about her possessions; she was honest about her priority (her son); and she was honest about her perspective. She didn't have much, and what she had would serve as a last meal for her and her son. It wasn't much...but it

was something. For reflection: *Can you think of other examples in the Bible where God took a little, and made it a lot? What lesson does that teach us?*

God proves Himself one miracle at a time (vv. 13-16). Notice the order of events. The prophet of God encouraged her (“Don’t be afraid”) before testing her. She was instructed to proceed with her initial plan, but to make him a loaf first. Why? Because in so doing, she would use up all her ingredients! Her willingness to do so proved that she believed the promise of God (v. 14), His ongoing provision for the duration of the drought (vv. 14-15). For reflection: *What do you think is the relationship between faith and God’s miracles? Does He only work miracles on the basis of faith?*