

Bible background

1 Kings 18:16-46

Aim of lesson

To show that there is only one God and we should not be afraid to stand up for him.

Preparation required

You will need plasticine, some used matches and colouring materials. It would be wise to study the chapter carefully and decide how much of it you wish to use with your particular class. There are concepts, such as sacrifice, and details like the slaying of the priests, that could confuse or distress the younger children without helping you achieve your aims.

Suggested outline of lesson

1. Question the children about last week's lesson to draw out the points that Ahab was an evil king; Israel was suffering a drought because they had forgotten God and that Elijah was a man of God. Introduce the idea of false gods, explaining that people were building statues to bow down to and that one of these was called Baal.
2. The drought had now lasted three years, discuss with your class the problems this would cause, pointing out that even king Ahab was getting desperate (1 Kings 18:5). Describe the meeting between Ahab and Elijah, noting that Ahab was in no position to argue.
3. Help the children picture the scene at Mount Carmel; the expectant hush from the thousands of Israelites watching king Ahab and 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah in their robes, all being fearlessly addressed by Elijah. Tell them the choice Elijah gave them and briefly explain the challenge. Do the children think Baal would be able to send down fire?
4. Describe the frantic shouts of the prophets and their increasing frustration as Elijah taunted them until the middle of the afternoon when Elijah had his turn. Let the children make twelve stones of plasticine and build an altar, laying matchsticks on it and a plasticine bullock; tell them it was a present for God. Talk about how it was drenched with water and discuss the likelihood of it burning when very wet. If circumstances allow you could drench your plasticine altar and try setting it alight, but do impress on the children that they must never play with matches.
5. Contrast the quiet prayer of Elijah with the shouting and dancing of the prophets of Baal, and describe the fierce flames that fell, burning the altar from top to bottom and even licking up the water. Ask the children how they would react; then tell how the people reacted.
6. Act out the final few verses, with Elijah sending his servant seven times to look out to sea. Let the children express the relief the Israelites must have felt at the sight of rain clouds.
7. Do the activity sheet, finishing off the two pictures then showing the correct altar burning. Teach the rhyme if you wish.

Alternative activities

1. Make a collage picture of an altar with shiny paper flames. Sponge print the altar, then use pieces of sponge cut into flame shapes or lots of hand prints to make the fire. Either add a suitable sentence to your picture or stick a copy of the rhyme from the lesson notes underneath.
2. If you have a sand tray you could collect some large flat stones and some twigs to make an altar then help the children to make trenches around it (you will need to use slightly damp sand for this) and pour on some water.

Relevance to the children's lives

The Israelites were being punished for doing something wrong. What sort of things do we do wrong? What happens to us, and what can we do to make things right again?

Prayer

Make up a prayer asking God to forgive us when we forget him and do wrong things.

Verse

'Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God.' Deuteronomy 8:11.

Rhyme

God sent down fire
But nothing came from Baal.
Whom should we trust?
The God who doesn't fail.