

Aim of lesson

To see the way the evidence for God's existence and absolute power is shown by Elijah, and to consider the powerful evidence for God available to us today.

Bible background

1 Kings 18.

Outline of lesson

The first confrontation

There are times in everyone's life when a choice has to be made. This lesson is about a time like that. After three and a half years of drought, Elijah presents the people with a choice. They must either serve God or Baal.

The first element of confrontation is between Ahab and Elijah. You could read with the class 1 Kings 18:16-18. The first part of the workbook is for the class to put into their own words why each considered the other to be the 'troubler of Israel'.

The Carmel confrontation

The second part of the confrontation is on Mount Carmel. Elijah tells Ahab to bring all the people and the prophets of Baal and Ashteroth to meet him there. He presents a challenge to the people. They must choose to the LORD. (God's name is used by Elijah here to distinguish him clearly from Baal which means 'lord' or 'master'. God's name is written as YHWH and is sometimes pronounced Jehovah or Yahweh. Like most Bible names it has a meaning. It means 'He who is' or 'He who will be'. Many English Bibles use the title LORD in capitals where the Hebrew has the name of God.) Elijah does not just tell the people they must choose. He sets before them the evidence. He knows that Baal does not exist, there is only one God. Elijah does not expect the people to show blind faith, but he does demand that they commit themselves wholeheartedly when they have seen the evidence. The class could read 1 Kings 18:19-24 using different members of the class to read the words of Elijah, the people, and the narrator and their ideas noted in the workbook.

Reacting to the evidence

After reading together 1 Kings 18:25-39 or having it summarised, the class can decide they think the evidence was convincing. The different reactions of the people (1 Kings 18:39) and Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-2) can be noted by the class in the workbook. It is worth discussing with the class these different reactions. The evidence was not less convincing to Ahab. At no point does Ahab say he does not believe what happened. However, he does not want to accept the responsibility that such belief brings.

Our reaction

The next section of the workbook is to consider the evidence we have before us for the existence and power of God. The evidence that God presents to us in nature, in fulfilled prophecy, in the moral teaching of his word and in archaeology could all be considered and noted down. However, the points learned from the reaction of Ahab need to be applied to us. The evidence can be overwhelming, yet it is still a test of faith to commit ourselves wholly to what we know to be true. Our preferences and selfishness can distort our vision. God places before us incontrovertible evidence, yet we may still prefer to keep our eyes closed and go our own way. God does not seem to object to genuine seeking for evidence of the truth of his existence or the truth of his word. If doubts arise they should be faced squarely. 'Have faith' does not mean close your eyes and hope that it is true even when you are afraid it might not be. God gives us evidence. He wants us to be sure of what we believe. See God's words in Isaiah 43:9-10: 'Let them bring in their witnesses to prove they were right, so that other may hear and say, 'It is true'. 'You are my witnesses' declares the LORD, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.'

Digging deeper

Only one God

This is a study to find out a bit more about the God we worship.

Relevance to our lives

Often we can be rather apologetic about saying that we believe in God. Questioning each other in class about why we are convinced can help us to show more confidence when talking to others. The class could explain to each other the reasons they believe in God, or suggest answers they might give to people who said they did not believe.

Prayer

'Lord, help us to face the evidence for your existence and truth, and then to serve you wholeheartedly.' The class could consider what Elijah might have prayed before the confrontation on Mount Carmel.

Other suggestions for activities

- The newspaper of the time of Elijah could be continued with articles and pictures about the events on Carmel.
- The class could write a letter from the servant of Elijah to a friend, telling him of the events on Carmel, and how he felt.
- The class may like to look up 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11-17; Psalm 51:16-17; Micah 6:6-8 and Hebrews 10:1-10 to find out about sacrifice for us.