

Aim of lesson

To learn lesson for ourselves from the way God rescued Elijah from the depression that he felt after the events at Carmel.

Bible background

1 Kings 19.

Outline of lesson

After Carmel

Elijah seems to have felt depressed after the events on Mount Carmel and it is not difficult to see why. After three and a half years of drought with all the suffering that it had brought to the people, Elijah must have had high hopes about what the confrontation on Carmel would achieve. Perhaps his heart was set on the conversion of the king. Certainly, he must have felt that with such proof before them, both the king and the people must have been convinced. However, Ahab had more than his convictions to guide him – he had his wife! Ahab tells Jezebel of what Elijah had done. Jezebel's reaction shows that she is not interested in what is true or false, or in what is right or wrong, but only what enhances or diminishes her power or status. Read with the class 1 Kings 19:1-3 to see Elijah's fear of Jezebel. Discuss with them how they would feel in Elijah's place if, after doing so much to save the people, the result was the queen issuing an order for their death.

The first question in the workbook can be filled in at this stage.

Running for his life

Read with the class 1 Kings 19:3-8. Elijah's journey to get away from the queen covered about 60 miles to get as far as Beersheba – a town on the southern border of Judah. He still did not feel safe there, or perhaps he did not want to risk punishment coming on Judah for harbouring him (see 1 Kings 18:10). He goes further south into the desert. Consider with the class the help that God gives him there. Elijah was probably undernourished after the experiences in the drought and the excitement of Carmel. He would certainly be exhausted after his journey. God takes care of his basic needs first. He gives Elijah sleep and food and drink. He lets him sleep again and eat again until he is fully refreshed physically, before attempting to raise his spirits. Ask the class to fill in the next section of the workbook.

The cave at Horeb

Though the exact location is not known, Horeb is certainly in Sinai and is called the mount of the Lord because it is where God revealed himself to Moses (see Exodus 3:1). Mount Horeb is also called Mount Sinai. God told Moses that the Israelites would serve him on that mountain (v12) and it is indeed the place they came to after the Exodus (Exodus 18:5 and 19:2). This is where Moses received God's law (Exodus 19:20) and where they were still camped when Moses went again up to the mount and was shown the glory of God in the declaration that God made as he passed by (Exodus 34:4-8).

This is the place Elijah comes to (1 Kings 19:8-13). Perhaps he is saying to God as Moses did, that he does not want to go on unless God's presence is with him (Exodus 33:15). Here God begins to raise Elijah from his despair. He first asks Elijah what is wrong and listens to his complaint. He then reveals to him the wind, earthquake and fire, and after that the still small voice. Discuss with the class what Elijah learned from this. Were the earthquake, wind and fire like the fire Elijah had called down on the sacrifice at Carmel? Was God telling him that his way is to change people by a quiet voice rather than calling down fire? Did the voice say the same to Elijah that it said to Moses about God's character of forgiveness and compassion? Ask the class to write their thoughts on what Elijah learns, on the next section of the workbook.

A job to do

God's next step in helping Elijah is to give him a specific job to do. In 1 Kings 19:15-21 we read of God's work for Elijah. God shows him that he is in charge of who becomes king, not only in Israel but also in their powerful neighbour, Aram or Syria. God also gives Elijah a disciple. Elijah would now have the blessing of sharing his thoughts with someone else, and of having someone to teach God's ways. God also encourages Elijah by telling him of the seven thousand in Israel who are still faithful to God. Elijah is now refreshed and encouraged. He calls Elisha who becomes his disciple and companion. The next time we meet Elijah (1 Kings 21) he is the strong spokesman for God that we saw previously.

The class can put their ideas about God's words to Elijah in the next section of the workbook. The letters are such that if the class remove the letters of the words WIND, EARTHQUAKE and FIRE, the words A QUIET GENTLE VOICE are left.

Digging deeper

Elijah and John the Baptist

This section explores the similarities between these two prophets.

Relevance to our lives

The class could look at the steps God takes to help Elijah out of his depression and consider whether they could be useful today in helping a friend who might be feeling depressed.

Prayer

'Lord, thank you for helping us when we are low. Help us to appreciate your way of gentle teaching and compassion.'

The class could write a prayer that Elijah might have said after his time in Horeb.

Other suggestions for activities

- A tape recording could be made of a dramatisation of the events on Horeb.
- The newspaper of the time of Elijah could be continued.
- The class could trace the journey of Elijah on a map.
- An older class could make a comparison between the experiences of Moses and Elijah on the mount, and consider why they were the two chosen to appear with the Lord Jesus at his transfiguration.