

A Good Shepherd Sacred Story

Elijah and the Widow

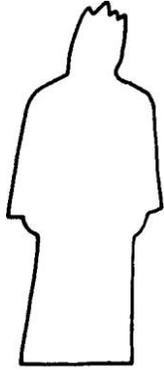
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ELUAH AND THE WIDOW MATERIALS

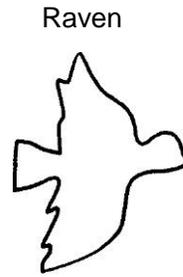
- small wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden figure of Ahab
 - wooden figure of Elijah
 - wooden figure of raven
 - wooden figure of widow
 - wooden figure of the widow's son



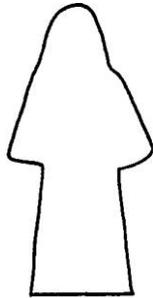
Ahab



Elijah



Raven



Widow



Widow's Son

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ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from its shelf. Return to the circle and sit down, placing the basket next to you.

Allow 10-15 seconds of silence while you reverently touch one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Lift up first your right hand (good kings) and then your left hand (bad kings) about waist high.

Place Ahab to the left of the storytelling area.

Place Elijah a slight distance to the right of Ahab.

Move Ahab right, even closer to Elijah.

Move Elijah to the right of Ahab, several inches.

Hold the raven with your fingertips and "fly" the bird to Elijah and away, two or three times.

Place the raven back in the basket. Shake your head sadly.

Move Elijah right, to the center of the storytelling area.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All the words to this story are inside of me. If you will make silence with me, I will find all of the words to this sacred story of God's people.

After David and Solomon died there were some good kings in the land of God's people and some bad kings.

One of the bad kings was called Ahab. He even worshiped gods from other places. The people of God were to only worship Yahweh.

Elijah, a prophet who spoke the words of Yahweh, told Ahab that because of his evil ways there would be no rain in the land for years.

Ahab wanted to kill Elijah.

Then God told Elijah to go hide in a nearby country that King Ahab didn't control.

While he was there God sent ravens to bring Elijah bread and meat and he drank water from the brook Cherith.

But pretty soon the brook dried up because there was no rain.

God told Elijah to go to the city of Zarephath in the land of Sidon and stay there. God had commanded a widow who lived there to feed the prophet.

Place the widow a short distance to the right of Elijah.

Cup your hand around your mouth as though calling.

Touch the widow briefly and shake your head sadly.

Touch Elijah as you speak.

Shake your head once as you say "not be gone".

Touch the widow and smile as you speak.

Place the widow's son to her right.

Lay the widow's son down and turn the widow to face Elijah.

Move Elijah and the widow's son (prone) away from you, just a little, and together.

Fold your hands in prayer as you speak.

Stand the widow's son up next to Elijah.

When Elijah got to Zarephath he saw a widow gathering sticks.

He called to her to bring him a drink of water. As she left to get it, he also asked her to bring him some bread.

But the widow said, "All I have left is a little flour in a jar and a little oil in a bottle. I'm gathering sticks to make a fire and make it for myself and my son. After that, we will die because we have no more food."

Elijah told her, "Don't be afraid. First make me a little loaf and then, one for yourself and your son."

"For Yahweh has told me that the oil and flour will not be gone until the rains come back to grow crops. "

The widow did as Elijah said and each day there was enough flour and oil to make more bread.

Later, the son of the widow became very sick and died.

The widow wanted to know why Elijah had come and brought death to her son.

Elijah took her son and carried him to a bedroom upstairs.

There he prayed to God, asking that the boy be given back his life.

Yahweh heard the words of Elijah and the boy came alive.

Touch the widow and then, Elijah. Nod as you speak.

When Elijah brought the boy back to his mother she said, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that you speak the words of God."

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder why Ahab worshiped other gods?

I wonder how it felt to have birds bring your bread and meat?

I wonder how the oil and flour kept growing?

I wonder what the boy thought when he came back to life?

Carefully return all the wooden pieces to the basket, one at a time.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away, so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the story basket back to the shelf. Then return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story, so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

Be certain each child has had an opportunity to choose their work before dismissing the group for their work/art response time.

I wonder what you will choose for your work today? Let's go around and choose what each of us will do.

ELUAH AND THE WIDOW TEACHER HELPS

This story really contains three miracle stories about Elijah. The first is the feeding of Elijah by the brook of Cherith. God had sent Elijah away while King Ahab suffered the results of the predicted famine and to get Elijah out of Ahab's way. Even after the natural food sources of the brook and the birds were gone, Yahweh still provided a way for the prophet to eat by sending him to the widow at Zarephath. The continuation of her flour and oil is the second miracle story. The third is the raising of her son from the dead by the prophet.

There are two very significant things about Elijah going to the widow in Zarephath. The first is that she was not an Israelite. There is no account of her being a Hebrew, rather she was probably a Sidonian, which was where the southern Phoenicians lived. (The Bible Almanac, J.I. Packer, Merrill C. Tenney, William White, Jr., Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 1980, p. 143) Another woman in the Ahab story, Queen Jezebel, was the daughter of the king of Sidon, and it was supposedly she who enticed Ahab to worship Baal. (The Bible Almanac, p. 428) In Jesus' first sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth, he appeals to God's plan of salvation for all the nations by referring to the widow at Zarephath as God's choice to keep Elijah alive when there were, no doubt, widows in the land of Israel at the same time. By the end of the story, the widow is convinced that Elijah is a man of God and we would believe that she becomes one who worships Yahweh.

The second important note about this woman is that she was a widow. In the times of the Bible there were no more oppressed people than widows and orphans. They had no means of support and, in many cases, could not inherit land. They were at the mercy of their families, who often treated them like outcasts. God chose to sustain the life of one of the least of society's members, not the life of a queen or even a prophetess, but the life of a widow. This is a strong statement of the Hebrew understanding of doing justice, which often is referred to with the example of caring for the widows and the orphans.

The whole purpose of the Elijah stories in I Kings 17 is to establish the authority of Elijah as a man sent by and empowered by God. Three times that authority is established. Elijah is saved from the famine for a purpose known only to God. This story is followed by the story of the miracle of the altar set afire by Yahweh, when the altar of Baal could not be set aflame by that god.

The story of Elijah and the Widow is one that children usually feel very good about because it includes a child and it gives a powerless child a second chance to live. It shows that God was in control of the events in the story and assures a child that God is still in control.

The wondering questions begin by asking why Ahab would serve another god. Children may not understand worshipping another god, but they may be quite charitable in saying that Ahab just didn't know about Yahweh, or someone told him the other god was OK. Some will reply that he was stupid.

The second question wonders how Elijah felt being fed by birds. The children's responses may be very mixed. Some children will perceive it as "neat" while others will find it scary. Since we are dealing in feelings there really is no correct answer, just allow the feelings to be shared.

The third question wonders how the bread and oil could keep growing in the empty jars. Some children will try to find a logical explanation for what happened while the very young and those in the oldest elementary grades will say that's just how miracles are. None of us know what happened, so all possibilities are fair game.

The final wondering question deals with the feelings of the child. What did he think when Elijah brought him back to life? Did he know he had stopped breathing? Had he been afraid? Was he happy? Sad? His response is not addressed in the story, but it's a natural connection point for children, so let them put their feelings into words. Most of them will respond as they think they may have felt while transferring the thoughts and feelings to the boy of the story.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

You are Elijah and you've been living by this little brook for months. It hasn't rained yet and the brook is getting smaller and smaller. What are you thinking?

In the time of this story the poorest people in the world were probably widows. Why would God send Elijah to a widow?

Imagine that you are the son of the widow. You've overheard Elijah's promise to your mom. The day after your mom uses all the flour and oil you sneak down early in the day and find more flour and oil in the jars. What would you do? What would you say to your mom? What would you say to the strange prophet?

This widow lived in a land where they did not worship Yahweh. Most people in the land worshiped Baal. The Hebrew people believed that Yahweh had chosen them and had not chosen any other people. How would this story change that understanding?