

## The Widow of Zarephath

Lesson 02 in the series, "I didn't catch your name"

### I. The OT prophet Elijah was sent by God to confront the sin of idolatry among God's people.

Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, "As surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives—the God I serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years until I give the word!"

1 Kings 17:1 (NLT)

- a. The people of Israel had abandoned God for Baal, a Sidonian deity believed to control rainfall.

"But Ahab son of Omri did what was evil in the LORD's sight... he married Jezebel, the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and he began to bow down in worship of Baal... Ahab built a temple and an altar for Baal in Samaria. Then he set up an Asherah pole. He did more to provoke the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him." 1 Kings 16:30-33 (NLT)

- b. "Elijah" means "My God is Yahweh"

*Life Application:* We must NEVER worship anyone/anything but God.

"Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world." Col. 3:5 (NLT)

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Matthew 6:24 (NLT)

### II. God hid Elijah at a widow's house while He disciplined his people and exposed the foolishness of worshipping Baal.

"He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years."

James 5:17 (NIV)

Then the LORD said to Elijah, "Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a widow there to feed you." 1 Kings 17:8-9 (NLT2)

- a. Zarephath was located in the heart of Baal country.

*Life Application:* "...the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment." 2 Peter 2:9 (NLT2)

So he went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her, "Would you please bring me a little water in a cup?" As she was going to get it, he called to her, "Bring me a bite of bread, too." But she said, "I swear by the LORD your God that I don't have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die." But Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you've said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what's left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the LORD sends rain and the crops grow again!" So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her son continued to eat for many days. There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the LORD had promised through Elijah. 1 Kings 17:10-16 (NLT)

- b. When the widow put God first, He took care of all of her needs.

*Life Application:* When we put God first He'll take care of all of our needs.

"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."

Matthew 6:33 (NLT)

- c. God gave the widow just enough to provide for herself, her son and Elijah.

"O God, I beg two favors from you; let me have them before I die. First, help me never to tell a lie. Second, give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" And if I am too poor, I may steal and thus insult God's holy name. Proverbs 30:7-9 (NLT)

*Life Application:* Jesus wants us to ask God for enough to meet our needs.

"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.' Matthew 6:9-11 (NIV)

### III. Later the widow's son became sick and died.

Some time later the woman's son became sick. He grew worse and worse, and finally he died. Then she said to Elijah, "O man of God, what have you done to me? Have you come here to point out my sins and kill my son?" But Elijah replied, "Give me your son." And he took the child's body from her arms, carried him up the stairs to the room where he was staying, and laid the body on his bed. Then Elijah cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, why have you brought tragedy to this widow who has opened her home to me, causing her son to die?" And he stretched himself out over the child three times and cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, please let this child's life return to him." The LORD heard Elijah's prayer, and the life of the child returned, and he revived! Then Elijah brought him down from the upper room and gave him to his mother. "Look!" he said. "Your son is alive!" Then the woman told Elijah, "Now I know for sure that you are a man of God, and that the LORD truly speaks through you." 1 Kings 17:17-24 (NLT)

- a. When tragedy struck the widow immediately blamed Elijah.

*Life Application:* Bad things happen to all of us because we live in a fallen world.

"Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse. All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time." Romans 8:20-22 (NLT)

"...this world is not our home; we are looking forward to our city in heaven, which is yet to come."

Hebrews 13:14 (NLT)

- b. When tragedy struck the widow falsely assumed God was getting even with her for past sins.

*Life Application:* God loves lost sinners everywhere and sent Jesus to save us NOT condemn us.

"Do you think that I like to see wicked people die? says the Sovereign LORD. Of course not! I want them to turn from their wicked ways and live." Ezekiel 18:23 (NLT)

"Certainly there were many needy widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the heavens were closed for three and a half years, and a severe famine devastated the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them. He was sent instead to a foreigner—a widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon." Luke 4:2-26 (NLT)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:16-17 (NIV)

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"When anything in life is an absolute requirement for your happiness and self-worth, it is essentially an 'idol', something you are actually worshiping." Tim Keller

#### Connect Group questions:

1. According to Dictionary.com one of the definitions for "idol" is: "any person or thing regarded with blind admiration, adoration, or devotion." What/who are some "idols" we bow down to in our society?
2. Read 1 Kings 17:1 & James 5:17. How did God prove to the people of Elijah's day that He is the true God of the weather and that idol worship is foolish? (Ask someone in your group to do a web search for "Baal" if you want to see why people worshiped him.)
3. Read 1 Kings 17:2-16. Why, in your opinion, did God hide Elijah during the three and a half years of drought? What might have happened if people knew where Elijah was?
4. Read Matthew 6:33. What do you think Jesus meant when he said "seek first the kingdom of heaven"? Would you consider yourself to be a person who does this? Why? Why not?
5. Read 1 Kings 17:17-24 & Romans 8:20-22. What would you say to someone who believes that if they go to church nothing bad will ever happen to them?
6. Discuss Ezekiel 18:23, Luke 19:1-10 & John 3:16-17. How does God feel about lost sinners?
7. Spend some time as a group praying for people who need to know that God loves them.