

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
MARCH092024

faith on the mountaintop

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 18:1–40.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 10 last part (pp. 133-154); 11.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

After years of famine, during which Elijah was miraculously cared for by the Lord, the time had come for a showdown. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest. At stake was the worship and loyalty of the nation of Israel. Elijah risked everything on his faith that God would bring fire from heaven to honor his sacrifice—and that the false god Baal would do nothing.

Elijah's courage in this story seems extreme to the point of foolishness—taunting the pagan prophets, soaking the Lord's sacrifice with water to emphasize his total dependence on God. Such extreme faith seems far removed from the everyday reality of most youth, yet day-to-day faith experiences with God now will lay the foundation for the kind of courageous faith young people will need to take a stand for what's right in more difficult situations. It might be helpful, though, to help the students understand that this story is not suggesting that Elijah's stance of taunting be used for our interactions with non-Christians or non-Adventists. A study of Scripture and Ellen White can help us investigate the nature of this circumstance more thoroughly. As stated, the point that you want to stress for your students is that of Elijah's courage.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Understand that trusting God through hard times gave Elijah the strength to take a courageous step of faith. *(Know)*
- Believe that they can trust God to be there for them when they do what is right. *(Feel)*
- Commit to taking a stand for what they believe is right. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

Unity in the Body of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 14

"The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Ps. 133:1; Matt. 28:19, 20; John 17:20-23; Acts 17:26, 27; Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 2:13-16; 4:3-6, 11-16; Col. 3:10-15.)"

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think?

section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

In groups of two or three, ask students to share an example of a time they faced a situation such as that described in *What Do You Think?*—a situation in which someone they knew was doing something wrong. Have them discuss how a Christian teenager might respond in that situation.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

In 1989 Chinese students staged a seven-week-long protest in Tiananmen Square that drew the world's attention. As people around the world watched the story unfold on the news, one image, reprinted over and over in different media outlets, caught every eye. Nearly 20 years later, it still remains one of the most striking and memorable images of that time.

The picture shows a line of Army tanks rolling into the square. Standing in front of the lead tank, boldly facing it down, is a single young man. The unknown protestor, whose real name is still unknown to this day, forced the line of tanks to halt simply by standing in front of them. As tanks tried to drive around him, he continued to step in front of them, finally climbing up onto the front of one tank to speak to the driver until he was pulled back into the crowd by onlookers.

The picture of "Tank Man" became so popular because it showed something we all admire: one person who has the courage to stand alone in the face of danger and oppression, even at the risk of his own life. How many of us would have that kind of courage?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

We all admire courage. We respect the person who takes a brave and difficult stand. But could we be that person? Most of us find it much easier to go along with the crowd than to take a difficult stand.

There are times in the Christian life when, in order to be true to God, we'll have to say and do things that are unpopular. We'll have to be willing to stand out, maybe even face hardship and persecution. The only way to get through that is by faith. The kind of faith that grows stronger as we build a loving, trusting relationship with God day by day.

That's the kind of faith Elijah had. That's the faith that gave him courage, that enabled him to stand alone on Mount Carmel facing all those prophets of Baal and say, "Come on! Let's see whose God is the true God!"

Out of the Story for Teachers

Read the Into the Story *section aloud with your student*s.

- Assign different students to read the words spoken by Elijah, the prophets of Baal, and the people. Read the narrative portions yourself. After reading through the passage in this way, ask: What does Elijah say to the prophets of Baal? Why do you think he speaks in this way? What do his words convey?
- What do the prophets of Baal say? Why do you think the Bible writer doesn't record any response from them to Elijah? Were they speechless? Why?
- What about the people of Israel? How did they respond to the fire from heaven? How do you think they would have responded if the prophets of Baal had somehow managed to make fire appear on *their* altar?
- Ask: How many jars of water had soaked the sacrifice by the time Elijah was finished? What was the point of doing this? Why does the Bible writer record that not only the sacrifice and the wood, but the altar stones and the water, were consumed? What point is this making about the God of heaven?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Ephesians 6:10–17; Romans 8:31–39; Hebrews 11:1–6, 32–40

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

Faith like Elijah's doesn't happen overnight. Sometimes we imagine standing up for our faith in a difficult situation, or facing persecution at the end of time, and think, *I could never do that! I don't have the courage!*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Role-Playing

Doing a role play, as suggested in this week's *Getting Started* section, can be a great way to bring a story or issue to life for your class. However, some students may be too shy or self-conscious to participate in a role play. Don't force anyone to participate if they don't want to, but encourage everyone to take part. If you have a very large class, you might have a group of three students perform a role play for another group of three, rather than in front of the whole group—this may make it less threatening.

Christian writer Corrie Ten Boom had that same fear as a child. She told her father she feared she wouldn't be brave enough to face persecution if that time ever came. Her father asked her, "When we go on a train trip, when do I give you your ticket? Three weeks before?"

"No, Papa," she replied, "you give it to me right before we get on the train."

"That's how it is with God," he told her. "He gives us courage to face trials when we need it, not before."

As an older woman Corrie found herself hiding Jews in her home during the Holocaust, eventually ending up in a German concentration camp. The courage she thought she would never have was there when she needed it.

Corrie Ten Boom, and the prophet Elijah, and many other people of faith throughout history have learned that putting your faith in God day by day builds the kind of trusting relationship that allows us to be courageous in the face of danger. Before he ever faced down the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah lived through three years of famine, trusting God to provide his food every day. By the end of that time, he had practice trusting God. He knew God would come through.

Sure, you may not have to face a firing squad for your faith today. But maybe you can have the courage and faith to be friendly to an unpopular new student at school or to walk away when someone tells a racist joke instead of laughing along with the crowd. As we exercise our faith in small things, God gives us greater faith and courage.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Think back to the situations we discussed at the beginning of this week's lesson—times when others are doing wrong and we need to take a stand for what's right. On a note card, write the following sentence, filling in the blanks:

"I promise that when others are _____, with God's help I will

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite the students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* Prophets and Kings. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that speaks most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

_____." Fold the card and keep it in your Bible as a private commitment between you and the Lord. Remember, He doesn't expect you to do it in your own strength—He gives you the faith and courage to do the right thing even when it's difficult.

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

Elijah's confrontation on Mount Carmel was dramatic, exciting, larger-than-life. Yet we face the same challenge in many smaller ways. Will we stand up for what's right when others are doing wrong? Can we trust God to take care of us even if we risk rejection, misunderstanding, and danger?

Taking a small stand for the right today may lead to bigger things tomorrow. Someday you may have the opportunity to stand on your own "Mount Carmel" and declare your faith in God to the whole world. But it begins today with simple trust and faith in God. Trust Him to help you do the right thing, to make the right choices and live with the consequences. Place your life in His hands, and He'll give you all the courage you'll ever need.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 10 last part (133-154); 11.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: 1 Kings 18:1–40.
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Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.

flashlight

"God cannot use men who, in time of peril, when the strength, courage, and influence of all are needed, are afraid to take a firm stand for the right. He calls for men who will do faithful battle against wrong, warring against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 142).

keytext

"Elijah stepped forward and prayed: 'LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.' "

(1 Kings 18:36, NIV)

what do you think?

When I see others in my life doing something I think is wrong, I usually

____ Ignore it.
____ Join in.
____ Tell them what they're doing is wrong.
____ Keep quiet unless they ask me what I think, then say I think it's wrong.
____ In a kind, caring way provide positive advice and point them to a better way that is possible through Jesus.

If I'm doing something wrong, I appreciate it when others in my life

____ Don't bother me about it; mind their own business.
____ Respectfully tell me where they think I'm making a mistake.
____ Talk to others and leave me alone.

did you know?

The name Baal means "lord." It is used to refer to a number of different pagan gods that were worshiped by the Israelites and the people who lived around them. King Ahab's wife, Jezebel, made the worship of Baal popular among the Israelites. Pagan gods were believed to control such things as weather, crops, and so on. By declaring that the God of heaven had stopped the rain for three years, Elijah was challenging the belief that Baal would bring rain and good crops. His "showdown" on Mount Carmel demonstrated that God alone controlled every aspect of life and that He alone was worthy of Israel's worship.

INTO THE STORY

"Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, 'Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.' So they took the bull given them and prepared it.

"Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. 'Baal, answer us!' they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

"At noon Elijah began to taunt them. 'Shout louder!' he said. 'Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.' So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

"Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come here to me.' They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which had been torn down. Elijah took twelve stones. . . . With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it. . . . He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, 'Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.'

" 'Do it again,' he said, and they did it again.

" 'Do it a third time,' he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

"At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: 'LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.'

"Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

"When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, 'The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!' "

(1 Kings 18:25–39, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think Elijah thought of the idea of staging a challenge between Baal and the true God?

_____
_____
_____

What did he hope to accomplish by doing this?

_____
_____
_____

Why do you think Elijah made fun of the prophets of Baal? How might they have responded when he did this?

_____
_____
_____

What was the point of soaking the sacrifice with water?

_____
_____
_____

How did Elijah have enough faith to trust that the sacrifice would burn?

_____
_____
_____

What was God's purpose in offering this spectacular display of His power?

_____
_____
_____

How do you think the people watching felt when they saw the sacrifice consumed? How do you think the prophets of Baal felt?

_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" **(Hebrews 11:6, NIV).**

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" **(Ephesians 6:10–12, NIV).**

"Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" **(Matthew 17:20, NIV).**

"And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" **(Luke 1:17, NIV).**

further insight

"Where there is not only a belief in God's word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul."—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 63

Sabbath

Read Hebrews 11:6.

Elijah had the courage to speak out when he believed the people of Israel were doing wrong. God gave Elijah a job to do, and Elijah had the courage and faith to follow through with it.

What does it mean to you to say that "without faith it is impossible to please God"? If you felt you had to speak out against something you thought was wrong, would it take a lot of faith to do that? Would you trust God to come through for you as He did for Elijah in this story?

Think about a situation in your life in which you believe God is calling you to trust Him. If you had greater faith, what could you do in this situation?

Sunday

Read Matthew 17:20.

Imagine yourself watching in the crowd on Mount Carmel as Elijah faces off against the prophets of Baal. As an ordinary Israelite, you may be torn between Baal worship and faith in the true God. After three years of drought and famine, you're prepared to worship any god who can bring rain.

All the odds seem to be stacked in Baal's favor. Yet after hours of noisy worship, the priests of Baal have accomplished nothing. Your attention swings to the lone prophet of God, Elijah. His sacrifice is soaked with water, making it abundantly clear that he can't light it himself. He relies completely on the invisible God of your fathers.

Write three words that describe what you might feel at that moment:

_____ _____ _____

Monday

Read 1 Kings 18:36.

According to the *Key Text*, what did Elijah hope the demonstration on Mount Carmel would prove? _____

Was this goal accomplished? _____ Find a text in the *Into the Story* section that supports your answer. _____

Tuesday

Read Ephesians 6:10–18.

What do you think it means to "take a firm stand for the right" as the passage from *Prophets and Kings* says that Christians should do?

Sometimes we face situations in which others are doing wrong and we need to have the courage and faith to speak out. In which of the following situations would you feel that, as a Christian, you should point out that what's happening is wrong?

____ Your classmates are making fun of a disabled student behind his back.

____ You are shopping with your friend when you notice she quietly shoplifts a small item.

____ You are at a friend's house with no adults around when someone brings in a case of beer and several of your friends start to drink.

____ A friend brings an Ouija board to your house and asks that you help him ask it to contact his uncle who died last year.

____ You notice someone cheating off your paper during a test.

How likely would you be to speak out in these situations? What different ways are there of handling these situations?

Wednesday

Read Luke 1:17.

The Bible verses in the *Punch Lines* section talk about what it means to be a person of courage and faith, to take a stand for what is right. Elijah was such a powerful biblical example of this kind of faith and courage that centuries later, in the time of Jesus, people still looked to him as the ideal man of courageous faith. John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus, was said to have come "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (NIV), and some people even believed that Jesus Himself was Elijah reborn! That's the kind of impact a person of courage and faith can make on the world.

As you look around you today, who do you see setting an example of courageous faith?

Thursday

Read James 1:12.

Look back at the situations presented in Tuesday's lesson. Are any of them similar to situations you have faced? How do you react when others are doing things you believe are wrong?

_____

What's one situation you're facing now in which you feel God is calling you to stand up for what is right? _____

What could you do to stand up for God in this situation? _____

Friday

Read 1 Peter 5:6, 7.

Elijah's faith was strong on Mount Carmel because he had a lifetime of experience in trusting God. He had just lived through three years of famine, depending totally on God's power to provide even the most basic, everyday needs for him. Sometimes we read stories like that of Elijah on Mount Carmel and think, *I could never have that kind of faith!* But faith is like muscle—it gets stronger by being used.

In your prayer time today talk to God about the things you're worried about. Place them trustingly in His hands and ask Him to help your faith grow so that you will be ready when bigger tests come.

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapters 10 last part (pp. 133-154); 11.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.