

# Elijah and the Prophets of Baal

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Sunday Plan

SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 18

MEMORY VERSE

1 Kings 18:39

OPTIONAL VIDEO

Elijah on Mount Carmel — Slapstick Theater

<https://southside.cc/011-413>

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*The LORD, he is God — there is no other.*

## For the Teacher

Read this before you teach. Last week the kingdom split in two and Israel started chasing other gods. Today, generations later, that chase has gone all the way down. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel have filled the land with prophets of Baal. The northern kingdom isn't deciding *whether* to worship God — they're trying to worship two gods at once. So God sends a drought. Three years of no rain. And then he sends Elijah, alone, to settle the question on top of a mountain.

### KEY TRUTH

The LORD, he is God — there is no other.

**This is a contest, but the contest is rigged.** Elijah lets Baal's 450 prophets go first. He lets them pick the bull. He lets them shout and cut themselves all morning. Nothing happens. Then Elijah soaks his altar in water — twelve big jars, until it's running down the trenches — and prays one short prayer. Fire falls from heaven and burns up the bull, the wood, the stones, the dust, *and the water*. It isn't a coincidence. It isn't even close. God settles the question with no room left for "well, maybe."

**The bottom line is the people's line.** When the fire falls, the people fall on their faces and say, "*The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!*" (verse 39). They say it twice. That's the memory verse — and it's the bottom line. The whole chapter is built to land on that one sentence. Make sure the kids hear it, say it, and leave saying it.

**"How long will you go limping between two opinions?"** That's Elijah's question to the crowd in verse 21, before the contest even starts. The kids should hear it. It's blunt: *pick one*. You can't worship the LORD and also worship Baal. You can't half-follow God. The contest exists because the people couldn't decide. Today's kids face the same question in different clothes — the thing your friends care about most, the thing you'd give anything for, the thing you'd be embarrassed to be seen praying instead of doing. Anything that takes God's spot is a Baal. Name it that plainly.

**Where this connects.** Last week Israel split and Jeroboam set up golden calves so people wouldn't have to walk to Jerusalem to worship (Q3L11). Today is what happens a few generations down that road — full Baal worship, a king who hates God's prophets, a country that's forgotten which God brought them out of Egypt. Elijah's job is to remind them.

**What we're skipping and why.** Verse 40 — Elijah orders the 450 prophets of Baal seized and killed at the brook Kishon. It's a real part of the chapter and it fits the Old Testament pattern of judgment on idolatry, but it isn't the lesson today and elementary kids don't need it. The chapter's heart is the contest and the people's confession. Stay there. If a kid has read ahead and asks, you can say: *Yes — the false prophets were judged. God takes idol worship seriously. But today we're staying with the people who fell on their faces and said "The LORD, he is God."* Move on.

**Repeat the bottom line all morning.** Say it at least six times. Say it the way the people did — twice in a row. Have the kids say it back. Write it on the board. End with it.

### MATERIALS

- Bibles for every student
- Whiteboard or large paper, markers
- Pencils, crayons or colored pencils
- Index cards
- Activity sheets (printed in advance from this week's activities — pick what you'll use)

# 1. Gather

Welcome the kids and have them sit together. Tell them today's story is a showdown — one prophet against four hundred and fifty, on top of a mountain, with fire involved.

## ASK

*Has anyone ever stood up for something when nobody else would? What happened?*

Let two or three kids answer. Don't push. Then write the bottom line on the board:

## SAY

*The LORD, he is God — there is no other.*

Have them say it back with you. Tell them: *that's the line a whole crowd of people shouted at the end of today's story. We're going to find out why.*

# 2. The Story

## Setting the Stage

Before opening the Bible, the kids need the backstory. Tell them, in your own words:

## SAY

*After King Solomon died, Israel split into two kingdoms. The northern kingdom got worse and worse — kings who didn't love God, people who started worshiping other gods. The worst king of all was named Ahab. He married a queen named Jezebel from another country, and Jezebel brought hundreds of prophets of a fake god named Baal into Israel. The people stopped knowing which God to follow.*

*So God sent a prophet — one man — named Elijah. Elijah told King Ahab there would be no rain in Israel until God said so. And for three years, no rain fell. Three years of drought. The land dried up. The people got hungry. And Israel had to start asking: which God can actually do something? Today, after three years, Elijah comes back. And he tells King Ahab to bring everybody — everybody — up to the top of Mount Carmel. Because today, the question gets settled.*

## The Question

Have everyone open to 1 Kings 18:21.

### 1 Kings 18:21

## DISCUSSION

1. Elijah asks the people one big question. What is it?

→ *"How long will you go limping between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, follow him." Elijah is asking them to pick one.*

2. What does it mean to "limp between two opinions"?

→ *Trying to worship both gods at the same time. Going back and forth. Half following one, half following the other. Elijah is saying: stop. You have to choose.*

3. Why do you think the people don't answer Elijah?

→ *Because they don't want to choose. They want both. They want God when it's helpful and Baal when it's fun. The whole rest of the chapter happens because they won't answer.*

## The Contest

Tell the kids the contest. In your own words:

### SAY

*Elijah said: bring two bulls. Build two altars. The prophets of Baal will pray to Baal to send fire. I'll pray to the LORD to send fire. Whichever god answers with fire — that's the real God.*

*The people said yes.*

*There were 450 prophets of Baal. There was one Elijah. Elijah let them go first.*

Have a confident reader read what happened when Baal's prophets prayed:

## 1 Kings 18:26–29

### DISCUSSION

1. What did Baal's prophets do all morning?

→ *Shouted, danced around the altar, cut themselves with knives — anything to get Baal's attention. They went on for hours.*

2. What happened?

→ *Nothing. Verse 29 says it bluntly: "There was no voice. No one answered. No one paid attention." Baal isn't real. Baal can't answer because Baal isn't there.*

## Elijah's Turn

Then it's Elijah's turn. Tell them:

### SAY

*Elijah rebuilt the altar of the LORD with twelve stones — one for each tribe of Israel. He laid the wood. He laid the bull on top. And then he did something strange. He told the people to fill four big jars with water and pour them on the altar. Then do it again. Then do it again. Twelve jars of water. The wood was soaked. The bull was soaked. The trench around the altar filled up. Everything that should burn was wet.*

*Then Elijah prayed.*

Have a confident reader read Elijah's prayer and what God did:

## 1 Kings 18:36–38

### DISCUSSION

1. How long was Elijah's prayer?

→ *Short. Three sentences. He doesn't shout. He doesn't dance. He just asks God to show the people who is really God.*

2. What did the fire of the LORD burn up?

→ *The bull. The wood. The stones. The dust. And even the water in the trench. There was nothing left. God didn't just barely win. He left no doubt.*

3. Why do you think Elijah soaked the altar with water first?

→ *So nobody could say it was a trick. So nobody could wonder if the wood caught a spark on its own. The wetter the altar, the more obvious it is that only God could light it.*

## What the People Said

Have everyone turn to 1 Kings 18:39.

## 1 Kings 18:39

### ASK

*What did the people say when the fire fell?*

Write it on the board, exactly as they said it — twice:

**The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!**

### SAY

*They said it twice because they had been wrong twice. They had been limping between two opinions for years. The fire didn't just settle the contest. It settled the question they had been afraid to answer.*

### TRANSITION

This is the hinge of the lesson. The bottom line of the chapter is the line the *people* shouted. That's the line we're carrying home.

## 3. The Point

Say the bottom line again, with the kids. Say it twice — the way the people said it:

### SAY

*The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!*

### The Memory Verse

Have everyone turn to 1 Kings 18:39 again. Have a student read it aloud:

### SCRIPTURE

*1 Kings 18:39*

*And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God."*

Read it three ways together: all together normally, all together in a whisper (the way a person says something they finally believe), all together loud (the way a crowd on a mountain would shout it).

### SAY

*You won't usually be on a mountain watching fire fall from heaven. But every week of your life you'll have to answer Elijah's question: am I going to follow the LORD, or something else? Anything that takes God's place is a Baal — even if it's not a statue. Sports. Friends. Phones. Being liked. None of those are bad. But none of them are God. The LORD, he is God. There is no other.*

### The Index Cards

Hand out index cards. Tell each student to write or draw one thing in their life that sometimes tries to take God's place — a thing they care about so much it's started to feel bigger than God. Tell them no one else will read it. They'll keep it or take it home.

### NOTE

While they write, walk around quietly. If a kid is stuck, ask them: "What's something you'd be really upset to lose? What's the first thing you reach for in the morning?" Help them name it. Don't make the thing itself sound evil — most of these are normal kid things. The point is naming where it sits in the heart.

When they're done, have everyone hold their card. Pray over the cards:

**PRAY**

*God, you sent fire on Mount Carmel so the people would know you are the only true God. Help us know it too. The things on these cards aren't bad — but they aren't you. Don't let them take your place. Help us follow you, and only you. The LORD, he is God. There is no other. Amen.*

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## 4. The Work

Pick one or more activities from this week's menu. Print enough copies for each kid in advance. The kids don't have to do all of them — pick what fits the group's energy and what time you have left.

The menu for this week:

- **Fire on the Mountain** — coloring page reinforcing the Mount Carmel scene and the bottom line.
- **The LORD, He Is God** — word search with the names, places, and key words from 1 Kings 18.
- **The Thing That Tries to Take God's Place** — drawing prompt connecting the lesson to the kid's own life.
- **Remember the Showdown** — fill-in-the-blanks recall using the kids' Bibles (1 Kings 18).

The full production specs for each activity are in this week's activities file.

**NOTE**

While the kids work, sit with them. Ask one or two what they're working on. Reinforce the bottom line one more time before class ends. If you finish early, have a few kids share what they made. If you run long, send the activity sheets home.

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## What Comes Next Week

Next week we close the quarter. We'll look back across all twelve lessons — Joshua's river crossing, Jericho's walls, the judges, Ruth's loyalty, David's heart, Solomon's wisdom, the kingdom splitting, Elijah's fire — and ask one question together: what kind of people does God want living in the land? It's the quarter review, and it sets up everything Year 2 is going to do.