

Elijah Runs Away

1 Kings 19

PPT Title

Elijah Runs Away

Main Point: God is with us even when we fail. He is the God of new beginnings.

Key Verse: *I knew that you are gracious. You are tender and kind. You are slow to get angry. You are full of love. You are a God who takes pity on people. You don't want to destroy them.* - Jonah 4:2b

Props: Fresh baked bread (warm and fragrant, and outside the room if possible), a small jug of water

BACKGROUND/REVIEW

Say: God's chosen people, the Israelites, had turned their backs on God. King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, constructed altars to the false god, Baal, and the Israelites worshipped a made up god who could do nothing for them. God sent a prophet named Elijah (eh-LY-juh) to declare that God would send a drought in the land. The drought lasted over three years, and the people suffered. Elijah proposed a challenge. He told the false prophets to prepare a bull to be sacrificed on an altar for Baal. But the prophets were not allowed to start the fire. They had to call on Baal to send fire. **Ask:** What happened? *Absolutely nothing!* **Say:** A god that is not real cannot send fire, or anything else! After hours and hours of waiting, Elijah rebuilt an altar to the one true God. Just to make it more challenging, he told the people to pour lots and lots of water on the sacrifice and altar. Then he prayed for God to send fire. **Ask:** What happened? *God sent fire!* **Say:** God proved that He is the only God when He sent fire down from heaven. His fire not only burned up the sacrifice, but it burned up the altar, the dirt it stood on, and the water that was on it.

The people were amazed. They fell face down and shouted that God is the ONLY God. Then, according to God's law, the false prophets were killed. Elijah prayed to the Lord. Soon, the sky was black with clouds and God sent a great rainstorm. God showed that He could bring fire and rain, while Baal could do neither.

DEATH THREAT (1 Kings 18:46 - 19:9)

Say: King Ahab left Mount Carmel and went home to Jezreel.

Then the Lord gave special strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to the entrance of Jezreel. - 1 Kings 18:46

Elijah was able to run 15 miles, quicker than a chariot! Now, King Ahab had seen what had happened on top of Mount Carmel, and it appears that he realized that Elijah was truly sent by the one true Lord (1 Kings 18:44b, 45b). All of the people turned back toward God, and all the false prophets were dead. But there was still one more enemy that Elijah would have to deal with. **Ask:** Can anyone guess who this would be? *Jezebel.* **Say:** Ahab's wife, Jezebel, did not go to Mount Carmel. How do you think she will react when she finds out that her dear friends, the false prophets, have been killed, and her beloved Baal has been proven to be a fake? *Listen for answers.*



Say: *Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done. He told her how Elijah had killed all of the prophets with his sword. So Jezebel sent a message to Elijah. She said, "You can be sure that I will kill you, just as I killed the other prophets. I'll do it by this time tomorrow. If I don't, may the gods punish me greatly."* - 1 Kings 19:1-2

Say: Now, Elijah had just seen with his own eyes that God sent fire from heaven. He saw God deliver 750 enemies (the false prophets) into his hand, and he heard the entire kingdom of Israel shouting praises when they turned back to God. So, we might expect that Elijah would burst out laughing when he heard Jezebel's death threat that she swore in the name of gods that didn't even exist. But that is not at all what happened.



Elijah became afraid, and he ran away. He went over 100 miles south, to Beersheba. Elijah fled out of fear, not because God told him to. Remember, the first time that Elijah went to hide out (after he announced to Ahab that a drought was coming) God told him to go and hide. At that time, hiding was God's plan. God was allowing time for the drought to take effect. This time, hiding was not God's plan. We can only imagine what amazing thing God would have done to protect Elijah, and defeat Jezebel, if only Elijah would have listened to God's voice once again.

Application: One time, hiding was God's plan. The next time, hiding was not His plan. Only God knows everything. He sees what we cannot. He knows what the future holds. He knows exactly what is best for us. We must abide - walk with Him, sit with Him, daily - to know His perfect will, and to be used by Him.

Note to Teacher: We may have every reason in the world why we should or should not do something. Our reasons may be good and logical. However, what we should really ask is, "What has God spoken on the issue - either through His written word, His whispered voice, or His prompting by the Holy Spirit?" Very often, emotions and logic can mislead us. We must stand firm on God's omniscient instruction (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Say: After going to Beersheba, Elijah walked into the desert wilderness for a day. He sat under a small tree where he offered a sad and desperate prayer to the Lord.

"Lord, I've had enough," he said. "Take my life. I'm no better than my people of long ago." Then he lay down under the tree. And he fell asleep. - 1 Kings 19:4-5a

Note to Teacher (NOT to be shared with children): If Elijah were to have consulted a psychiatrist, I believe he would have been diagnosed as suicidal. In fact, I believe that in our text Elijah is actively trying to kill himself. He is doing the very things people do when they are trying to kill themselves. He is depressed. He is angry. He is tired of life and wants out. He leaves his servant behind so that he will be alone. This way, no one can stop him. He then goes out into the wilderness, where there is no food or water, and this after he has run 15 or so miles from Mount Carmel to Jezreel, and another 100 miles or so from Jezreel to Beersheba. Now, another day's journey into the wilderness, he lays down under a scrubby tree to die. It is just as though he has taken a bottle of sleeping pills and never plans to wake up. His final words say it all: "He... asked to the LORD to take his life, 'I've had enough! Now, O LORD, take my life. After all, I'm no better than my ancestors.'" - Bob Deffinbaugh, *The Life and Times of Elijah the Prophet - Elijah Throws in the Towel (1 Kings 18:45-19:21)* ©1996-2006 Biblical Studies Press, reprinted with permission from www.bible.org.

Say: It is here that we see Elijah give up. He told the Lord that he was fed up and he would rather die than go any further. But God was not ready to give up on Elijah! Notice that even though Elijah had failed, and fled in fear, God was still with him.



Suddenly an angel touched him. The angel said, "Get up and eat." Elijah looked around. Near his head he saw a flat cake of bread. It had been baked over hot coals. A jar of water was also there. So Elijah ate and drank. Then he lay down again.

The angel of the Lord came to him a second time. He touched him and said, "Get up and eat. Your journey will be long and hard."



So he got up. He ate and drank. The food gave him new strength. He traveled for 40 days and 40 nights. He kept going until he arrived at Horeb. It was the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.

- 1 Kings 19:5b-9a

Elijah was at the end of his rope. After all the amazing things God had done, Elijah could only focus on the fact that one woman was threatening his life. At this moment, Elijah forgot that God is infinitely more powerful than Jezebel. He was looking at things through human eyes, only seeing the threat in front of him. Elijah needed to **refocus!**

Application: I'm afraid that, at times, most believers are guilty of doing what Elijah did. Even though God has taken away our sin, given us new life, and continues to pour out His blessings on us, when something goes wrong, that one thing is all we can see. At times, we all need to refocus!

Say: But God did not leave Elijah to lie there and focus on himself. God sent an angel to him. Elijah awoke the smell of fresh bread baking. Have you ever smelled homemade bread baking in the oven? **Teacher:** *Have someone bring in the fresh bread, and walk around the room with it so the kids can smell it.* Wow, there is no more comforting smell than that. Smelling that would certainly make me feel better! Elijah sat up and ate some of that bread and drank the fresh water God provided. The angel told him to have "seconds", because he was about to go on a long journey.



Strengthened by the food, Elijah traveled for 40 days and nights until he got to Horeb.

Ask: Who remembers the story of Moses and the burning bush? **Say:** God first appeared to Elijah's ancestor, the great prophet Moses, at this place called Horeb, in the Sinai desert. It was at Horeb that God told Moses to remove his sandals because God was right in front of him and he was standing on holy ground. At Horeb, God now had a question for Elijah.

THE LORD APPEARS TO ELIJAH (1 Kings 19:9 - 19:18)



A message came to Elijah from the Lord. He said, "Elijah, what are you doing here?"
- 1 Kings 19:9b

Say: Of course, God knew exactly what Elijah was doing there. We see many times in the Bible that God asks people questions (Genesis 3:9, 4:9). God knows everything! His reason for asking cannot be to find out information that He did not know. He asks to make people think about the answer. Often times, it is so the person can realize they have sinned, confess the sin to God, and seek forgiveness. Isn't God kind to approach His fallen children this way, instead of blasting them with scolding words?



(Elijah) replied, "Lord God who rules over all, I've been very committed to You. The people of Israel have turned their backs on Your covenant. They have torn down Your altars. They've put Your prophets to death with their swords. I'm the only one left. And they are trying to kill me." - 1 Kings 19:10

Say: Elijah made a good argument. Most of those things had happened. **Ask:** But what was the real reason that Elijah was out in the wilderness? *He was afraid of Jezebel.*

Say: He was afraid that Jezebel was more powerful than God. He doubted that God would protect him his time.

Elijah's real problem was that he was focused on Jezebel, not on God. God wanted to refocus Elijah's attention to where it should be. God was about to do something amazing. Keep in mind that because God is perfectly holy, and people are utterly sinful, whenever God came near His people there was a barrier between them. In the tabernacle, there was a curtain about four inches thick, which separated God and man.

The Lord said, "Go out. Stand on the mountain in front of Me. I am going to pass by."



As the Lord approached, a very powerful wind tore the mountains apart. It broke up the rocks. But the Lord wasn't in the wind.

After the wind there was an earthquake. But the Lord wasn't in the earthquake.



After the earthquake a fire came. But the Lord wasn't in the fire.

And after the fire there was only a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his coat over his face. He went out and stood at the entrance to the cave.



Then a voice said to him, "Elijah, what are you doing here?" - 2 Kings 19:11-13

Say: God asked the very same question again. This is sort of when your mom or dad has asked a question and they know you have not given a completely honest answer. They ask again to give you another chance to answer honestly. Look at Elijah's first response on the screen while I read his second response.

PPT Verse

He replied, "Lord God who rules over all, I've been very committed to You. The people of Israel have turned their backs on Your covenant. They have torn down Your altars. They've put your prophets to death with their swords. I'm the only one left. And they are trying to kill me." - 2 Kings 19:14

Ask: What was different in Elijah's second response? *Listen for answers.* **Say:** Absolutely nothing was different! This is so sad. God purposely displayed His power right in front of Elijah. He sent wind that tore mountains apart, an earthquake that shook the ground Elijah stood on, and fire from heaven. This should have changed Elijah's focus back to the power of God. Then in a gentle voice, God gave Elijah the opportunity to repent of his mistrust and underestimation of God's goodness and power. But Elijah did not change one bit!



The proper response would have been for Elijah REPENT. Elijah should have fallen on his face and said, "Lord Almighty, I have doubted your power to protect me. I forgot about how you provided for me during the drought, how You raised a boy from the dead, and how you ALWAYS keep your promises. Please forgive me and help me to keep my focus on You. Thank you for giving me another chance. Please continue to use me."

Without a humble and repentant heart, Elijah's time of being used by God would end. God gave Elijah one last set of instructions.

*The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came. Go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also anoint Jehu as king over Israel... And **anoint Elisha (ee-LY-shuh) from Abel Meholah as the next prophet after you.**" - 1 Kings 19:15-16a*

God named two men that He wanted Elijah to anoint over two parts of the kingdom. God also told Elijah that he was not the only faithful believer in Israel after all. There were 7,000 people who did not worship Baal. Strangely, Elijah did not anoint the kings as God had instructed. (This will be done later by Elisha.)

THE CALL OF ELISHA (1 Kings 19:19-21)



Elijah left and found Elisha plowing a field with a pair of oxen. There were eleven other men in front of him, and each one was also plowing with a pair of oxen. Elijah went over and put his own coat on Elisha. Elisha stopped plowing and ran after him. "Let me kiss my parents good-bye, then I'll go with you," he said.

"You can go," Elijah said. "But remember what I've done for you."

Elisha left and took his oxen with him. He killed them and boiled them over a fire he had made with the wood from his plow. He gave the meat to the people who were with him, and they ate it. Then he left with Elijah and became his assistant. - 1 Kings 19:19-21 CEV

Elijah put his prophet's coat on Elisha as a sign that he wanted Elisha to come with him. This was like telling him that he had been chosen to be the next prophet of God. Elisha went willingly. But first, he killed his team of oxen and cooked them over a fire he made by burning the wood from his plow. Clearly, Elisha was not planning to return to his home and his farming. He had been called to be God's servant, and for him, there was no turning back. Then Elisha became Elijah's assistant, training to become a prophet.

Application: We all become discouraged at times. At times, each of us will fail. But just as we saw with Elijah, God does not leave us. He gently gives us the opportunity to repent and draw close to Him again. When God entered our world in the form of the Man, Jesus, He faced every trial and temptation that we face. He is not a God who is far from us. He understands what you and I go through. It is so important for us to turn from our pride and confess our sin when God brings it to our attention. As we saw with the sad ending of Elijah's ministry, if we refuse to humble ourselves and turn back to God, we will not be useful servants for the Lord. If we remain unrepentant, will not be able to bring glory to God.

But notice that God's plans cannot be stopped - even by the sin of stubborn people. When Elijah refused to repent, God had another man waiting to take his place. God does not *need* you or me to fulfill His plan. It is our honor and privilege to be used by God. Do not miss out on the joy of being in the middle of God's plan because you refuse to turn from your sin. Instead, be quick to listen to the Lord and confess every sin.

PPT Key Verse

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PPT Main Point

Main Point: God is with us even when we fail. He is the God of new beginnings.