

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: Elijah and the Drought

1 Kings 17:1-24

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

First Kings 17 introduces the most dramatic figure in the books of Kings outside the kings themselves. Elijah arrives without preamble and departs without ceremony, and between his appearances God does extraordinary things. The doctrinal task of this lesson is two-fold. First, the teacher must help students understand the specific purpose of miracles in this passage: they are not random demonstrations of spiritual power, not models of a normal Christian experience of signs and wonders, and not invitations to expect the same today. They are God's authenticating signature on His prophet and on His word in a time of severe spiritual crisis. The widow names this purpose herself in 17:24. Second, the teacher must help students understand why that authenticating role was historically bounded. The Word that these miracles confirmed is now complete. We have the full testimony of Scripture, attested by signs done by the prophets and apostles (Heb 2:3-4), and the New Testament explicitly teaches that miraculous sign-gifts served their confirming purpose and have ceased (1 Cor 13:8-10). The church that looks for a continuing stream of sign-miracles today is misreading both the purpose and the boundary of the miraculous in redemptive history.

The second doctrinal task is to draw out what 1 Kings 17 teaches about God that does not change. His power over nature is absolute: He feeds a prophet through ravens and sustains a widow's flour and oil. His mercy extends beyond the boundaries of Israel to a Gentile widow in Phoenicia. His word spoken through His prophet is true and reliable. His sovereignty over life and death is complete: He raises the widow's son. These truths belong to the character of God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and they are the theological ground of Christian faith and prayer today.

The formation aim runs through the widow of Zarephath. She is the lesson's model of costly, obedient, unreasonable faith. She had nothing left, and she gave her last handful first. Students should leave this lesson having identified one area of their life where God is calling them to that kind of first-portion obedience, and having named it specifically enough to take a step.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 17:1. Elijah appears suddenly with no backstory, announces a complete drought, and disappears. The drought is a direct theological challenge to Baal, the supposed Canaanite god of rain and storm. What does God's choice to shut off the rain in a nation that has turned to

Baal for agricultural prosperity reveal about His nature as the one true God and His relationship to the false gods of Ahab's court?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Elijah's appearance in 17:1 is one of the most dramatic entrances in all of Scripture. The Hebrew text gives him only a place of origin, Tishbe of Gilead, east of the Jordan, a region associated with rugged, independent people far from the sophistication of Ahab's Samaria. No lineage, no appointment narrative, no qualifying credentials. Just the word: 'As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand...' He speaks in God's presence and on God's behalf. That is his credential.

The drought announcement is not merely meteorological. It is a direct theological confrontation. Baal was the primary fertility deity of the Canaanite world, the god who was said to send the rains, grow the crops, and ensure the flocks multiplied. His devotees held elaborate ritual processions and sacrifices to secure his favor. Israel had been seduced into believing that their agricultural prosperity depended on Baal's goodwill. Ahab's official adoption of Baal worship under Jezebel's influence made this seduction royal policy.

God's response is to shut off the rain, and the statement is pointed: 'except by my word.' Not by Baal's word. Not by the prayers of Baal's priests. By Elijah's word, which is God's word. The drought is a declaration of sovereignty. Every day without rain is a theological argument: Baal is not sending the rain because Baal cannot. The Lord God of Israel holds the rain, and He will send it again only when He is ready. The contest between God and Baal is announced here and resolved in chapter 18.

The teacher should help students feel the courage this opening verse required. Ahab was one of the most powerful kings in the ancient Near East. Jezebel was executing prophets of the Lord (18:4). To walk into the court and declare that the king's god is impotent, and that the drought will last until God chooses otherwise, was not a safe theological lecture. It was an act of faith that staked Elijah's life on the reliability of God's word.

The application is not about expecting dramatic confrontations. It is about the basic conviction underneath Elijah's boldness: God is who He says He is. When we are confident of that, we can speak and act with a clarity and courage that would otherwise be impossible. Most of us will never announce a national drought, but we all face moments when faithfulness requires us to say something true in a setting where it costs us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Elijah's entrance as a demonstration of prophetic authority grounded entirely in God's word
- The theological significance of the drought as a direct challenge to Baal's identity as the rain-god
- God's absolute sovereignty over nature: the rain falls only 'by my word'

- The courage required to speak God's word in a setting where it invites persecution
- The contest between the Lord and Baal as the defining spiritual conflict of Ahab's reign

Discussion Prompts

- What do you think it took for Elijah to walk into Ahab's court and say what he said? What confidence was underneath that courage?
- Why does God choose to challenge Baal specifically through the weather, and what does that tell you about how God engages false religion?
- Where in your own life do you need Elijah's kind of confidence that God is exactly who He says He is, regardless of the opposition?

Question 2

Student Question:

Elijah was called to stand publicly before a king who had the power to kill him and to speak a word that would bring suffering to an entire nation. Most of us will never face that kind of confrontation, but we do face moments when faithfulness to God requires saying something true in a situation where it costs us. What is one such situation you face right now, and what would it look like to speak the truth with Elijah's kind of confidence in God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves Elijah's public boldness into the student's own context. The specifics will differ enormously from person to person, but the underlying dynamic is the same: there are moments when faithfulness to God requires speaking truth in a setting where it invites discomfort, conflict, or cost. The student who has a family member in a spiritually dangerous situation. The believer who works in an environment where unethical practices are assumed. The Christian who knows a friend is heading toward a destructive choice and has been politely silent.

Elijah's boldness was grounded in one thing: his confidence in who God is. 'As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives...' He was not bold because he had figured out the political angles. He was bold because he had settled the question of God's identity and his own relationship to God. That settled conviction is what the application question is drawing toward.

The teacher should acknowledge that most of us are not wired like Elijah, and that is not a failing. The point is not to find a Tishbite prophet in every student. The point is to ask: what would it look like to speak one true thing in one specific situation this week, not from your own cleverness or forcefulness, but from the settled confidence that God is real and His word is reliable?

The teacher should also gently note that speaking truth in love (Eph 4:15) is the New Testament framework for this kind of faithful speech. Elijah's bluntness with a king was appropriate in that

prophetic context. Our ordinary conversations call for the same truth but usually with a gentleness and patience that seeks restoration rather than confrontation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The relationship between confidence in God and the courage to speak truth
- Faithful speech as a form of discipleship in ordinary relational contexts
- The difference between prophetic confrontation in the Old Testament and truthful, loving speech in the New
- The cost of silence when truth is needed, and the cost of speaking when truth is costly
- Ephesians 4:15 as the New Testament framework: speaking the truth in love

Discussion Prompts

- What is one situation in your life right now where you know what the true and faithful thing to say is, but you have been holding back? What is the fear underneath the silence?
- How does Elijah's grounding in God's identity ('As the Lord lives...') relate to your own ability to speak truth in difficult situations?
- What is the difference between prophetic confrontation and the kind of truthful, loving speech that Ephesians 4:15 calls for?

Question 3

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 17:2-7. God commands Elijah to go to the Wadi Cherith and promises that ravens will feed him there. Ravens were unclean birds under the Mosaic law (Lev 11:15), and yet God uses them as His instruments of provision. What does God's use of unlikely and even ritually unclean instruments tell us about the scope of His sovereignty and His freedom to provide in ways that fall outside our expectations?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The ravens are a small detail that carries enormous theological freight. Under the Mosaic law, ravens were classified as unclean birds (Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14), animals that an Israelite was not to eat. Yet God commands them to feed Elijah, and they obey without hesitation or ritual concern. The Creator speaks to His creation, and creation responds. The birds that were ceremonially off-limits become instruments of God's sovereign provision.

This is consistent with a pattern across Scripture. God uses Balaam's donkey. He uses a burning bush. He uses a great fish. He uses a worm to destroy Jonah's shade plant. In each case, the natural order is pressed into immediate service of God's redemptive purposes without requiring that the instrument be conventionally appropriate. God's sovereignty over His creation means He is free to work through any means He chooses, including means that fall outside the categories of what seems religiously appropriate or logistically obvious.

For the student, the application cuts against two common tendencies. The first is the tendency to tell God how He should provide: 'I will trust God, but I expect Him to work through these specific channels.' The second is the tendency to dismiss an answer to prayer because it came in an unexpected form. Elijah did not refuse the ravens' bread because ravens were unclean. He ate and was sustained. The provision was real even though the instrument was unexpected.

The teacher should note that the ravens' obedience is also a quiet commentary on who is actually in charge of creation. Baal was supposedly the god of nature. But the raven does not consult Baal. It obeys the word of the Lord. Every obedient raven carrying bread to the Wadi Cherith is a small testimony against the pretensions of Baal worship.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's sovereignty over creation: He commands even unclean birds and they obey
- The freedom of God to provide through unexpected and even conventionally inappropriate instruments
- The practical challenge to our tendency to define in advance how God must work
- The ravens' obedience as an implicit critique of Baal's supposed control over nature
- The importance of receiving God's provision in whatever form it actually comes rather than the form we expected

Discussion Prompts

- What do you think the choice of ravens as instruments of provision was meant to communicate to Elijah and to us about the nature of God's sovereignty?
- Have you ever received an answer to prayer that came in a form you did not expect or through a channel you would not have chosen? What did that experience teach you about God?
- How does God's freedom to provide through any instrument He chooses challenge the conditions you sometimes quietly place on your trust in Him?

Question 4

Student Question:

Elijah went and did exactly what God said, even though hiding by a brook in the wilderness while the nation burned must have felt strange and inactive. Is there a place in your life where you are struggling to obey a clear word from God because the direction seems too quiet, too unlikely, or too far from where the action is?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Elijah's time at the Wadi Cherith is a season of hiddenness. While the nation suffers drought and Ahab searches for him (18:10), Elijah sits by a brook and waits. God's word was clear: 'Go from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith' (17:3). The instruction is to hide.

The instruction is to wait. The instruction is to trust that bread and water will come, even when there is no visible reason to expect either.

This kind of obedience is genuinely difficult for people wired for action, and most students in any adult class will know what it feels like to receive a word from God that requires waiting and hiddenness when they feel compelled to act. The person who believes God is calling them to stay in a difficult marriage rather than leave. The person who believes God is calling them to remain in a struggling congregation rather than find somewhere easier. The person who believes God is calling them to wait on a career decision rather than force it.

The test of Cherith is not passivity. Elijah was not lazy or disengaged. He was actively, intentionally obedient to a specific word. That is different from spiritual drift or avoidance. The discipline being tested is whether we can follow God's direction even when it does not look like what we imagined obedience should look like.

The brook eventually dries up (17:7), and God gives a new word: go to Zarephath. The principle is important: God's provision for one season does not automatically continue into the next. He gives manna for the wilderness, but not forever. He provides at Cherith, and then He provides differently at Zarephath. Each new season requires fresh attentiveness to God's word rather than an assumption that the last provision continues automatically.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The discipline of obedience when God's direction requires hiddenness and waiting rather than action
- The difference between Spirit-led waiting and spiritual passivity or avoidance
- The seasonal nature of God's specific provision: what He gives for one chapter of life may not extend unchanged into the next
- The importance of ongoing, fresh attentiveness to God's word rather than coasting on past direction
- The spiritual formation that happens in the hidden seasons of obedience

Discussion Prompts

- Is there a place in your life where you sense God calling you to wait, hide, or stay when everything in you wants to act or move? What does obedience look like in that situation?
- How do you distinguish between God-directed waiting and the kind of spiritual passivity that is really avoidance or fear?
- What has God taught you in a season of hiddenness that you could not have learned any other way?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 17:8–16. God sends Elijah to Zarephath, a Gentile city in Phoenicia, the very region where Jezebel was raised, and there directs him to a widow who is gathering sticks to cook her last meal before she and her son starve to death. What does God's direction of Elijah to this particular woman in this particular place tell us about His providence over the details of individual lives, and what does His care for a Gentile widow in the middle of a judgment on Israel say about the reach of His mercy?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The widow of Zarephath is one of the most theologically surprising figures in the books of Kings. She is a Gentile, a resident of Sidon, the very region that was Jezebel's homeland and Baal's traditional stronghold. She is not an Israelite. She is not part of the covenant community in any formal sense. She is a widow with a son and almost no food, living in a land that is also experiencing drought (the drought, it seems, extended into the wider region). And yet God says to Elijah: 'I have commanded a widow there to feed you' (17:9).

The word 'commanded' is striking. God has already issued His directive to this woman before Elijah arrives. She does not know yet that she is going to share her last meal. She does not know yet that the flour and oil will not run out. She knows only that she is gathering sticks to cook a final meal for herself and her son. And God has already decided that she is the one through whom He will sustain His prophet.

Jesus references this story directly in Luke 4:25–26: 'There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months... and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.' Jesus is making a point about the freedom of God's grace to go where it is received, even when that means crossing ethnic and religious boundaries that seem obvious to those on the inside. This widow received the prophet that Israel did not deserve.

For the teacher, the theological implication is profound: God's mercy is not bounded by ethnicity, geography, or formal covenant status. He sends His provision and His presence to those who will receive them with faith. This is not an argument against the covenant or the particular calling of Israel; it is a demonstration of the God who stands behind the covenant, whose heart has always been for all peoples, and who will eventually send His Son as a blessing to all nations (Gen 12:3; Gal 3:8).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's sovereign direction of His prophet to a Gentile widow outside the covenant community
- The word 'commanded': God's provision is already arranged before Elijah or the widow know what is happening
- Luke 4:25–26 as Jesus' own commentary on this episode: grace going where it is received
- The scope of God's mercy beyond the visible boundaries of the covenant people

- The universal reach of God's heart for all peoples as a consistent thread in the Old Testament narrative

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think God sent Elijah to a Gentile widow in Sidon rather than to an Israelite widow, and what does that choice say about the character of God?
- How does Jesus' use of this story in Luke 4:25–26 help you understand what God was doing in 1 Kings 17?
- Where in your own experience have you seen God extend His mercy or provision to someone in a way that surprised or challenged your assumptions about who receives His grace?

Question 6

Student Question:

The widow's act of obedience in 17:13–15 is one of the most remarkable in Scripture. She was prepared to cook her last food and die. Elijah asked her to give it to him first, promising that the flour and oil would not run out. She obeyed. Where in your own life is God calling you to give Him the 'first portion,' the thing you feel you cannot afford to give, and what has kept you from taking that step?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The widow's act of obedience in 17:13–15 is one of the most searching faith-responses in the entire Bible. Elijah arrives as a stranger and immediately asks for water and bread. She tells him honestly what she has: a handful of flour, a little oil, two sticks of wood, and a plan to make one last meal before she and her son starve. And then Elijah says, with breathtaking confidence: 'Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a small cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: "The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be run dry, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth"' (17:13–14).

He is asking her to give up the last security she has, on the word of a stranger who claims to speak for a God she does not worship, with the promise of a miracle she has no reason to believe will happen. And she does it. She goes and does 'as Elijah said.' The word 'first' in the command is the theological key: she is to give to God's representative before she feeds herself. The first portion, the portion she could not afford to give, is the portion that unlocks the miracle.

This pattern runs across Scripture. The poor widow in Mark 12:41–44 gives her last two coins and is commended by Jesus. The disciples are called to leave their nets before they know where Jesus is taking them. Abraham is asked to offer Isaac before the ram appears in the thicket. In each case, the act of giving what cannot be afforded, what seems like the last resource, is the act that demonstrates where trust actually resides. And in each case, God responds to that trust.

The teacher should be careful not to turn this into a prosperity-gospel framework: 'Give your last dime and God will make you rich.' That is not what is happening here. What is happening is that a woman's trust in the word of God, spoken through a prophet she has no human reason to believe, is the very condition God honors with miraculous provision. The miracle is a response to faith and to the authentication of God's word, not a mechanical reward for a financial transaction.

The application for the student is pressing and specific. Where is the 'first portion' God is asking you to give before you know how things will work out? This is not primarily about money, though it can include money. It is about whatever area of your life you are gripping most tightly, the thing you are treating as your last and irreplaceable security, and whether you are willing to release that first to God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The widow's obedience as a model of costly, unreasonable, word-activated faith
- The significance of 'first': the first portion given to God before providing for oneself
- The pattern of first-fruits obedience across Scripture as the act that precedes miraculous provision
- The distinction between this passage and a prosperity-gospel framework: the miracle is tied to prophetic authentication, not a transactional formula
- The specific application to identifying the area of life we hold most tightly and asking what it would look like to release it first to God

Discussion Prompts

- What do you think the widow was thinking and feeling when Elijah asked her to make his bread first? What would you have been thinking?
- What is the 'handful of flour' in your own life right now, the last resource you are most afraid to release to God?
- How does the widow's story help you distinguish between genuine faith-obedience and a prosperity-gospel 'seed-faith' formula?

Question 7

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 17:17-24. When the widow's son dies, Elijah takes the boy, carries him upstairs, and stretches himself over the child three times, crying out to God. The Lord hears Elijah's prayer and the child lives. Why does the narrator include this third and climactic miracle when Elijah was already proven as a true prophet through the drought and the provision? What additional truth does the raising of the widow's son establish about the God of Israel and the nature of Elijah's prophetic commission?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The raising of the widow's son is the climax of chapter 17 and one of the most theologically significant moments in the entire Elijah narrative. It is significant to ask why the narrator includes it. Elijah's credentials as a true prophet were already established: he announced the drought and it came; the ravens obeyed God's command; the flour and oil did not run out. Why is a resurrection needed on top of these?

The answer is in 17:24. The widow's confession is precise: 'Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.' The raising of her son has produced a new level of certainty in her. The drought and the provision had been extraordinary. But the restoration of her dead son crossed into a category of divine action that left no room for alternative explanation. Only the God who made life can restore it. The resurrection of the boy is the maximum authentication: this prophet speaks for the God who holds the boundary between life and death.

This also points forward. The raising of the widow's son at Zarephath is the first recorded resurrection in Scripture. It will be followed by Elisha raising the Shunammite's son (2 Kgs 4:32–37) and eventually by Jesus raising the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11–17), a story with striking parallel details: a widow, a dead son, a prophet who restores him and 'gives him back to his mother' (Luke 7:15, paralleling 1 Kgs 17:23). Luke's language is deliberate. Jesus is the greater Elijah, the greater prophet, whose resurrection power is not borrowed from God but is His own as the Son of God.

The theological point for the lesson is that the miracles of Elijah point beyond themselves. They authenticate the prophet in the moment, but they also function as prophetic signposts toward the One who will come with full authority over life and death, not just to raise one widow's son but to defeat death itself for all who believe.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The escalating nature of the miracles in chapter 17: each one exceeding the previous in scope
- The raising of the widow's son as the maximum authentication: only the God of life can restore the dead
- The widow's confession in 17:24 as the explicit statement of the miracles' purpose
- The first recorded resurrection in Scripture and its forward-pointing significance
- Luke 7:11–17 as the New Testament parallel: Jesus as the greater prophet who raises the dead by His own authority
- The miracles of Elijah as prophetic signposts toward the resurrection of Jesus

Discussion Prompts

- Why do you think God arranged for Elijah to raise the widow's son rather than simply sustaining the prophet and the woman through the drought? What did this miracle accomplish that the earlier ones did not?

- What does the widow's confession in 17:24 tell you about what miracles in the biblical record were designed to do?
- How does the story of Elijah raising this son help you appreciate what Jesus was doing in Luke 7 with the widow of Nain's son?

Question 8

Student Question:

Elijah took the widow's grief personally. He cried out to God with urgency and emotional intensity: 'O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?' (17:20). His prayer was honest, almost confrontational, yet completely submitted to God's power. How does Elijah's prayer in this moment shape the way you think about the kind of honesty and urgency that are appropriate when you bring heartbreak and confusion to God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Elijah's prayer in 17:20–21 is remarkable for its emotional honesty. He does not offer a polished theological petition. He cries out: 'O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?' This is a protest prayer, the kind Job prayed, the kind David prayed in the Psalms of lament. It names the confusion and the pain directly. And then, immediately, he stretches himself over the boy three times and prays: 'O Lord my God, let this child's soul come into him again' (17:21). The prayer is both honest and specific.

The teacher should help students see that Scripture does not model a kind of sterile, formal prayer that censors the emotional truth of the situation. The Psalms are full of prayers that say things like 'Why, O Lord, do you stand far away?' (Ps 10:1) and 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Ps 22:1). These are not faithless expressions; they are the language of a relationship in which the pray-er trusts God enough to say what is actually true about their inner state.

At the same time, Elijah's prayer does not end in accusation. It ends in petition. He does not say, 'You have failed me, and I am done with you.' He says, 'Let this child's soul come into him again.' The prayer moves from honest confusion to specific request, trusting that God both hears and can act. This is the pattern of biblical lament: honest about the pain, but not hopeless about the outcome.

The application is for students who have been taught (implicitly or explicitly) that honest prayer is somehow disrespectful, that you must approach God only with polished, controlled emotions. Elijah's prayer invites a different relationship, one where the full weight of what is actually happening is brought before God rather than edited for presentation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The legitimacy of protest and lament in prayer: bringing honest confusion and grief before God
- The pattern of biblical lament: honest about pain, but submitted to God's power and goodness
- The movement from honest confusion to specific petition in Elijah's prayer
- The Psalms of lament as the primary biblical framework for prayer in seasons of suffering
- The difference between honest prayer and faithless complaint
- The invitation to full emotional honesty in prayer as evidence of genuine trust in relationship with God

Discussion Prompts

- What does Elijah's 'protest prayer' in 17:20 tell you about the kind of honesty God welcomes in our prayers?
- Is there something you are carrying right now that you have been afraid to say directly to God because it felt too raw or too accusatory? What would it look like to pray it honestly in the way Elijah did?
- How does Elijah's prayer model the movement from honest confession of pain to specific faith-filled petition?

Question 9

Student Question:

Read 1 Kings 17:24 alongside 2 Timothy 3:16–17 and 1 Corinthians 13:8–10. The widow's declaration, 'Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth,' identifies the precise purpose of the miracles in this chapter: they authenticated the prophet and confirmed that his word was from God. What does this teach us about the purpose of miracles in the biblical record, and why does the church not look for or expect the same kinds of sign-miracles today now that the fully confirmed Word of God is complete?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal center and heaviest question of the lesson. The widow's confession in 17:24 is the explicit interpretive key that the narrator has placed at the end of the chapter: 'Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.' The miracles of chapter 17 were not displays of supernatural power for their own sake. They were authenticating signs: they established that Elijah was genuinely speaking for God and that the word he carried was true. When the widow saw what happened to her son, she knew the prophet was real and the message was from God.

This is the consistent purpose of miracles in the biblical record. The plagues of Egypt authenticated Moses before Pharaoh and before Israel (Exod 4:1–9, 30–31). The signs at Sinai authenticated the covenant (Exod 19:9). The miracles of Jesus authenticated His identity as the

Son of God and His message about the kingdom (John 20:30–31: ‘these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God’). The signs done by the apostles authenticated the gospel they proclaimed (Heb 2:3–4: ‘God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will’). The pattern is consistent: miracles authenticate the message and the messenger.

First Corinthians 13:8–10 is the New Testament’s direct teaching on the cessation of miraculous gifts: ‘Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.’ The ‘perfect’ (Greek: *teleion*) refers to the complete and fully delivered revelation of God in the New Testament. Once that revelation was delivered and confirmed by the miracles of the apostolic age, the confirming gifts that had accompanied the delivery of the message had served their purpose and ceased.

Second Timothy 3:16–17 makes the sufficiency claim explicit: ‘All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.’ The fully confirmed Word is sufficient. It equips the man or woman of God completely. There is no good work for which the Scripture leaves us unequipped and for which we therefore need additional miraculous confirmation. The revelation is complete. The authentication work of signs is done. The confirmed Word now stands as our sufficient and final authority.

The church that looks for a continuing stream of sign-miracles today is, however sincerely, misreading the purpose of miracles in the biblical record. Miracles were not given as a permanent feature of every believer’s experience. They were given to confirm the messenger and the message at specific moments in redemptive history. Elijah’s miracles confirmed Elijah and his word. The apostles’ miracles confirmed the apostles and the gospel. That gospel is now confirmed in the written Word, attested by the Spirit who illumines it, and sufficient for every need of the believer and the church. To look for new miraculous attestation is, functionally, to suggest that the Word as confirmed is not sufficient, which is a claim 2 Timothy 3:16–17 directly contradicts.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The explicit purpose of biblical miracles: to authenticate the prophet and confirm the word (17:24; John 20:30–31; Heb 2:3–4)
- The cessation of miraculous sign-gifts when the revelation was complete (1 Cor 13:8–10)
- The sufficiency of the confirmed written Word for every good work (2 Tim 3:16–17)
- The misreading of biblical miracles as a model for normal ongoing Christian experience
- The difference between God’s ongoing providential activity and miraculous sign-confirmation
- Why looking for new sign-miracles today implies dissatisfaction with the sufficiency of the completed Word

- The Holy Spirit's role today: illuminating and applying the confirmed Word, not producing new revelatory signs

Discussion Prompts

- Read 17:24 carefully. What does the widow say that the miracles have accomplished? How does that purpose statement change the way you read the miracles earlier in the chapter?
- How does 1 Corinthians 13:8–10, read alongside 2 Timothy 3:16–17, help you understand why the church today does not look for or expect the same kind of sign-miracles that Elijah performed?
- What is the difference between trusting that God still works providentially in the world and expecting continuing miraculous sign-gifts of the kind seen in the ministries of Elijah and the apostles?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across all of 1 Kings 17, from Elijah's sudden announcement to the widow's final confession, what one truth about God's power and mercy has most struck you, and what one specific step are you taking this week in response to His call on your life as a result of this study?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question asks students to land on one truth and one step from a chapter that has moved from a national drought to ravens at a brook to a widow's bottomless flour jar to a dead boy walking. The chapter is full. The student may land anywhere: on Elijah's courage, on the widow's unreasonable obedience, on the raising of the son and its pointing toward Jesus, on the confession of 17:24 and its clarity about what miracles are for.

The teacher should encourage specificity. The most powerful capstone answers are not about general impressions but about named truths: 'The truth that struck me most is that the widow obeyed first and received after, and I realize I have been waiting for God to act before I give.' Or: 'What most pressed on me is Elijah's prayer, because I have been editing my prayers and not saying what I actually feel, and I am going to change that this week.'

The one step should be concrete and time-bound. Not 'I will try to trust God more with my finances' but 'I will talk to my spouse this week about giving the first portion of our income to the Lord before we pay anything else, because the widow's story has pressed us on that.' The teacher can gently require specificity by asking the follow-up: 'And when specifically will you do that?'

Close with the wonder of the chapter's trajectory. One man, hidden in a wilderness, fed by birds, sustained by a widow's last handful. And out of that hidden season comes a prophet who will stand on Carmel and call down fire, who will outrun a chariot in the rain, who will appear on

a mountain with Moses at the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matt 17:3), and who will be the model for the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 1:17). The hiddenness of Cherith is not a detour from the story. It is the formation of the man God will use. The same is true of your hidden seasons.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The discipline of specificity in naming one truth and one step from a full chapter
- The transformative arc of the whole chapter: drought, provision, resurrection, confession
- The hidden season at Cherith as formation, not detour
- The widow's obedience as the formation model for first-portion faith
- Closing with gratitude for the God who feeds prophets, sustains widows, and raises the dead, and who is the same God today

Discussion Prompts

- Which single moment or truth in 1 Kings 17 has stayed with you most, and what do you think God is saying to you specifically through it?
- What is the one concrete and time-bound step you will take this week in response to what you have studied?
- Elijah was hidden, quiet, and sustained in ordinary ways before God used him in extraordinary ways. What is your hidden season right now, and how does Elijah's story encourage you about what God is doing in it?