**Gleaner’s Sunday School Lesson**

**At First Baptist church for August 1, 2021**

**Unit: Elijah: Living Outside the Comfort Zone.** Most people do not go looking for difficulties.  We usually choose what’s easy and comfortable.  There are times, however, when we need to step into jobs with a lasting impact.  The life of a believer is a life of service to God which often requires moving outside of our comfort zone.  For six weeks, we will learn from the life of the Old Testament prophet, Elijah, how to rely on God regardless of challenges and mistakes.  Following Elijah’s examples may lead us to the hardest job we’ve ever loved.

**Sessions #2 Topic: Serve with Trust**

**Scripture:**Primary Source of lesson: *Bible Studies for Life, the Senior Adult Personal Study Guide* beginning on, **p. 108,** or open your bible to **1 Kings 17:7-16.**

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we praise your name as Lord of our life and Light of the world. You have been so faithful to meet our every need.  We are filled today with humble and  heartfelt thankfulness for Your loving care.  We pray for those in our class who are unable to be with us for whatever reason.  We pray you will restore them to health and provide what is needed to bring them back to Bible study and Worship. Please bless our families, friends, pastors, missionaries throughout the world, and those still suffering from the effects of COVID.  As we continue to study the life of Elijah, may we trust You for Your provision even in the most difficult seasons of life..  Forgive our failures Lord.  In Jesus’ holy name I pray.

**Setting:** After his appearance before Ahab and his God-inspired declaration of a years-long drought, Elijah continued to obey the Lord’s command by hiding at the Wadi Cherith.  There God miraculously fed and protected him during the initial period of drought and famine.  Elijah learned to depend on God for everything which deepened his faith and trust in Him.  However, the Lord had more to teach His prophet as the water supply dried up. In this session we can learn how God continued to provide for Elijah in another unusual way. In all situations, our service to God should be fueled by trust in Him.  God cared for Elijah and a widow in Zarephath. He will do the same for us.

**Question #1 (p. 108) Whom would you trust to lead you through difficulty or danger?** Our author tells the story of the tightrope walker Charles Blondin who, in 1859, walked across Niagara Falls on a  3-inch thick cable. Later he did this  carrying a man on his back who happened to be his manager,  the only one who trusted him enough to accept the challenge. That was real trust!  Elijah similarly demonstrated trust in serving God.  He didn’t just talk about what God would do, but built his life on it. He also showed others how to do the same.

**Point:** **Service to God should be fueled by trust in Him.**

**Read 1 Kings 17:7-12 (p110) Elijah learned to trust God for his every need**

**Verse 7: After a while, the wadi dried up because there had been no rain in the land.** Elijah trusted and waited to hear from God.

**Verse 8-9:** After some time**… the word of the Lord came to him.** God instructed Elijah to travel to **Zarephath,** a city in the heart of **Sidon,** the pagan stronghold of Jezebel.  Elijah was to look for a **widow** who God **commanded** to provide for him. This was in the backyard of Jezebel’s father, the king of Sidon. God’s final command, **stay there,** signaled that Elijah’s period of learning would last a while. Living in Zarephath as a worshiper of Yahweh carried great risk, but Elijah learned his presence on Phoenician soil where Baal was worshiped demonstrated Yahweh’s power over all things.

**Verse 10-11:** By the time Elijah crossed the desert and **arrived at the city gate** of Zarephath, he desperately needed water.  He met the **widow** there **gathering wood.** This was an indicator of her poverty as she gathered meager scraps for firewood.  He asked her for a little water to drink.  **As she went to get it, he called to her and said** “**Please bring me a piece of bread..”.**  Elijah’s faith rested in the Lord who promised that a widow in Zarephath would provide for him.

**Verse 12:** The widow assured Elijah with an oath, **As the Lord your God lives, I don't have anything baked.** She didn’t have any bread to share.  She only had **a handful of flour in the jar and a bit of oil in the jug.**  She was going to use the oil and flour to **prepare** a final meal for her and her son, **eat it, and then die.** This plan did not make sense.  How could Elijah expect an impoverished woman to provide for his needs? He had to  look to God in faith and not his circumstances to see God’s will.  God is not limited in how or through whom He does His work.  Earlier, scavenging ravens; now a destitute woman!

**Question #2: (p. 111) When has God provided for you through unlikely means?**

**Question #3 (p. 112) What helps you trust God’s guidance when it doesn’t seem to make sense?**

**Read 1 Kings 17: 13-14 (p. 112) Next we will observe Elijah’s instruction and words of hope to the widow.**

**Verse 13:** Elijah learned to see beyond impossible circumstances and believe what God promised. He shifted the widow’s focus and challenged her,**”Don’t be afraid; go and do as you have said.”** God spoke through Elijah to quiet her heart with the words God speaks to us time and again through Scripture, **“Don’t be afraid.”** Then  Elijah  boldly instructed her to go home, **bake** him **a small loaf, and bring it to him** **first.**  **Afterward, you may make some for yourself and your son.** This command may have been the hardest test she had ever faced.  Why did Elijah direct her to feed him first?  He was actually inviting her to believe God’s promise for provisions.

**Verse 14:** Elijah made a promise to the widow based on the authority of **the Lord God of Israel:... the flour jar will not become empty and the oil jug will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the surface of the land.** Elijah demonstrated faithful obedience to God’s command by going to Zarephath.  Now, he urged the woman to practice the same kind of obedience by acting in faith on the Lord’s promise. Will we hold fast to faith when hope seems lost?  Will we share our faith and invite others to trust with us in the God who never forsakes His own?

**Question #4: (p. 114)  What are some opportunities you’ve had to trust God and lead others to do the same?**

**Read 1 Kings 17: 15-16 (p. 114) In this passage we will see how the widow obeyed Elijah’s command and God’s response to her faith.**

**Verse 15-16:** The widow **proceeded to do according to the word of Elijah.**  **Then the woman, Elijah, and her household ate for many days.**  **The flour jar did not become empty, and the oil jug did not run dry,** according to the word of the Lord spoken through Elijah. We can trust and believe based on how God worked in biblical times, and our faith can also grow when we hear testimonies of what God has done for others today.  Our author describes the steps Jonas Salk used to develop the vaccine for polio.  After testing it on monkeys, he tried it on himself and his family.   Trust in God is somewhat like that.  LIke the widow, we must personally trust His faithfulness and provision ourselves.  We must trust His promises and see God move mountains and resurrect what was dead.

**Question #5: (p. 116) How have you experienced God keeping your supplies from running out when you have trusted in Him?**

**Summary:** We have only one sure and constant source of trust:  God who is omnipotent and perfect in all His attributes. Lasting Truths:  (1) Follow God’s direction, even when it is beyond human reason or comprehension. (2) Encourage others to join in trusting God so they too may know His blessing. (3)  See how God works to our benefit when we trust His guidance. (4) During good and bad times, the Lord takes care of His people and directs their path.  (5) The blessing of the Lord is found on the path of obedience.  (6) The Lord will provide what we need. (7) Look for God at work all around you.  (8) Rejoice that the Lord desires to use you to declare His word and encourage others to trust and obey Him.

**Engage: (p116)** Listed below are some things you might feel may be running close to dry or empty in your life.  Circle the ones true for you today:

Money          Energy     Time     Hope     Compassion

God may invite you to share out of your scarcity with others.  Will you share anyway? The widow provided Elijah with his basic need for food and shelter.  Use the space below to record any needs that are most critical in your life today.  To whom could you reach out in your need?

**Live it Out (p. 117)**  The chorus to an old hymn proclaims. “Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!  How I’ve proved him o’er and o'er!”  Louisa Stead penned these words in 1882 after watching her husband drown attempting to rescue a drowning boy.  The loss left Stead and her four-year-old daughter penniless.  From her crisis, she wrote the lyrics that challenge us still today.  How will you express your trust in God?

1. **Trust.**  Identify one thing God has told you to do that doesn’t seem logical.  Do it anyway.
2. **Encourage**.  Name someone struggling with a crisis.  Share with this person your hope in Christ.  Tell him or her how God has brought you through trouble and pray with that person.
3. **Give** an “outrageous” gift to your church or someone in need.  Trust God to replenish what you need.

**Pray: “**Father, thank You for Your faithfulness to provide for us.  Thanks for this reminder from Your Word.  Help us to trust You more.”

**Watchword:**  May the Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another. Stay safe and healthy...