

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Sep. 3

MONDAY

The widow's son falls deathly ill and she blames Elijah. But Elijah takes the child and cries out to the Lord for mercy and healing.

READ: I Kings 17:17-20

Do you see what this poor widow suspects is the problem? It's her sin. (she says so in verse 18) In many ways, this widow reflects the thinking of many Christians - that somehow their sins are too great for God to over-look. So let's get this straight: God doesn't overlook sin! As the righteous judge of the universe, He punishes every sin. But the sins of we who believe have already been punished, and we bear them no more! They are not eligible for additional punishment. Instead the inheritance of eternal life as an heir of God awaits us! She's a poor widow for not knowing that.

TUESDAY

The prophet prays and pleads with God to bring the child back to life. God does exactly that, and his mother testifies as to the prophet's role as a true man of God.

READ: I Kings 17:21-24

Elijah stretches himself out over the dead boy's body in a kind of gesture portraying, perhaps, the transfer of life from his own body to the boy's. But he knows that such a transfer is not simply a matter of posturing because he cries out to God - asking Him to restore life. As we live for God, we may come up with some pretty unique ways to put our faith into practice, but in the end, it's all about God and how He chooses to show Himself and His power to us, and in us, and thru us. Today is all about God!

WEDNESDAY

Three years later, God tells Elijah to go speak to King Ahab. At the same time, Ahab is consulting with his advisor Obadiah about finding water. (Obadiah is a follower of God.) The king and his advisor split up and go two directions, looking for water.

READ: I Kings 18:1-6

Obadiah's story is a stirring one. He risked his life by hiding 100 prophets of the Lord when Ahab's wife, Jezebel, was hunting them down and killing them. There weren't many people with a better excuse not to do such a thing: after all, he worked in the king's household as an overseer. It must have been an easy thing for King Ahab to investigate his whereabouts. But Obadiah risked everything in order to save those prophets. *He who loses his life (or risks that possibility) for my sake, will save it!*

THURSDAY

Obadiah, obeying King Ahab's command, scours the countryside, searching for water. Suddenly, Elijah walks up to him and tells him that he must report back to Ahab that he's found the prophet. Obadiah, who recognizes Elijah, explains to him why he's afraid to do that.

READ: I Kings 18:7-18

The inconsistencies of life! One moment, Obadiah is fearlessly hiding 100 prophets from Queen Jezebel, and the next moment, he's afraid that King Ahab will kill him if he reports that he has found Elijah, and also if Ahab shows up to apprehend him, and Elijah is no longer there - if the Spirit of the Lord has carried Elijah away. What made Obadiah think that Elijah might not be there when the king arrives? Couldn't he have his soldiers guard him? I'm sure that Obadiah is thinking of other times when the Spirit carried him away - from one place to another (think back). Here's the point: the story of what God does in and thru a believer will spread. Your story is spreading this very day. Others are telling it and others are hearing it! So what, exactly, is your story? Is it about God and His faithfulness and goodness and mercy?

FRIDAY

Here begins the famous encounter of Elijah and the false prophets on Mount Carmel, the tastiest mountain in the entire land of milk and honey! (forgive me!)

READ: I Kings 18:16-20

Obadiah reports to Ahab that Elijah has been found. Ahab goes and they meet. Elijah identifies the king as one who has abandoned the Lord and followed Baal. He instructs him to gather 850 prophets of Baal (and his god-wife Asherah) and meet him again on Mount Carmel. Notice how King Ahab identifies Elijah - as the one who troubles Israel. Elijah denies that. Listen, that sort of accusation lives on. As we speak of God and His salvation to others, some will identify us as troublemakers. While it is true that what we say may disturb their peace of mind when it comes to spiritual things, it is still true that we are not basically troublemakers. We are peacemakers - hoping and praying that the one we are speaking to will put his trust in Jesus and come to know the peace that God alone can give. See yourself today as a peacemaker for those who are troubled and lost in their vanity and pride. And get out there and make some peace!

SATURDAY

Elijah speaks to the prophets (and others) gathered on Mount Carmel, telling them to stop wavering in their faith: either follow God or follow Baal. Trying to do a little of both will not work. The he challenges the gathered false prophets to a contest to determine which god is the real God.

READ: I Kings 18:21-24

How long will you halt between two opinions? The King James Version says. *How long will you waver?* says the NIV. The word waver is the word *dance* in Hebrew. They danced back and forth in their faith or lack of faith. That's a sad picture, is it not. In today's world, too. In our everyday worlds, too. Dancing around from church to church, from passion to lukewarmness, from boldness-in-Christ to ashamed to speak His name. James calls that being "double minded." It's a picture of one who is not fully trusting God. Trust God with all your heart and stop dancing around.