**1. Motivate**

Who or what can most always cheer you up?

* mom, dad

A video introduction to the lesson is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_mjkos80l> If you have no Wi-Fi where you teach, best to download to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/32wkc47k>

* kids
* reading the psalms
* turn off the news
* grandkids
* that first cup of coffee
* warm cinnamon rolls
* ice cold Coke, Pepsi, Dr. Pepper, etc.
* pancakes at Cracker Barrel, Bob Evans, et.

**2. Transition**

Sometimes our discouragement affects our spiritual lives.

* Today we look at Elijah’s time of discouragement.
* God told him and tells us, don’t let discouragement keep you from serving.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Never Give Up

Listen for response to a threat.

1 Kings 19:1-5 (NIV) Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." 3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

Who are named here as Elijah’s enemies?

* Ahab
* Jezebel
* the queen and king

What did Jezebel say that frightened Elijah?

* sent him news of a “contract” on his life
* promised to have him killed by sundown next day

Describe his attitude toward what was happening to him and the solution he had for escaping it.

* afraid for his life
* “ran for his life”
* decided to go off and hide in the desert wilderness
* found a little shade and prayed to die
* fell asleep as a result of his running and his fear

What are some situations where you could feel like you just want to give up?

* taking an academic course you found *very* hard … or the teacher made the course harder that it should have been
* a chronic health problem
* a rebellious child
* an abusive situation
* an increasingly negative financial crisis

Why do you think it is difficult to remember God’s power and faithfulness in the midst of discouragement?

* the discouragement (and sometimes depression) are overpowering
* the only thing you can focus on is the problem
* even if you know all the right verses (and have shared them with others) they feel like only words – the Truth they contain is not assimilated by the mind and spirit

Realize this …

* spiritual victory is often followed by trouble and danger
* even godly people can be tired, afraid, and distressed

Elijah is off into the wilderness. How could this be symbolic of his state of mind?

* he was all alone and felt all alone
* not much beauty he could see in the wilderness
* it was hot, dusty, desolate … that’s how he felt
* even the cave could have felt dark and dank – also not a happy feeling

How can isolation be detrimental when you are discouraged?

* you have no other input than your own thoughts
* you tend to blame yourself or condemn yourself
* there is no one around to encourage you or set your thinking straight

3.2 Be Attentive to The Lord’s Presence

Listen for how God speaks.

1 Kings 19:11-14 (NIV) The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

When God asks, “what are you doing here?” what points does Elijah make?

* I’ve been very zealous for Almighty God
* the Israelites have rejected your covenant
* they’ve broken down your altars
* they put your prophets to death
* I’m the only one left … and now they’re trying to kill me too!

Why do you think Elijah believed he was the only prophet of God left alive?

* lack of communication
* he might have asked God
* he had been in seclusion
* he had run off to the wilderness, maybe if he had stayed around and confronted the threat, others might have joined him

What events does Elijah experience that turn out *not* to be God’s communication?

* a great windstorm
* earthquake
* fire

What do we normally do when someone whispers? What did Elijah do?

* lean forward
* really pay attention
* make sure we catch what they are saying
* figure it must be important

What do you think Elijah could learn about God through the great wind, the earthquake, and the fire?

* sometimes God speaks in dramatic fashion
* sometimes God demonstrates His power
* sometimes God wants to get our attention in a way that we cannot miss
* Maybe God was just getting his attention for when He would actually speak
* Those kind of demonstrations are more for displays of power and might
* The still, small voice was more for demonstrating God's reassuring presence

How does God speak specifically to us today?

* we have Scripture
* God’s Spirit will impress concepts or life decisions upon our consciousness
* He uses godly men and women to teach, preach, counsel us
* a sequence of events will give us direction also

What encouragement has God recently spoken to you through one of these ways?

* a verse that spoke to one of my worries or concerns
* a Bible study or sermon that challenged me to trust God more
* a friend who reminded me of one of God’s promises
* a podcast that reminded me to make better choices with my time and entertainment

3.3 Press On!

Listen for tasks given to Elijah.

1 Kings 19:15-18 (NIV) The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. 16 Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. 17 Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. 18 Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."

What specific tasks does God have for a worn out prophet?

* go back
* anoint Hazael king of Aram
* anoint Jehu king of Israel
* anoint Elisha as your successor

Why would assignment of specific ministries be an encouragement to someone who feels at the end of their rope?

* God trusts me to do these things
* God has an important task for me
* I must not be really finished, it’s not all over
* God wants me alive, not dead
* God’s work goes on … with or without me, whether I am feeling good or feeling lousy

How would news of the 7000 faithful be an encouragement?

* I’m not alone
* there’s others with me on this venture
* God is at work … there’s opposition, but people are responding to God’s message

⇨ Consider that our personal obedience to the Lord is an encouragement to other believers!

What kinds of things make us feel sorry for ourselves?

* health problems
* being alone
* being out of work
* lack of successes

How does God give a sense of purpose and direction in these situations?

* daily strength to go on
* good friends to help, to support you in prayer, to encourage
* tasks and ministries that only you can do
* the Truth of His word

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Pray.

* Revise your prayers this week from “God, change my situation.”
* Change them to “God, change my perspective.”

Thank.

* Thank someone who has encouraged you by their perseverance to serve God through discouraging circumstances.
* Commit yourself to be that example for one person you know.

Recommit.

* Recommit yourself to a God-given task you’ve been ready to quit.
* Make your recommitment public.

Cryptogram Puzzle

Don’t tell anyone, but I’m the secret operative for here in Kiarab. We received these scraps of paper in two different message drops. Can you help us decode them? Sorry about their condition, but it’s been raining here. The key gives the letters which go in the matching spaces of the message. Most of key letters are given, but you might have to do some thinking to finish the message. When you finish, decrypting the message pass it along to your church web master for posting. If you get stuck, go to <https://tinyurl.com/32wkc47k>. You’ll find other cool Family Activities there also.

