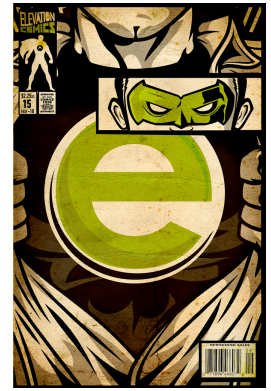


onechurch

big idea small group discussion



Sometimes life can really feel like a roller coaster, where instead of a steady path there are lots of ups and downs. This certainly was true for the prophet Elijah, who experienced so many ups and downs that he had to wonder what God was doing. What was God doing? Preparing Elijah for a bigger stage. A larger influence. A greater ministry. But before we can have a bigger stage, we must first be faithful on the smaller stage. Before we can have a larger influence, we must learn to be faithful in the small stuff. Because God cannot take us to the next level if we don't sweat the small stuff and be faithful in the little we already have.

BIG IDEA: Sweat the small stuff. Small faithfulness leads to big opportunities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In your own life, do you feel like you are in an “up” time, where things are exciting? Or, are you in a “down” time, where it feels like the bottom has dropped out and things are confusing? Why?
2. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 17:1-6.* Why did Elijah need to hide in the Kerith Ravine? How were Elijah's needs met while he was alone in the desert? What was unusual about the ways God chose to provide for Elijah during the drought?
3. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 17:7-9.* Describe a time when you decided to step out on faith and obey God even though that decision didn't seem to make sense to you at the time. Did that experience strengthen your relationship with God? If so, how?
4. After the brook dried up, Elijah trusted God and moved on to Zarephath. Is there a “dry brook” in your life God is using to “motivate” you to move on to what He has next for you?

The dry brook was only the beginning. *Zarephath* comes from a Hebrew verb that means *to melt, to smelt*. The noun form means *crucible*. Zarephath would be a crucible for Elijah—a place designed by God to further refine him so that God could use him and make a major difference in his life and influence.

5. How is God using the crucible of your circumstances to refine you and use you more effectively?
6. God commands Elijah to make a trip to a place called Zarephath, which isn't even in Israel. It is in the pagan nation of Phoenicia on the coast—the center of Baal worship. This 100 mile trip was a huge inconvenience to Elijah. God calls us inconveniently to live and work in very irreligious places. In what places in your life is God calling you to work with religious outsiders and to be inconvenienced?
7. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 17:4-24.* What are some “ups” that these characters experience? Can you think of a time when you knew God was at work in a big way?
8. What are some of the “downs” in this story? Have you experienced some downs or a “not in the brochure” moment?
9. What was the widow's circumstances when she first encountered Elijah? (17:12) If you were the widow, how would have you responded to Elijah's words? (17:13-14) Why does Elijah tell her to provide for him first? Why does the woman comply?
10. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 17:18; Job 36:8-9.* What does the woman assume when her son dies?
11. Why does Elijah work so hard on the son?
 - a. He rejects the belief that God afflicts people when they sin
 - b. He accepts the belief, but feels the widow is not guilty
 - c. He wants to be proven a man of God, whose word can be trusted
 - d. The years he has spent with the widow and her son, he has grown to care and love them both.
12. What impact does her son's recovery have on the widow?



13. Why did this whole story have to happen? What do you think Elijah and the widow learned during this roller coaster ride?
14. Are you facing a confusing twist or turn in your story right now? What is it?
15. Have you ever learned something big about God and faith during a “down” period that you couldn’t have learned in an “up”? Why is this different than what we might assume?
16. How can our needs and hurts draw us closer to God? How can your group help one another as you encounter life’s twists and turns?

MOVING FORWARD

Luke 16:10 says “If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities. This entire chapter is all about small things leading to big things. The first time it shows up is here with the widow. What is she going to do? Is she going to prioritize God first? Serve God first? Make his priorities first? Are we willing to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness?”, and do we believe that all these things will be given to you as well? (Matthew 6:33)

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

So many of us want God to come though in the big areas of our lives, but we haven’t followed in the small areas. ***When your faithful in the little, God will give you larger opportunities.*** What smaller areas in your life do you need to start following God, so He can start to work in the bigger areas?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

But she said, “I swear by the LORD your God that I don’t have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die.” But Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid! Go ahead and do just what you’ve said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what’s left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son. 1 Kings 17:12-13

