

CHURCH SCHOOL LESSONS  
AUGUST 23, 2020

This week our Bible story is about Elisha. We have been learning about Elijah and Elisha was his friend. At the time of our story, Elisha had become a prophet in Israel. Our lessons this month have been happening near the water and they involve water. What does water make you think of?

I am going to put out some pictures. I want you to circle the ones that use oil.



In this week's story Elisha uses oil to work a miracle for a woman and her children. Elisha ensures that nearly every container in the village is filled with oil so that it can help a family in need.

Turn in your Bible to 2 Kings 4. Elijah has gone away, and Elisha is on his own now. Read 2 Kings 4:1-4.

Why is the woman upset? What do you think Elisha is going to do to help?

Read 2 Kings 4:5-7.

What happened with the oil? How will it help the woman and her children?

Reading a Bible story through the perspectives of different people can make the story more real. In the Bible passages you can tell that the woman is upset. The children may have been even more upset. Here is the story from one son's perspective. See if you can imagine what it was like for him.

*Things have gone from bad to worse. First, my dad died. Now it's just me, my mom and my brother. It's awful hard for a family in our culture to get by without a dad. My mom has been working hard and somehow getting us the food we need. But then a man came. He said my dad owed him money. My mom told him that my dad had died and she didn't have the money. How could she come up with that much money? The man didn't care. He said that a debt was a debt, it didn't matter that my dad had died. The debt didn't die.*

*"That's not fair!" I almost shouted. But my mom gave me a look that clearly said, "Be quiet!" I kept my mouth shut but I didn't like it. And the man wasn't exactly kind to my mom. Before he left, he said that if she didn't come up with the money, he would come back and take me and my brother away as slaves.*

*I was NOT going to go anywhere with him. I wasn't going to leave my mom or my little brother. My mom was upset and didn't know what to do. She heard that the prophet Elisha was in town, so she asked him for advice. He told us to go around the village and collect as many jars as we could. Our house is full of jars!*

*My mom kept filling the jars from our tiny jar of oil. It was the weirdest thing -- that tiny jar didn't run empty until all the jars were filled.*

*I don't know how all of this is going to end, but I know that this much oil costs a lot of money. Surely it will be enough to pay off the debt so that we can stay together. After all, it's just me, my mom and my brother against the world. Well, with Elisha, too.*

Do you think this is a good way to tell the story? If you were one of the boys how would you have felt when the man came to collect the debt? What about when you saw the oil multiplying?

We can't know exactly what the boys felt or thought, but using our imagination this way can help us understand the message of the story better. Just as God worked through Elisha to help this family, God works through us to help one another. What are some ways you see people helping one another? How have you helped other people?

In Old Testament times, when a man died, any money he owed other people was expected to be paid back by the family. As terrible as it sounds, the person who was owed the money could take the man's children as slaves in order to pay off the debt. The problem was when a man died, the family often lost their source of income, therefore, they didn't have money to pay off the debt. This is why it was so important that Elisha helped the woman generate enough oil to sell to pay the man back.

When oil is mentioned in the Bible it most likely refers to olive oil. Olives grew on trees, and these trees grew in the region where the Bible stories occurred. Olive trees are believed to live 500 years, sometimes longer! Even when the trunk and branches die, the olive tree sprouts again to produce more olives. To get the oil out of the olives, the olives were crushed by a stone wheel then placed in special baskets for the oil to drain into a basin.

Olive oil was so important that King David had olive trees guarded to keep them from being damaged or harmed. The tree itself is nearly indestructible and will survive in harsh climates.

Here is a list of some uses for olive oil in Old Testament times:

Applied to the skin as a moisturizing agent	Eaten with bread
Used in building the pyramids of Egypt	Used in cooking
Used in making ointments	Used in making perfumes
To heal wounds	To treat leather
To soothe upset stomachs	To maintain hair styles
Used in making soap	Creating decorations for the body
Consecration of the sick or anointing	In oil lamps

Which of these are still uses for olive oil today?

Did you know that the first Olympic torch was a burning olive branch? Did you know that after the Great Flood, the olive branch was the first vegetation seen by Noah? Did you know that in the Common English translation of the Bible oil is mentioned 227 times?

I know you haven't been in school for a while, so I am going to test your math skills. (I will give you the answers with next week's lesson.)

Online 16 ounces of olive oil ranges in price from \$6.00 to \$15.00.

If the widow in our story had to pay debts totaling \$500.00 today, how many 16 ounce jars of oil would she have to sell at \$10.00 each to pay the debt? \_\_\_\_\_

If the jars sold for \$15.00 each, how many 16-ounce jars would she need to sell to pay the \$500.00 debt? \_\_\_\_\_

After paying the \$500.00 debt, if the widow had \$1,000.00 left over to support herself and her boys how many jars would she have sold for \$10.00 each? \_\_\_\_\_

While making oil multiply may seem like a boring miracle, Elisha was giving the woman and her sons new opportunities to live a better life.

Let's close this week with a prayer. Thank you God for the many people who help us and for the ability to help others in your name. Help us remember that we can be a prophet like Elisha when we help others in need. Keep us safe and guide us to do the things that are pleasing in your eyes. In Jesus' name. Amen.