

God's Unexpected Provision

1 Kings 17:7-16

⁷ *And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.*

⁸ *Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ⁹ "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." ¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink." ¹¹ And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."*

¹² *So she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die."*

¹³ *And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son.*

¹⁴ *For thus says the LORD God of Israel: "The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.' "*

¹⁵ *So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah.*

—1 Kings 17:7–16

Read 1 Kings 17:7–16

Where would you choose to hide a prophet from a dangerous tyrant during a famine? Would you choose a fortress? A faraway country? The Temple in Jerusalem? That's not what God did. He sent Elijah to the country near Israel where Jezebel's father was the sovereign. In Isaiah 55:8, God declares, "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor*

are your ways My ways,' says the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'" There is no way to know the superiority of God's ways unless we obey His directives above our own thoughts and ways. It is only by obedience to God that we can become beneficiaries of His provision, protection, and purposes.

In our passage this week, we see God directing Elijah to the most curious and unlikely place to hide out during the famine. In this place, God provided for, protected, and used the prophet to save others.

Obedience to God often seems irrational and ridiculous to the people within our culture. Yet, it is only by way of obedience to God's Word that we will experience the provision, protection, and purposes that He promises.

Take some time to slowly read through 1 Kings 17:7–16 again. As you study this passage, put yourself in the story. Think about what it would have been like for Elijah to receive provision from a Gentile widow. Also think of what it would have been like to be the widow, on the verge of starvation, giving your last provision to a Jewish prophet because of a command from a foreign God.

1. According to 1 Kings 17:7–8:
 - a. Why was Elijah not able to remain where he was?
 - b. How did God meet Elijah in this place?

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

Jesus highlighted this Gentile widow's reception of His Word in Luke 4:25–26:

²⁵ But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; ²⁶ but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.

5. Using 1 Kings 17:14–16 to comment on the following:
 - a. The promise of God
 - b. The widow's response
 - c. The result
 - d. The miracle
 - e. The veracity of God's promise

6. With this passage in mind, share your thoughts concerning:
 - a. God's ways
 - b. God's directives
 - c. God's promises

d. God's faithfulness

7. What is your greatest takeaway from 1 Kings 17:7–16?

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

Widows were considered the poorest class of citizen, and without the support of their families or communities would be destitute. God not only sent Elijah to a widow, but He sent him to a Gentile widow. Zarephath, a city of Sidon, was outside the borders of Israel. God could have sent Elijah to any widow in Israel, but here again we see His love and provision for all mankind (both Gentile and Jew) as He provided for both the Gentile widow and her son, along with the prophet Elijah.

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

Jesus shows special attention to widows: He empathized with the widow of Zane (Luke 7:11–16); He commended the widow who gave two mites (Mark 12:40–43); He highlighted them in His parable on prayer (Luke 18:1–8).

**FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

It is important to note that the scarcity from famine was not only flour, but everything was affected, including water.