Elijah and a Little Cloud

1 KINGS 18:41-46

KIDS WILL UNDERSTAND:
• The story of Elijah praying for an end to the drought.
• That Elijah had expectant hope that God would answer.
• That we have reason to be filled with expectant hope.
**ACTIVITY**

You will need to download the YouTube video called “Baseball Signs Explained” submitted by wmrvtv. We have included a separate file of instructions for both PC and Mac users if you need assistance in downloading.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLBT7HZP8vE

Watch the video. **Some of these signs seem a little crazy. If you wanted to make up a sign that told your brother that it’s time to eat dinner, what would you do? Now, make up a sign that means the neighbors are on vacation.** Give the kids a few minutes to come up with a sign that they can share with the group, about anything they want it to be.

**In our story today, a man named Elijah noticed a sign that God gave. The sign was to let the people know that rain was coming and the drought was over. No one else would’ve noticed the sign, because it was a little crazy. But, Elijah saw it and knew what it meant!**

**BIBLE ACCOUNT**

A wonderful cheap resource to have with kids are rhythm sticks. Cut dowel rods into 12-inch lengths. Each child will need two sticks. If you have someone who has a sander, ask them to sand the ends to eliminate any splinters that may appear after cutting the rods.

If you’re thinking, “I’d never put sticks in the hands of my kids”, don’t leave me yet. It’s about boundaries. Set down rules before you ever give the sticks to the kids. As soon as the kids get their sticks (or pull them out from under their chair), they put the sticks “at attention”—one stick along the side of the head at each ear. Give them permission to pound on anything between the sticks—their head! They’ll get tired of it in a few seconds.

Lead the kids in learning the following rhyme as they keep the beat with their sticks.

Elijah prayed for rain to fall
With his face between his knees.
Then he sent his servant off
To search the sky above the seas.

Tell the story and where indicated, signal the kids to say this rhyme.

**There had been a drought in the land for over three years and it caused a terrible famine. The people were starving. The prophet of the One True God Elijah told King Ahab to go on and celebrate a feast with the people, because the famine was over. Rain was on its way! It sure didn’t look like rain, but King Ahab believed Elijah.**
Elijah took a servant and climbed up Mount Carmel. Immediately, Elijah began to pray that God would send rain. He put his head between his knees and pleaded with God to bring an end to the drought. He believed wholeheartedly that God would send rain. So, he sent the servant to look out toward the sea for rain clouds. The servant went, but returned with news that the skies were clear.

Elijah prayed some more and then sent the servant to look again.

(Graph the kids to say the rhyme.)
Elijah prayed for rain to fall
With his face between his knees.
Then he sent his servant off
To search the sky above the seas.

The servant returned a second time, saying that there were no clouds.

(Graph the kids to say the rhyme.)

The servant returned a third time, saying that there were no clouds.

(Graph the kids to say the rhyme.)

A fourth, fifth, and sixth time, the servant returned with no good news of rain.

(Graph the kids to say the rhyme.)

When the servant returned the seventh time, he reluctantly told Elijah that he noticed a little bitty, teeny-tiny, itsy-bitsy cloud about the size of a man’s hand off in the distance. The servant wasn’t very hopeful, but Elijah was ecstatic! Yes! Yes! Yes! He believed the tiny cloud was a sign from God that He was sending rain. I can just imagine Elijah dancing around with his servant on top of the mountain. Oh happy day!

Immediately, Elijah sent the servant with a message for King Ahab that the rains were coming and that he’d better leave the feast to get back home before he got in the middle of a storm! Maybe now the people would turn away from their idols and believe in the True God.

As the sky grew dark with huge storm clouds, Elijah tucked his cloak into his belt and ran down the mountain. He was so excited that God chose to end the drought this way! God gave Elijah an extra dose of strength that day, because he ran in front of King Ahab’s chariot all the way back to Jezreel where the king lived.
SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

In our story the end of the drought started as a little bitty cloud. That cloud grew and grew and grew and became part of a major downpour that drenched everyone. Let’s see if we can make our own little cloud that turns into a bigger cloud.

Remove the paper wrapping from a bar of Ivory soap. Do not try to do this experiment with a different kind of soap, because it will not work. Ivory is special because it is “99% pure” and contains a lot of air. Place the bar of soap on a paper plate and then put the plate in the microwave. Set the microwave on 2 minutes. Make sure the kids are where they can watch through the front window of the microwave as the bar of soap changes.

The bar of soap will turn into a large paraffin cloud. After it sets for about 30 seconds, the kids can gently touch it. Let them describe what it feels like. It’s waxy and soapy.

* You’ll need to leave the door open on the microwave for a while to let it air out!

GAME

Each child will use the markers to draw a likeness of their face on a paper plate. Now, they’re ready for this game.

1 Kings 18:42 describes Elijah taking his servant and climbing Mt. Carmel. It says that once he climbed the mountain, he “bowed low to the ground and prayed with his face between his knees.” How did he pray? With his face between his knees! Bring a very nimble child forward (maybe a gymnast) to demonstrate “putting your head between your knees.” Now, ask them to walk across the room that way. That doesn’t look very easy. So, we have a different way that you’re going to put your face between your knees and walk across the room.

Divide the kids into teams of varying ages, sizes, and abilities. The teams will be at one wall. On the opposing wall, hang a sign that says “Mount Carmel.” At the signal, one player from each team will run to the Mt. Carmel wall, carrying their paper plate face. They will hit the wall, put their paper plate face between their knees, say “Elijah prayed!” and return to their team with the plate still between their knees. Once the plate is in place and the player begins walking, they can no longer touch the plate. If they drop it, they must go back to Mt. Carmel and begin again from there. The first person down the mountain will get the opportunity to answer a question about the story. (Take the questions in order.) If a child is not confident in giving an answer, let them consult their team members for help.

The next player on each team will play for the next question. Continue racing up and down Mt. Carmel until all the questions have been answered.
• What did Elijah tell King Ahab to go ahead and do?
  (go to the feast)
• Even though there were no clouds in the sky, what did Elijah
tell King Ahab about the drought?
  (that it was over)
• What mountain did Elijah climb?
  (Mt. Carmel)
• Who did Elijah take with him up the mountain?
  (his servant)
• What did Elijah do as soon as he got to the top of the
mountain?
  (bowed to pray, with his head between his knees)
• What did Elijah send his servant to do?
  (go look out toward the sea for any clouds coming)
• How many times did Elijah send his servant to look for clouds?
  (7)
• What was the servant’s report the first six times?
  (saw nothing)
• What did the servant report the seventh time he returned from
looking out to sea?
  (he spotted one very small cloud)
• What did the little cloud mean to Elijah?
  (that the rain was coming)
• What message did Elijah send to King Ahab?
  (Hurry home before you get drenched!)
• Describe Elijah as he came down the mountain.
  (happy, dancing, celebrating, running)
• What did Elijah hope for when God sent the rain?
  (that the people would return to worshipping God instead of
  idols)
• How was Elijah able to run in front of the king’s chariot all the
way to Jezreel?
  (God gave him extra strength that day.)

MESSAGE

(show slide #2) ESPN

Does anyone recognize this logo? What do you think of when you
see these letters? Does anyone know what the letters actually stand
for? Well, you might say that they stand for Entertainment Sports
Professional Network, BUT not today, not in kids’ church, not for what
we’re doing. Today, they stand for 4 things that we can learn from
Elijah.

(show slide #3) Elijah was EXPECTANT.

Have you ever been expecting someone to arrive? Maybe your
grandparents were coming to visit and they always bring you
something cool. You keep looking out the window, hoping to see their
car coming down the street. That’s what it means to be expectant.
Elijah kept praying and he kept sending his servant to look out at the sea. It was going to take a big downpour of rain to end the drought. Elijah expected God to do something BIG! Elijah believed completely that God would do a mighty work and he never let doubt creep in to take the place of his faith.

If we're going to be like Elijah, we have to pray expecting God to do something that only God can do. I've done this, and I'm sure you have, too—you come to God expecting Him to work in a situation and then you start doubting that He really will. You say to yourself, “Maybe God doesn’t hear me like He hears other people. Maybe He’s not going to help me this time.”

But, don't just pray expecting God to work. Live like you mean it. People will see it in the way you stand and move. Right now, stand like someone who's expecting something great to happen. Now, stand like someone who doesn’t think anything great could ever happen in his/her life. I challenge you to live with expectant hope that God is working in you and through you. Let others see it!

(show slide #4) Elijah was SPECIFIC.

Elijah’s mind was wrapped around the fact that there had been no rain for 3½ years. That's what he prayed about. He wasn’t concerned with all the other little things going on in his life. King Ahab was not happy with him, but Elijah knew he needed to keep praying about this one thing—rain that would end the drought.

Our prayers often are very general. We thank God for our friends. We thank Him for our food. We ask Him to be with those who are sick and hurting. What if we got really specific and thanked God for Jenny and Marcus, our friends? And, what if we talked to God about Jenny and Marcus? I think that would tell God that you were really thankful for those friends. What if we thanked God for the mashed potatoes and the meatloaf that Mom spent so long preparing, even though she was tired after working all day? I think that would tell God that you've put some thought into what you're thanking Him for. What if you prayed for Mr. Goldman who just got home from the hospital and asked God to make his heart strong? That's specific. That's putting a name to your prayers, and that tells God that you really mean what you're saying.

(show slide #5) Elijah was PERSISTENT.

SIX times Elijah sent his servant to look out at the sea for a cloud, and SIX times the servant returned reporting that the skies were completely clear. Elijah didn’t give up! He kept praying, and he kept believing. The empty reports were not going to discourage him. Just because the answer had not come yet, that was no reason to give up his expectant hope and his persistence. So again, he sent the servant ... for a SEVENTH time! This time, the servant came back with a different report—there was a little bitty cloud on the horizon.

Sometimes we understand God’s answer to our prayers almost immediately. Other times, it takes a long time before we see the
answer or recognize how God is working. If there is something on your heart, God has put it there. Keep praying. Be persistent. God wants to know that you’re serious.

(show slide #6) Elijah NOTICED God working.

When I read the Bible, it sounds like the servant wasn’t even sure he was going to mention that little bitty cloud. After all, they needed a downpour to stop the drought, not a sprinkle here and there. But, Elijah noticed the sign. Because Elijah had Expectant hope, because he was Specific, and because he was Persistent, he Noticed where God was working. He was looking for it and he was ready. When he noticed, he couldn’t help but start celebrating. Can’t you just see the funny scene of Elijah running down the mountain, screaming that rain was coming, when all there was in the sky was a little bitty cloud that hardly deserved mentioning? He was so excited because he noticed God working!

Look around. God is working around you all the time. But, we get so busy with what we’re doing that we don’t notice. I like to call these God-sightings. Every day, God moves someone to show extraordinary kindness, or He heals someone, or He provides a surprise for a needy family, or He makes a tree bloom with thousands of little flowers. Accept the challenge to notice what God is doing this week.

(show slide #7) ESPN

Now, when you see this logo come up on the TV, you’ll be thinking something different than everyone else. What four things did we learn from Elijah? Be Expectant, Specific, Persistent, and Notice when God is working.

ACTIVITY

In the Bible story, Elijah climbed up on a mountain called Mount Carmel to pray. He could’ve given up. He could’ve sat in his living room and played video games instead of climb up a mountain to seek God in prayer. But he didn’t run away from the mountain; he chose to climb it ... he chose to kneel ... he chose to put his head between his knees ... and he chose to pray. Just like we talked about, Elijah expected God to do something. He prayed specifically about this one need. He kept praying and praying—he was persistent. And, then he noticed what no one else would’ve recognized, but he realized that the cloud was a sign that God was doing something awesome.

Divide the kids into groups of 4-6 and give each group about half a bag of caramel squares. They are going to work together to make the caramels into Mt. Carmel. While they’re working, though, each kid will share which letter (E, S, P or N) is most difficult for them and why.

• Do you sometimes act like you don’t Expect God to show up?
• Are you guilty of praying real general prayers, not Specific ones?
• Do you pray about something one time and then forget it?
• Do you need to be Persistent?
• Or are you really bad about not Noticing when God is working all around you?

Start building and start talking! Walk around while the kids are building and encourage their conversations.

**PUPPETS / SKIT**

Make a paned window frame out of poster board to hold up in front of the puppets.

Kid #1:  
(looking out the window)

Kid #2:  
Hey, Bro, what you looking at?

Kid #1:  
I'm waiting for the moving truck.

Kid #2:  
Whose moving truck?

Kid #1:  
I'm not really sure. I'm watching for the moving truck for the house next door. I think that the new owners are moving in this week.

Kid #2:  
Why are you so anxious to see the truck?

Kid #1:  
Well, I've been praying that a new friend will move into that house. It could be any time now.

Kid #2:  
What kind of friend you think is moving in there?

Kid #1:  
Well, I'm hoping it will be someone who likes to play baseball and likes to have long talks on the swings and likes to get messy in the dirt and likes video games and coconut banana caramel raisin peppermint ice cream.

Kid #2:  
You really think that a new friend is going to move in next door that likes all the same things you do?

Kid #1:  
Well, a kid can hope, can't he?

(sign that says “Next Day” comes up and then goes back down)

Kid #1:  
(still looking out the window)

Kid #2:  
You still looking out that window?
Kid #1: Yep! It's been 5 days now. This could be the day. Oh, oh, oh! Look what I see!

Kid #2: Well, by George, there it is. There's the moving truck you've been waiting for.

Kid #1: This is so suspenseful!

Kid #2: The moment of truth. Who's going to get out of that moving truck? (silence for a few seconds, then discouraged) Oh man, I'm sorry. Just some Grandma and Grandpa. Looks like you're out of luck, Bro.

(sign that says “A Few Days Later” comes up and goes back down)

(both puppets come up)

Kid #2: Hey, you look like you're heading somewhere.

Kid #1: Sure am. I'm going to hang out with a couple of new friends.

Kid #2: Who's that?

Kid #1: That couple that moved in next door. I was hoping for a new friend, but God actually sent me two new friends ... and they like all the same stuff I like.

Kid #2: No way!

Kid #1: Yes, way! Last night Mom sent me over with a plate of cookies to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Newby to the neighborhood. They invited me to stay, so we sat on the porch swing, ate cookies, and talked about all kinds of stuff. Come to find out, they wanted a house with a swing, 'cause they like to swing and talk ... just like me!

Kid #2: So, are you going over for more cookies and porch swingin'?

Kid #1: No, Mr. Newby's going to show me some new baseball pitches. He said he'll practice with me anytime I want! And, come to find out, Mrs. Newby likes to garden and thinks it's fun to play in the dirt and catch worms. She's going to let me get my fishin' worms out of her garden!

Kid #2: They sound like really fun people!

Kid #1: You can meet 'em tonight. Mom's invited them over for dinner and some Wii games. You know, I was hoping for a new friend, and God sent me more than I expected ... I've got two new friends and they live next door!
Kid #2: Don't expect them to like your weird coconut banana caramel raisin peppermint ice cream, though.

Kid #1: Well, I guess I'll find out. Mom's serving it for dessert tonight.

Kid #2: Oh, yuck! If you want to keep them as friends, I'd forget that ice cream.

- How was our puppet showing expectant hope?
- How did God surprise him?
- How did the puppets remind you of the story of Elijah?

We learned today that Elijah expected God to move, to do something that only God can do. But, I think Elijah had something different in mind. I think he thought the servant would see a ferocious thunderstorm brewing out at sea that was moving toward the shore. Instead, the servant saw a little cloud the size of a man’s hand, but that was enough for Elijah. He knew that was a sign from God that He was at work.

Our puppet today had a certain kind of friend he was hoping for—a kid about his age who liked all the same things he liked. Instead, God sent him two friends who were more like his grandparents, but liked the same things he liked. He noticed that God was moving, even though it wasn't exactly what he thought would happen. God has a way of surprising us!

OBJECT LESSON

Choose some students (at least 4) to demonstrate this object lesson in front of the others. These kids should like bananas. Today, I brought some bananas that I’d like to use to demonstrate a quality that Elijah had and that we should have, also. Give each one of the kids a banana. At the signal, each kid will peel their banana and eat it. The first person done is the winner. Act like you're going to start the competition and then stop for one more instruction. Each player will have to peel the banana and eat it, but their hands will be wrapped in masking tape. Draft some helpers who will wrap the volunteers’ hands. You want their hands wrapped so their thumbs are tucked into the palm and the four fingers become one. Round and round and round with the masking tape until you’ve pretty much made tape gloves. Once everyone is wrapped, set them loose on their bananas.

After the game is over and a winner has been declared, ask these questions.

- Did you want to give up at some point?
- What made peeling the banana so difficult?
- What is persistence? (not giving up even when things aren’t going so well)
• How did this task take persistence?
• When is it most difficult to be persistent?

Sometimes we think we’re really persistent, but if we’re only persistent when things go our way and when we get the answers we want, we’re not persistent—we’re coasting. Persistence means not giving up, even when you’re not getting the answers or the results that you thought you would.

This is something that may have happened to you or might happen in the not-so-distant future. You go to church camp. The counselors wake you up in the morning, hand you a Bible, and tell you it’s time for a personal quiet time with God. You do this every day while you’re at camp. But then, you come home and your mornings are busy, and you have to get ready for school. Your alarm clock doesn’t hand you a Bible and remind you to have a time alone with God. In fact, your morning is so rushed with all the other stuff that it’s easy to forget time with God, or you just tell yourself that you’ll do it later. It’s easy to take time for God when you’re at camp and it’s built into the schedule. It takes persistence to continue having time with God even when you’re home and busy. Persistence means keeping at something.

Elijah was persistent when he prayed for rain. The sky didn’t look very promising, but that didn’t stop him from praying. Yep, I’d say that Elijah was pretty persistent!

**PRAYER**

Give each kid one index card and a marker. On the index card they will put one of the letters we have talked about today—E, S, P, N. The letter they write on their card (real BIG) will indicate which of these four points they need to pray about.

• Do you need a new attitude toward praying? Do you just dump everything out on God, but then don’t really EXPECT Him to move in your situation? Praying is more than just a complaining or worry-dumping session. If you want to change your attitude so that you really believe and trust and EXPECT God to hear and respond to your prayers, then put an “E” on your card.
• Do you find yourself just half-heartedly praying and being very general when you talk to God? If you’d like to start praying more SPECIFICALLY, then put an “S” on your card.
• Maybe you give up on a situation too quickly. If you want to be more PERSISTENT in the way you pray or your devotional time or your scripture memorization, then put a “P” on your card.
• Do you go through the day and never NOTICE that God is working in all kinds of ways in and around you? If you’d like to commit to being more aware, and NOTICING God more, then put an “N” on your card.

Lead the kids in praying about the area that they have indicated by writing the letter on their card. If you feel comfortable, you could even
have all the “E” people move to one corner together, all the “S” people to a separate area, and so on. Post a leader at each area to lead the children in praying about this specific area of growth. **But wait! How did Elijah pray? The Bible says that he prayed with his head between his knees. It’s like he rolled himself up in a ball so that he could shut out the world around him. He was concentrating on praying. So, as we all pray, let’s physically get in the same position that Elijah was in. Put your heads down in your laps toward your knees as we pray. Don’t worry about anyone around you, but only talk to God about how you want to pray more like Elijah (according to the letter on your card).**

**ACTIVITY**

Beforehand, recruit someone who has coached a team in the past or is coaching presently. If they have their uniform, ask them to wear that. This is a wonderful opportunity to get other people involved in the children’s ministry, and the coach will probably be honored that you asked.

You may want to conduct this as an interview. Here are a few questions:

- What is the role of the coach?
- How does the coach get the players to listen and trust him/her?
- Why is it important for players to listen and trust their coach?
- What do you do when a player will not trust you?

*It’s important for the players to know who to listen to and at what time, or they’ll get confused and not know what to do. The coach sees the big picture and directs the players. It’s the coach’s job to come up with the strategy and the plan for playing the game. If the team wants to grab a victory, they’ve got to follow their coach!*  

*Is God the coach of your life? Do you look to Him for guidance and direction? We all need a head coach, because there are so many influences trying to pull us in the wrong directions and lead us the wrong way. If you want victory in your life, you must listen and trust God with your whole heart. God sees the bigger picture. He knows how the plan all fits together. When you trust God as your life coach, He’ll guide and direct you to victory.*

**BLESSING**

*May you expect God to do great things!*
2 Timothy 4:7-8
“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of His return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.”

The kids will sit in circles of about 9 (uneven number) and each circle will need a pair of dice. The big sponge dice are fun to play with and they don’t make the obnoxious noise, either. Give one die to a player in the circle and the other die to a player opposite him in the circle. How many times did Elijah send the servant to look for a cloud—a sign from God? He sent him six times with no encouraging news. On the seventh time, the servant spotted the little cloud. It took SEVEN times! He didn’t think it was worth much, but Elijah knew better. As we memorize scripture, you may wonder if it’s really worth a whole lot. Your persistence in memorizing will pay off!

The players will toss their die at the same time. If the numbers combined total 7 (6 and 1, 5 and 2, 4 and 3), then those 2 kids will say the scripture together. Once they’ve said it, both players will pass their die to the person to their right and they’ll roll again. If the numbers do not add up to 7, then they pass the dice on. The reason you should make your circle an uneven number of players is that this will give them different partners when the die comes around to them again.

CRAFT

How did Elijah react when the rain began to fall? Do you think he minded getting wet? Have you ever stood out in the rain, just for the fun of it? I think Elijah had a party all by himself when he heard the raindrops begin to fall. We’re going to make a rain stick so that we can hear something that sounds like raindrops ... any time we want to.

Beforehand, cut 2 circles of brown paper for each child. (The lid of a 22-ounce cup works perfectly.) These will be the end caps for the rain sticks. Also, prepare two 4” x 18” strips of aluminum foil for each child. Give each child a paper towel roller (or cut up wrapping paper rollers).
• Use a brown circle to cap off one end of the tube. Place the tube end in the center of the circle. Cut slits around the outside of the circle in until you get to the cardboard tube. With slits all the way around, now pull these up the sides of the tube and tape them in place.
• Loosely scrunch the two strips of aluminum foil into twisted snakes ... not too tight.
• Slide the two pieces of coiled aluminum foil down into the cardboard tube.
• Pour 1/3 c. of dried beans into the tube.
• Tape the other brown paper circle onto the open end, just like you did the other end. This will seal the tube shut.

When you turn the tube upside down, the beans will fall down through the tube as they make their way through the foil. The sound they make will remind you of rain.