READY TO USE ALL-AGE SERVICE

# Elijah

MEETING AIM

To explore how God is with us and helps us through the tough times.

BIBLE PASSAGE

1 Kings 19

BACKGROUND

This service is designed to be used with a congregation in a church building. However, with some adaptation, you should be able to use it on Zoom or other video-conferencing software.

Throughout most of his story, Elijah is a strong, brave, faithful and slightly scary prophet of God. In the chapter immediately preceding this passage, he and God have defeated the prophets of Baal, and Elijah has put them all to the sword. And yet, a death threat from Jezebel sends him running into the desert, ready to give up everything. From the outside this seems an overreaction, but anyone who has had a mountain-top experience will know that the aftermath can be very difficult. Self-doubt, exhaustion and anxiety can often follow. This service will help people to recognise this and explore the fact that God supports us through these times.

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## WELCOME – 5 mins

As people arrive at the service, welcome them warmly! You might want to serve refreshments at the start, as this will ease people who don’t come regularly into an environment they may feel unsure about.

## OPENING ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

**OPTION ONE:** How do you feel?

**You will need:** various emojis (drawn or printed out); pens; Post-it notes

Before the service, stick your emojis around your meeting space. As people arrive, give them a few Post-it notes and pens. Ask them to think about a really good time they have had this week (or over the past few weeks). Encourage them to write these things on their Post-it notes and stick them to the most appropriate emoji. They should do the same with any bad times they have had recently. Make sure younger children get all the help they need to take part.

**OPTION TWO:** Creative prayer

**You will need:** various stimuli for prayer such as stones, shells, candles, holding crosses, sand

Before the service, spread out your creative prayer resources and as people arrive for the service, encourage them to explore the resources and to use them to talk to God about how they feel. You may need to have people on hand to help those who are struggling to know what to do. These helpers should avoid talking down to those who ask for their help.

Alternatively, include this activity as part of the opening section of the service.

## BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** maps of Elijah’s journey; emojis (see ‘Opening activities’ option one)

Show the first of the maps and explain what has just happened to Elijah – summarise the events of 1 Kings 18 in your own words. Introduce the service’s story by reading 1 Kings 19:1-2.

Show the second map and read 1 Kings 19:3. Point out that it was 120 miles from Jezreel to Beersheba – it would have taken about six days to get there (shorter if Elijah ran all or part of the way). Elijah got about as far as he could from Jezebel! Invite some volunteers to choose an emoji that they think reflects how Elijah is feeing.

Read 1 Kings 19:3-5a and invite more volunteers to choose an Elijah emoji. Read verses 5b-9a and show the third map. It was about 250 miles, but the terrain was far rockier and more difficult. Mount Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, where Moses met with God. (You might also want to point out the importance of ‘40’ – the years the Israelites spent in the desert, the days Moses spent on Sinai etc).

Read 1 Kings 19:9b-14 and invite more volunteers to choose an emoji to represent how Elijah was feeling. Finally show the fourth map and read verses 15-18. Choose a final emoji and then use all the chosen emojis to make an Elijah emotional rollercoaster.

## SMALL GROUPS – 10 mins

**You will need:** copies of the questions below; Bibles

Encourage people to discuss these questions in smaller groups. Give each group a copy of these questions:

* What’s the most important part of the story for you?
* Have you ever felt sad after a big success? Why do you think that was?
* How did God help Elijah? What do think of God’s help?
* What do you do when things feel like they’re getting too much?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

## REVIEW – 5 mins

**You will need:** roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on the questions from ‘Small groups’, using a microphone to hear people’s contributions if your meeting space is large.

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space or in different breakout rooms.

**OPTION ONE:** Emotion pictures

**You will need:** paper; art materials

Set out lots of paint and sheets of paper and encourage people to create a piece of artwork that reflects something of what they have discovered about Jesus today. What is God saying to them through the story? What difference is what they have discovered going to make to their lives?

**OPTION TWO:** Reflection

**You will need:** bread; cups of water; cushions and rugs; Bibles

Set out the cushions and rugs in a quiet area of your space. Spread the Bibles around the space and open them to 1 Kings 19. Set up plates of bread and cups of water. Invite people to rest, eat some bread and drink some water. As they do so, encourage them to read 1 Kings 19:3-7 again and reflect on what they immediately need in their lives; even though he faced big problems, God knew Elijah first needed rest.

**OPTION THREE:** Discussion

**You will need:** volunteers to facilitate discussion; paper and pens

Gather people together in small groups, each one with a facilitator, and challenge them to think about the difference what they have discovered today will make in their lives. Help everyone share their ideas; the stories of mature Christians will build up those with little experience or knowledge, while the fresh ideas of those new to the story will inspire older Christians.

## CLOSING – 5 mins

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

## CREATIVE WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS

Play some quiet, reflective music to enable people to reflect on how they’re feeling and what they want to say to God. Sing one or two songs about God caring for us.

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