

9. How does reading and following the teaching of the Bible keep us connected to God and guard our hearts against the kind of complacency Israel experienced? What can we do to deepen our commitment to study and obey God's Word?

Close in prayer.

## **Personal weekly Bible readings to go deeper into Scripture.**

*Memory Verse: Isaiah 6:8*

Day 1 – Chapter 16 of “The Story”

Day 2 – 2 Kings 17-19

Day 3 – Isaiah 3 & 6

Day 4 – Isaiah 13 & 14

Day 5 – Isaiah 49 & 53

## **Questions to consider while reading the Bible:**

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to rely on?

Is there a command to obey?

Is there a challenge in which to respond?



***The Story: God's Messengers***

*January 4 & 5, 2013*

*"The Story" Chapter 15; Hosea 4:1-4, 14:1-3*

Please use this space to take notes during the message today.



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## Adult and teen small group discussion points

Please use these discussion questions in your small group or with your teens.

1. When you were growing up, how did your parents warn you that you were in trouble? Was there a special word or phrase they used?
2. God still love his people, still tenderly seeks to warn us when we are in danger. Name some ways God posts a warning sign in the middle of the road as we travel through life.
3. When Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal, at one point he turned to all the people of Israel and asked, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him” (1 Kings 18:21; “The Story,” p. 204). What can it look like in our day when Christians “waver between two opinions,” trying to keep one foot in the world while still trying to walk with Jesus? How does such a lifestyle keep us from really experiencing intimate friendship with God?
4. Right after an amazing victory, Elijah faced one of his hardest times both spiritually and emotionally (1 Kings 19:1-9; “The Story,” pp. 206-207). What did Elijah go through (emotionally, physically, and spiritually) and how did God seek to lovingly restore him? Tell about a time you hit a low spot in your faith shortly after a time of real victory or strength. How can we be on our guard and prepared for spiritual attack in instances like these?
5. Elisha’s spiritual insight allowed him to know the plans of the king of Aram, and to see God’s angelic armies. Are there forces at work in our world today that we cannot see? (p. 211-212). What did this episode teach you about spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12)? Why is it important for us to pray for spiritual eyes that can occasionally get a glimpse of what is happening in the upper story?
6. Through the prophets Amos and Hosea, God pointed out the people’s sin and actions of rebellion (“The Story,” pp. 213-217). What were some of Israel’s sins and why do you think God was being so severe with them?
7. It is clear that if God’s people will repent, God is ready to embrace them with love and grace. How is God still offering this same invitation through Jesus today?

8. When Israel walked with God, they were joy-filled and fruitful. When they were distracted by other pursuits (including false gods and idols), their whole community life went sour. How does your life, including your attitude and general disposition, change when you are not walking with Jesus?

*Questions continue on the back page.*



## Family’s with kids discussion points

Please use these discussion questions with your children.

*Memory verse: “I serve the Lord. He is the God of Israel.” 1 Kings 17:1*

1. Have you ever talked with anyone about your faith in God? What made you choose that person?
2. Have you ever gone on a long journey? If so, where did you go? If you have never gone on a long journey, where would you like to go? Why?
3. Do you always say you’re sorry when you hurt someone’s feelings? Think about a time when someone hurt your feelings. Did you receive an apology? How did that make you feel?

**Family Activity:** When Ahab became king of Israel, he did many evil things. God sent Elijah to tell Ahab that he was judging the land because of the king’s poor choices. Elijah told Ahab that the living Lord is the God of Israel and to prove it “there won’t be any dew or rain on the whole land” (1 Kings 17:1). For three years it didn’t rain.

Have your family make it rain by gathering a clean glass jar with a metal top and ice cubes. Begin this activity by filling the jar half-full with super-hot tap water. Put the lid upside-down on top to trap the heat. Place several ice cubes in the lid. In about 15 minutes, raindrops will start to splash inside the jar.

As it starts to rain, ask these questions:

- What would the biggest problems be if it didn’t rain for three years?
- What was God’s point in stopping the rain?
- What are some ways mentioned earlier in “The Story” where God showed his power in mighty ways?
- Rain is one way that God provides for our needs. What are some other ways that God provides for us?
- Have family members talk specifically about an area of their lives where they’re especially grateful for God’s provision.

At the end of the drought, Elijah had a showdown against the 850 prophets who worshiped false gods. He challenged the false prophets to pray and have their god send fire down to earth. The false prophets tried and tried, but nothing happened. Elijah had the altar doused with water three times. Elijah prayed and God sent fire from heaven that burned up everything—even the water! The people of Israel turned back to God and he sent rain.

Pray together: Dear God, Thank you for providing for all of my needs. Thank you for the rain that keeps our land watered, and the food that keeps my body healthy. Please help me to encourage others the way you have always encouraged me or have sent others to encourage me. Help me to always remember that every good thing I have comes from you, and that you give me everything I need. I love you, Lord. Amen.

