

The Story Adult Study Guide
For the Week of January 19, 2020
Chapter 15: “God’s Messengers”



Key Events: the ministries of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, God speaks to Israel through the prophets Amos and Hosea

Key Characters: Ahab, Jezebel, Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea (see page 490 for descriptions)

Bible Reference for Chapter 15: 1 Kings 17-19; 2 Kings 2, 4, 6; Hosea 4-5, 8-9, 14; Amos 1, 3-5, 9

1. What was God demonstrating by causing a severe drought in Israel? (page 203)
2. Elijah went head-to-head with the prophets of Baal. What was the significance of repairing the altar of the Lord with 12 stones? (top of page 205)
3. Running for his life, Elijah despaired. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” What causes Christians to despair like Elijah? What is God’s response when we doubt and lose heart?
4. Chapter 15 lists a number of incredible miracles, including . . .
 - Elijah was fed by ravens. (page 203)
 - Fire fell and burned up the altar of the Lord. (page 205)
 - Rain was sent to end the drought. (page 206)
 - Elijah was taken to heaven in a whirlwind. (page 209)
 - The Shunammite’s son was brought back to life. (pages 210-211)
 - Naaman was healed of leprosy. (Naaman was commander of an enemy nation; page 211)
 - The Arameans’ attack plans were thwarted again and again. (pages 211-212)

How did these miraculous events serve God’s purpose(s)?

5. *The Story* contains excerpts from Amos and Hosea, prophets who served God before the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria. Identify the main theme and messages in their words on pages 213-217.
6. How does God speak to us today? Who are God’s prophets? How can we be encouraged when we speak to others from God’s Word, but we don’t see immediate responses?
7. Other thoughts and comments? Please share messages of personal comfort, hope, and encouragement you received from chapter 15.

Prayer Suggestions

- Ask God for a heart of repentance, willing to confess my sin and trusting in God’s mercy.
- Pray for courage and wisdom to share the message of Christ with others.

Study Guide helps for Chapter 15

1. The drought was an act of divine judgment on Israel and its king for their idolatry. The drought dramatically impacted everyone, and through it God warned the people to stop their unfaithfulness and turn back to him. The drought also set the stage for God to emphatically display his power and reveal the lack of power of Baal and its priests. Baal was considered the god of fertility and lord of the rain, so the drought demonstrated that this false god was powerless to send rain. This truth was highlighted in the competition on Mount Carmel between the Baal priests and Elijah (pages 204-205).

2. Ahab or Jezebel likely issued orders to destroy northern kingdom (Israel) altars dedicated to God. 12 stones symbolized the 12 tribes of Israel. In spite of the political division of Israel and Judah, Elijah called attention to the covenant unity of all Israelites as God's chosen people. The display on Mount Carmel pertained to the entire nation, now divided. God demonstrated faithfulness to the covenant relationship including the promise to send a Savior through his chosen people – God's loyalty was a sharp contrast with the disloyalty of the idolatrous people.

3. Elijah feared for his life at the hands of Jezebel, and he was depressed with the notion that nothing had changed with idolatrous Israel in spite of all his efforts. Elijah had enough and longed for the eternal relief and joy of heaven, not an uncommon impulse for Christians dealing with trying times. Various types of struggles and hardships may cause Christians to experience fear, uncertainty, doubt, physical and emotional pain, etc. Participants can share personal causes/temptations of despair. God is at work and he speaks to us in our despair. Through struggles, God reminds us that this world is a temporary residence and our real home is in heaven. Struggles help Christians "wake up" and focus on Jesus and God's spiritual priorities in our lives – we tend to pay attention in such times. Sometimes God allows us to reach a low point in order to pull us to him and out of our despair. Select verses from Romans 8: ¹⁸ *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. . .* ²³ *we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.* ²⁴ *For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?* ²⁵ *But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.* ²⁶ *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. . .* ²⁸ *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

4. Participants can discuss these and other miracles described in chapter 15. God's purposes served by these miracles: 1) God demonstrated his existence and presence during a time of widespread disobedience and idolatry; 2) the miracles revealed and validated the truth; they confirmed the messages God sent through his prophets; 3) miracles were a call to repentance and faith – they strengthened the faith and resolve of believers, and warned and alerted unbelievers regarding the futility, emptiness, and destruction of their idolatry; 4) God helped and blessed individuals/people directly through certain miracles; 5) miracles were a tool for God to control events and history to carry out his plans.

5. The main theme of Amos and Hosea is repentance – turn away from idolatry, spiritual complacency and disobedience, and return to God. Specific messages of Amos include: page 213 – Israel was God's chosen people; page 214 – an enemy (Assyria) will conquer them; page 214 – God displayed his justice and wrath in events like the plagues against Egypt; page 215 – turn to the Lord and seek good and God will be with them; page 215 – God will maintain a remnant of Israel to fulfill his promise of the Savior. Specific messages of Hosea include: pages 215-216 – Israel was guilty of unfaithfulness to God and his covenant, lying, murder, stealing and adultery (*a spirit of prostitution is in their hearts*); page 216 – punishment is coming, *the days of reckoning are at hand*; page 216 – Israel rejected and abused God's prophets; page 217 – God would forgive and restore them if they sincerely repented.

6. Christ served in the role of prophet. He preached God's Word during his life/ministry on earth, and he continues to be the prophet by sending all believers into the world to preach the Good News (Matthew 28:18-20). God speaks to us through his revealed Word in the Bible, and he speaks to us through Christians who share the message of Christ. All Christians, not just pastors and teachers, are prophets. We all have God's law and gospel to share. We are prophets at home, in our communities, in the workplace, with our immediate and extended families, in our circle of friends, with acquaintances, etc. The challenge is to find our strength in Christ and in His powerful Word. It will accomplish what God pleases!

7. Answers will vary. Consider/discuss elements of chapter 15 that relate to our daily walk of faith.

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