

One truth shared: God provides what we need in life—especially our greatest needs in Jesus.

Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.”

So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

1 Kings 17:1-6

God Always Provides

What’s the last thing you ate? I suppose the answer depends on what time of day you are reading this. If you just woke up, it might have been a late-night snack of pizza rolls the night before. Or maybe you are having breakfast right now. Or could it be that you finally had a day to sleep in and you slept all the way to lunch? Nothing like some pizza leftovers to get your day started right! Is this a nighttime devotion and you’re eating some fresh, hot, delicious pizza just delivered to your door? (Are you sensing a theme?)

Whatever it is you ate last, where did it come from? You might say it came from your fridge or pantry or the delivery person. But how did it get there? Okay, so maybe it came from the grocery store or fast food chain. But how did it get to those places? And how did it get from that location to your house?

We could play this game all day long and you would probably get pretty annoyed. So before you stop playing the question game with me, maybe you get the point? It takes a *lot* for you to get one slice of pizza, one protein bar, or one loaf of bread. There are farmers who grow and produce products and ship them off to factories. There are workers in the factories. There are drivers to the factory and from the factory to the store. Then there are managers, shelf stockers, and the friendly people who check out your groceries or deliver your pizza. But you wouldn’t have those groceries unless someone in your family had a job and earned money and then used that money to buy food and then brought that food to your home or ordered that pizza to arrive at your house. That’s a lot of people who go into one piece of pepperoni and cheese!

But if we really trace everything back to its source, doesn’t it always go back to God? He is the one that sends rain and sunshine. He is the one that causes things to grow. God is the one who gives people their vocation as farmer or driver or worker or father or mother and uses each person together in an intricate web of connection so as to provide for all of us.

It’s probably true that in America, a land of abundance, we often take God’s providing for granted. I mean, wouldn’t you recognize God’s loving care a little more if you had ravens dropping off food for you like Elijah did in the story for today? (Do you think you would need to tip the raven like the pizza delivery dude?) But just because your PBJ sandwich wasn’t delivered by animals or you haven’t seen Jesus feed the 5,000, it doesn’t mean that God’s providing for you is any less incredible. God works in many, incredible ways to make sure you have what you need.

Of course, the food in the fridge or even the burger in your to-go bag is nothing compared to our greatest need God has met. He provided a Savior for the entire world. He provides forgiveness for your sins. He provides a place for you waiting in heaven. Now that is truly miraculous! God gives you pizza *and* eternal life with him! What a gracious God!

In our land of consumerism where you can order or buy just about anything you want any time you want, and most people have fridges and pantries spilling over in abundance, don't forget the God who makes that all possible. Most importantly, don't forget the God who provides for your greatest needs in Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, King David wrote that, "The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing" (Psalm 145:15,16). Thank you for all that you provide for me, especially for the gift of your Son Jesus. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

Year A – Proper 13

Define Christian

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Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

The great debate! What is the greatest type of pizza and why?

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

- What are some of your other favorite luxuries of life besides pizza? (It can be food or anything else.)
- Why do you think we take these blessings for granted so often?

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- The Lord took away from Israel the rain and dew as a consequence for their constant rebellion. Explain why losing blessings is sometimes something necessary God allows for our good.
- While Israel was being called to repent, Elijah was learning a different lesson during this drought and famine. What was the Lord teaching him through this strange way of providing?
- Discuss how we can take time to be more thankful people for all of God's blessings. Think of real and specific things you can do.

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the “connecting question” above.*

Sometimes gaining perspective is a good way to recognize your many blessings. Traveling to a city or country that is poorer on a mission trip, helping the homeless or the hungry, donating to those in need—these are all ways that we can be reminded of God’s blessings to each of us while also giving back generously to others. As a group, discuss things you can do to gain more perspective. Dream big together! Can you think of a mission trip or mission/service project to work on together to help you be more thankful and generous together?