

Look Closer: The Difference Between Heaven and Hell

1 Kings 17:7-15 The Widow Feeds Elijah

Adapted from an Asian Folktale

This Asian Folktale illustrates the difference between the heavenly virtue of sharing (as the widow shared her last meal with Elijah) and the selfishness of not sharing. Read and discuss.

Optional: Dramatize the reading by taping a spoon to a yardstick (or securing with a rubber band) and offering an attractive bowl of food to eat. Invite the students to eat the food—using only the spoon you have provided. Try this before, during, or following the story telling.

Read “A Peek into Heaven and Hell” and then discuss it with the students (see attached sheet).



Talk About It

1. When faced with almost no food and water, Elijah asked the widow for food. How did she respond? (See 1 Kings 17:12-15)
2. What did Elijah promise her in return for giving him the only food she had?
3. Elijah the prophet represents the Lord with us. In what ways does the Lord challenge us to share spiritual food (goodness) and water (truth) with others?
4. What are the consequences of not sharing this goodness and truth with others? (See the Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30.)
5. Some day, each one of us will pass into the spiritual world. What questions might you expect the Lord to ask about your life on earth when that day arrives?

A Peek into Heaven and Hell

I Kings 17:7-15: The Widow Feeds Elijah
Adapted from an Asian Folktale

This Asian Folktale illustrates the difference between the heavenly virtue of sharing (as the widow shared her last meal with Elijah) and the selfishness of not sharing.

A devout man prayed to the Lord one day, begging the Lord to show him the difference between heaven and hell. In answer to the prayer, the Lord took him by the hand, leading him to a door.

Gesturing towards the door, the Lord invited him to enter. The smell of good food met his nostrils as he turned the handle and entered a large room. In the center of the room there was a round table with a pot of delicious stew right in the middle. A group of people sat around the table, waiting to eat. As he looked more closely, he saw that their faces were thin and gaunt. Strapped to their arms were spoons so long that they could not get the food from the tables into their mouths. The air became noisy with frustrated and angry shouts as each person tried again and again to feed themselves with the spoons. Their suffering was made worse by the smell and sight of the food. "This is hell!" said the Lord.

Withdrawing from the room, the Lord showed him a second door, bidding him go in. The room looked just like the first: it contained a round table with a pot of fragrant stew on top. The people sitting around the table also had long spoons strapped to their arms, but as he looked at them closely, he could see that they were healthy, well fed and happily enjoying each other's company.

The devout man looked at the Lord in confusion. "What does this mean?" he asked.

"It is simple," said the Lord. "The people in heaven have learned to feed each other. The greedy only think of themselves."