6. Describe the scene as you picture it as Elijah meets this widow at the gate of the city. What would you see, smell, and feel if you had been there?

7. What made the widow an unlikely candidate as someone to begin this adventure of caring for Elijah?

8. If she is going to see God at work, the widow must take a risk. Describe the risk and what was at stake for her.

9. Describe a step of faith that you or someone you know took that was necessary in order to see God at work.

10. Discuss with others the benefits that come with taking a step of faith with God when you don’t think you have much to offer.

Week Overview: “Adventure Candidates”

Who comes to your mind when you think of someone who is likely to be part of a daring adventure?

We often visualize someone on an adventure as one who is young, energetic, athletic, well-trained, and fully-resourced. We tend to think that these qualities and more are necessary if anyone attempts to climb Mt. Everest, sail across the Atlantic, walk Spain’s Camino de Santiago, race a dune buggy across the Baja Peninsula, or kayak across Lake Superior.

We would not normally recruit a contestant for a reality show like The Amazing Race or Survivor from the check-out lane of Fareway. We wouldn’t normally pick people standing in line for free dental care at a benevolent event in Des Moines. We wouldn’t typically compile a list of candidates from friends who are about to apply for social security benefits.

Our world tends to focus on people who are brimming with promise and potential. It targets the exceptional people. And in doing so, it leaves most of us out.

God does not operate that way. Throughout the narrative of scripture, he builds his kingdom using the limited resources of people who are amazingly ordinary and who may have little to offer.

If you tend to disqualify yourself as someone unlikely to be part of a risky adventure with God, you are in good company. Most of us view ourselves as inferior candidates.

But God looks at you differently, as you will discover in our look at a person he uses in 1 Kings 17:8-16.
Then the word of the LORD came to him, 9 “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you.”

So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” 11 And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, “Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.”

And she said, “As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.”

And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the LORD the God of Israel, ‘The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.’”

And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

Sometimes an opportunity presents itself and we don’t give it much thought because we quickly see ourselves as unqualified. Someone asks if you would sing in a choir, and you dismiss it because you don’t hit notes at all. There are some areas where all of us lack natural talent.

But there are many places where we assume we are deficient and may not be. Or we might be able to do something well, but because we don’t view ourselves as exceptional, we decline. We say to ourselves, “Maybe someone else can do this better.” And we do this even when we have no one in mind.

1. Discuss as a group examples where we see our children (or other youngsters) pull back from opportunities because they compare themselves unfavorably with others.

2. Discuss with the group some opportunities in your life that you have avoided—not because you couldn’t do them, but because you thought others might be better at them than you.

God’s provision for Elijah is a task he assigns to a widow who lives in the city of Zarephath. Zarephath is not in Israel. It’s in Sidon, which is an area populated by non-Jews who worship the false religion of Baal.

3. What does it tell you about God that he would send Elijah to this kind of place to be cared for? What was going on in Elijah’s life that made him living outside Israel a wise decision at this time?

4. What is the backdrop of this passage? (See 1 Kings 17:7.) How does that help you understand God’s directions to Elijah?

5. How does the reality of the famine explain the plans of the widow in verse 12?