

Can You Hear Me Now?

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1 Kings 19:9–18

We must know God's voice personally in a world of voices.

Introduction

Everybody loves vacation. It's a chance to get away, relax, enjoy different scenery and get away from the daily grind. We explore new places and experiences. Sometimes we get bogged down with the weight of our jobs and lives that we just need a break. Elijah was in the same place experiencing deep depression and needing time with God. He was ready to quit but God had other plans. When we need a break the best thing we can do is listen to God's voice.

Elijah faced off with the prophets of Baal, the false God of storms and weather, on Mount Carmel during a drought. The Lord proved himself to be the true God of Israel by engulfing Elijah's altar, which was drenched in water, in flames. Then God opened the skies and the land drank rain again. After this great victory Elijah should have been on top of the world. But when we join him at Mount Sinai he's given up. Let's look at his encounter with God in 1 Kings 19:9-18.

1 Kings 19:9–10 *ESV*

There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."

God challenges our perspective (1 Kings 19:9-10).

- After Elijah experienced spiritual victory on Mount Carmel, Queen Jezebel threatened his life and he ran into the wilderness Israel roamed through for 40 years.

We are most vulnerable to enemy attacks after spiritual victory.

- Elijah paid more attention to Jezebel's threat than to God's victory. Fleeing to Beersheba is 100 miles away from Jezebel, whose name means "Where is Baal." Elijah means, "Yahweh is God." Elijah won a spiritual battle but withdrew from it.
- Elijah travels 200 miles from Jezebel's reach to Mount Sinai. Halfway there he settles under a broom tree, a symbol of his loneliness. He is willing to quit and even die! He runs for his life but wants to die, the signs of deep depression.
- Elijah saw himself as a failure without complete victory. Although Israel acknowledged God its leadership didn't. He felt alone, fighting a losing battle, weary from little results.

Illustration: They say that people fight to get to the top but realize when they arrive that it's lonely up there all by themselves. Making decisions for many people, even as a single parent or parental unit, leaves you wondering if you make the right decisions. It feels like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. But we must never forget that we are not alone. God is always with us.

- Despite his desire to quit, God's angel fed and prepared him for his journey to meet the Lord. He needed refreshing and God ministered to his physical needs, propelling him 40 days and nights without sustenance toward Mount Sinai.
- He arrived at Mount Sinai and found a certain cave, probably the same cave Moses met the Lord face to face (Exodus 33:22, 34). Elijah was about to experience God's presence like Moses.
- The word of the Lord came to him when he arrived. God spoke with Elijah before his special presence appeared. The Lord used visions and other ways to speak to prophets. He asked Elijah a penetrating question, "What are you doing here?"

- Was God reprimanding him for his attitude and outlook? He chose to run but God chose his destination, the mountain of revelation.. Or was God exposing his motives?
- This gives Elijah permission to pour out his heart before the Lord. Elijah reveals his skewed perspective.
 - “I have been jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts.” He sees himself as the only fighter left.
 - “Israel has forsaken your covenant.” The nation followed false gods until God’s victory on Mount Carmel.
 - “Your altars have all been destroyed” (1 Kings 18:30). This was by edict from the king and queen.
 - “Your prophets they have killed with the sword” (1 Kings 18:4). Jezebel attempted to eradicate the Lord’s prophets.
 - “Only I am left as one of your prophets” (1 Kings 18:22). Elijah knows 100 prophets were saved from Jezebel (1 Kings 18:4). He may question their loyalty to Yahweh. God later reveals 7,000 are loyal to him.
 - “They have sought my life to take it” (1 Kings 19:2). Jezebel threatened his life.
- **Application:** God’s plans are often different than ours. Our perspective can be skewed and we can feel alone and depressed. How do we talk with God in these situations? Are we honest and genuine before him? It’s okay to vent in your prayer time. God can take it. He already knows how you’re feeling. Being genuine before the Lord is the first step to the healing of your soul.

1 Kings 19:11–13 ESV

And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went

out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

God speaks in many ways (1 Kings 19:11-13).

- God’s special presence passed before Elijah, but wasn’t in the first three acts of nature. They preceded him as heralds announcing his arrival. The prophet waited as creation responded to the Lord’s presence.
- Yahweh’s presence has been in these phenomenon before. Elijah must know God’s voice instead of its signs. Creation responds to his voice as in the beginning (Genesis 1).
 - First, wind tore the mountains apart. The Lord wasn’t in the wind but his presence has before (Psalm 18:10; Psalm 104:4; Acts 2:4).
 - Next, an earthquake shook the mountain but the Lord wasn’t in it. His voice was associated with earthquakes (Psalm 25:6, 8), thunder and lightning (Exodus 19:16, 19; Psalm 29:3-4) and (Exodus 19:18; Judges 5:4-5; Habakkuk 3:6).
 - Then, fire ravaged the mountain but the Lord wasn’t in it. He has been before (Exodus 3: 2; 19:18; 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:24; Psalm 18:8; 29:7; Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 12:29).
- What was the still small voice? “Voice” and “sound” in Hebrew are the same. It might be the calm following catastrophic events. Other possibilities: “a brief sound of silence,” “the sound of a late whisper,” “a gentle murmuring sound.”
- Silence contradicts the noise of the storms. Elijah just witnessed God consume his soaked altar with fire from heaven on Mount Carmel. But this bare whisper was teaching him that God does not always act in spectacular, overpowering ways.
- When Elijah heard this bare whisper he covered his face with his cloak in reverence, also to avoid death (Exodus 33:20). Yahweh covered Moses as he passed by (Exodus 33:22). Moses and Elijah are compared here.

- God asks Elijah again, “What are you doing here?” Elijah provides the same answer again. He seems unmoved by God’s presence passing by. Maybe deep depression or weariness kept him from seeing clearly.
- Elijah expected God to do something powerfully spectacular. God acts in many different ways. It’s his prerogative to do as he wishes without our input. He can work dramatically and quietly.
- **Application:** We are not in charge of God. His creation has no right to tell its Creator how to do anything. God is in charge and his perspective is better than ours. He knows what’s best for each of us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He has every right to act however he wishes. We can be sure he will act consistently and more righteously than we would.

1 Kings 19:14–18 ESV

He said, “I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” And the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

God restores our purpose (1 Kings 19:14-18).

- God’s lesson was not sinking in. Elijah was blindsided by his own perspective. Neither God’s presence nor his voice changed his mind. Although Elijah didn’t change, God stuck with him. He prepared Elijah to continue fulfilling his mission. God did not ignore him.
- Elijah felt he could do no more to serve the Lord.

- “Go back the way you came.” The Lord presses Elijah back into service. He showed that he rules the nation by anointing a king over Syria. Anointing Elisha showed there were more servants to serve him.
- Elijah is at the end of his rope and willing to quit. God answered Elijah’s concerns with actions that relieved his situation.
- By issuing new orders, God reassured Elijah that he wasn’t finished with him. God’s plans were not destroyed. Elijah was still part of God’s plans.
- God issued prophetic orders because Elijah did not complete all of these tasks. God was showing him he would deal with Israel’s idolatry.
- Elijah felt alone in the fight.
 - Elijah was never alone. God promises he will never leave us (Hebrews 13:5). His voice and presence are always with us. Many times, we don’t listen to or seek him out.
 - Introducing Elisha to Elijah’s ministry showed that God understood his cry of loneliness and was sending Elisha.
 - God shared the big picture with Elijah. Every concern Elijah raised was answered. Elijah did not work in vain.

God always takes care of every concern, physical, relational and spiritual needs.

- Elijah obeyed the Lord’s voice.
 - Everything the Lord told Elijah to do would be done. The rest of Scripture recounts that God used him mightily until the time he took him to heaven.
 - **Application:** God’s not done with you yet no matter how you feel. He has a purpose and plan for your life. We all need refreshed by his presence and voice. But don’t give up! You’re never alone. God is always with you and others are fighting the same fight.
 - God knows how we feel and what to do. But we must listen to his voice. We learn to hear God’s voice over others. One mark of the Christian is knowing and obeying Jesus’ voice.

Illustration: In John 10, Jesus talks about the many voices we hear today. From television commercials to world leaders to counselors to popular personalities we listen to many voices throughout just one day. Their advice will pull you in opposite directions. There are godly voices and ones that will lead you astray. We can be sure that God's voice is loud and clear if we would just tune in.

- Many Christians struggle to hear God's voice. They might see his voice as mystical, spiritual, and impossible to hear. Others may not invest the time and effort to hear Jesus' voice.
- Jesus says that his sheep know his voice (John 10:3-4) and only follow him. We must not listen to strange voices.

How to Hear God's Voice

- **Through His Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17).** God wrote the Bible to show us his love and how to please him.
- **Through godly leaders (John 10:5, 9).** God sends people into our lives to lead and mentor us with godly desires to see us grow in Christ.
- **Through the Holy Spirit.** He inspired human authors of the Bible and speaks to us, addressing issues in our lives as we read the Bible. He speaks through spiritual gifts that agree with the Bible.
- **Through life circumstances.** He uses life situations and trials to keep us on track as we walk with Jesus. He speaks as loudly as needed. Our unwise and ungodly behavior will be corrected lovingly.
- **Through other means.** God can speak audibly or in ways I haven't mentioned. We must be open, ready to listen and obey his voice.
- God does not accuse, confuse or condemn us. The enemy speaks to us this way. God encourages, builds up, exhorts, instructs and guides us. He is a loving Father who cares deeply about us.

God does not speak to wound but to heal, not to destroy but to discipline.

- **Application:** Don't ever take God's voice and presence for granted! Each of us must invest the time and effort to learn to hear God's voice. Only he can lovingly guide us into his purposes. There are so many voices at every turn today. We must be careful to listen only to the Lord and those ways in which he speaks. What is God saying to you today?

Conclusion

Elijah hid himself in the cleft of the rock to meet with God and hear his voice. Eventually he obeyed God and carried out his plans. Nothing has changed today. We must listen to and obey God's voice. We must invest our efforts into knowing and heeding his voice. Ignore the voices around you that do not come from Jesus. Find that special place where you can hear God uninterrupted. Make a practice of seeking God's voice and wisdom for everyday situations you face.