



ELIJAH

SESSION 4

- **Main Passage:** I Kings 19:9-18
 - **Purpose:** To examine how isolating ourselves from other Believers and focusing on fear deters us from the will of God.
 - **Session Snapshot:** As Christ-followers, we desire to know and follow the will of God. This requires us to hear God's voice, live in community with God's people, and focus on God during difficult times rather than the fears around us. This session will challenge men to practice the discipline of being in community with other men and leaning on them (and God) to live a life of impact and purpose.
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GETTING STARTED

Kick-off your time together with a quick connection time or reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, remind your group that this is week 4 of their video series on Elijah and that it's part of a larger study looking at the real men of the Bible.

THEN, if you want to start with asking men for prayer requests, checking in on how their weeks have gone, or any other housekeeping tasks, do so.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

THEN, when the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **How does God speak to us? Why do we struggle with hearing the voice of God?**
- **Why is it important to know the power of God before we hear the voice of God? In what ways does God show us His power today?**
- **Why is having a community of Christ-followers around us so important?**
- **How do men isolate themselves from other Believers? Why do we seek isolation from other Christians sometimes? What are the consequences of isolating ourselves from other Christ-following men?**

- In the video, Rick mentions that self-pity is not only unhealthy spiritually but that it is actually a sin. How does self-pity make us ineffective for the Kingdom?
- What are the small compromises that we make which can lead to bigger failures? How do we get to places in life where God asks us what we are doing there?
- What are the guardrails in your life that prevent you from making compromises in your decisions? What other guardrails do you need to construct to prevent becoming isolated or from making poor decisions?

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **God desires for each of us to live according to His word and His will. He desires for us to know His voice and to obey. Let's look at these events in I Kings 19 to further study these concepts.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you will take a more in-depth look at the lessons we learn from Elijah in I Kings 19.

Since you've been in 1 Kings for several sessions, ask your group what they remember about the context of the book. If you need help reminding them, use the following bullet points:

- **Author:** Ancient Jewish history has Jeremiah as the author of 1 Kings and 2 Kings. However, this view has never been widely supported by scholars. It's best to view the books as a collection of writings with no known author.
- **Time frame:** 1 Kings and 2 Kings are extremely difficult to date because it's a collection of writings that could have been written and edited in stages.
- **Purpose:** 1 Kings and 2 Kings tell the stories of the kings of Israel. These books speak of the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of kings and the impact that a godly leader can have on God's people.

THEN, explain to the group that we are meeting Elijah at a low point in his ministry and in his life in I Kings 19. To properly set the stage for the lesson today, remind the group that Elijah has heard from God multiple times throughout his ministry. He has heard specific directions from God on where to go, who to talk to, and exactly what to say. He has had great victory in his ministry and has been at the center of some amazing events, including the confrontation with the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel and the resurrection of a young boy. But in our lesson today, Elijah has hit a low point in his ministry due to fear.

Ask someone to read I Kings 17:2-3 and to also to read I Kings 19:2-3. Then, ask the group:

- **What differences stand out between these two passages?**
 - *Answer:* In the I Kings 17 passage, God directs Elijah to an area in the wilderness, and in that passage, God provides for Elijah's nourishment and protection. In the I Kings 19 passage, Elijah runs to the wilderness out of fear and not out of obedience. Elijah is not responding to the voice of God and is running away.
- **Why do you think Elijah is responding in fear and running away?**
 - *Answer:* Elijah's fear has superseded his faith. Even though Elijah is a great prophet, his human nature and lack of faith drive him to run.
- **What should Elijah have done instead of running away?**

- *Answer:* Elijah should have brought his fear to God. When we look at Elijah's ministry up to this point, we see Elijah having intimate conversations with God. We see that Elijah hears the voice of God, obeys the directions of God, and prays faithfully to God. Elijah's fear of the unknown usurped his faith. Instead of praying to God and looking for His direction, Elijah responds on his own and runs away.
- **Is it a sin to have fear in difficult times of life? How does giving in to fear weaken our faith, and how can fear strengthen our faith?**
 - *Answer:* It is completely natural to display fear in times of stress, tragedy, or loss in our lives. Having fear is not a sign of a lack of faith or weakness. However, how we respond to fear can either strengthen our faith or can weaken it. If we respond as Elijah does here by separating ourselves from other Believers and by running from our calling and responsibilities, then our faith has been weakened. We have given in to our fear. However, if we respond by running toward God in prayer, meditating on Scripture, and by having other Believers walk through those times with us, then our faith is strengthened.

Ask a volunteer from the group to read I Kings 19:9-10. Then, ask:

- **In his disobedience and fear, does Elijah seek God, or does God seek Elijah in these verses? What does this tell us about God?**
 - *Answer:* We see that God pursued Elijah even though he had run away and had tried to isolate himself. God's actions here show us His love and His readiness to restore.
- **Can you think of other instances in Scripture when God pursued someone?**
 - Answers will vary. We see this attribute displayed throughout Scripture. Here are a few examples: God pursued and called Abram while he was living in Ur; God pursued Moses while he was tending sheep; Jesus's parable of the prodigal son shows the father running to the wayward son even while he was a long way away; Paul tells us that while we were alienated from God and hostile toward Him, God reconciled us and brought us salvation (Romans 5:10 and Colossians 1:21-22).
- **What question does God ask Elijah, and why is this important? How does Elijah respond?**
 - *Answer:* God asks Elijah, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" God tells Elijah that the prophet is not where He intended. Elijah seems to blame his fear on his ministry. Elijah says that all the people of Israel have rebelled and have killed all the other prophets. He even says that he is there in hiding because he is jealous of the Lord as if to say that if he is killed, then God's message would vanish and not be preserved.
- **How does giving in to fear alter our perspective during trying times?**
 - *Answer:* When we give in to fear, we focus on the problem at hand instead of focusing on the Providential hand of God.

Now, read or have someone read I Kings 19:11-13. Ask the group:

- **What are the three ways God passes by but does not speak to Elijah? Why are these demonstrations so important right now for Elijah?**
 - *Answer:* God passes by Elijah as a great hurricane-force wind that destroys rocks and tears up the mountain, as an earthquake, and as a fire. These demonstrations are very similar to how God spoke to Moses while he was on Mount Sinai, but, here, God does not speak to Elijah through these amazing and startling events. God is demonstrating a fraction of His power to the fear-struck prophet. God has pursued Elijah and then has reminded him of His great power. He is refining and disciplining His prophet. God is not done with Elijah and has more work for the prophet to accomplish. In Elijah's time of fear and disobedience, God corrects the prophet and strengthens his faith with the power of His presence.

- **How does God speak to Elijah, and what is Elijah's response? Why are these details of this encounter between God and Elijah important?**
 - *Answer:* God speaks in the sound of a low whisper. Elijah responds by covering his face. The voice of God came in a still and quiet whisper; Elijah had to draw near in silence to hear this voice. Elijah is accustomed to hearing the word of the Lord throughout his ministry, but this time, the voice was quiet and still. It required all of Elijah's attention, and his response is one of humility and contrition. Covering his face showed both Elijah's proper understanding of God and a response of reverence.
- **What can we learn about listening to God through this encounter?**
 - Answers will vary. This shows us several aspects of hearing God's voice. First of all, God speaks to us regularly through prayer and His Word, but we must take the time to listen to Him. Also, we must put away the distractions of life and be silent to hear him. Finally, we must have a heart of reverence and humility to properly hear the voice of God speaking to us through Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

FINALLY, ask a member of the group to read I Kings 19:14-18. Elijah repeats the same response to God even after encountering Him and hearing from Him. But, then, in verse 15, God gives Elijah his next task. Ask the group:

- **What is the next task God calls Elijah to, and what does this tell us about God?**
 - *Answer:* God calls Elijah to anoint two men to be kings and to anoint the next successor in the line of prophets. God puts Elijah back to work. The anointing of kings is one of the tasks of a prophet, and God sends Elijah out to do what prophets do; God puts Elijah back to accomplishing His tasks in His kingdom! God restores Elijah's ministry, and He also restores his community. When Elisha is anointed, he leaves his family and not only accompanies Elijah in ministry but also assists him (1 Kings 19:21). God encourages Elijah that he is not alone in verse 18, and in verse 19, Elijah obeys. He leaves the wilderness and obediently follows God's command.

Ask if there are any questions. If there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group's attention on key takeaways from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **Are there areas in my life where I have let fear usurp my faith?**
 - What task God called me to that I am running from in fear?
- **Have I isolated myself from a community of other Believers?**
- **Is there an area of disobedience in my life where I know God is asking me, "What are you doing here?"**
 - Do I spend daily quiet time in prayer and Scripture meditation that allows God to speak to me? Do I listen for God or rush through times of Bible reading?

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to deal with the fears of their hearts to hear God and use those fears to strengthen their faith. Encourage the men in your group to make an effort to listen to the whisper of God's voice and to respond to God's calling in faithful obedience. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.