

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Elijah and the Gentle Whisper
1 Kings 19

So, I have a fear of flying. Now this hasn't been something that I've had my entire life, in fact it's brand new. In fact, it just started a week ago. And I'm not actually afraid of the whole flying process, I'm not afraid of heights. But what I'm afraid of is what happened to me a week ago. A week ago, it was the first time that I flew with my 4-month-old. I was already worried about it going in because I've experienced it happening to other people. I think we all have. But this was the first time that I had it happen to me. I was excited and expectant going into it because we've got a mild-mannered baby. She's four months old and she's just been a joy to be around. We were excited and prepared. We had everything we needed for a fantastic flight.

But then we walked onto the plane. And the minute we walked onto the plane we knew we had a problem because that thing felt like a sauna. We walked in, we sat down in our seat. and everyone boarded. Then the pilot got on the intercom and said, "Hey we're sorry but our air conditioning actually broke. So, it's 95 degrees in the cabin." I am like what is this 1960. Like Delta Airlines get your act together if you're watching! Get your act together. I know some of y'all remember the time with no air conditioning, but I was born in 1994 and I've had AC my entire life.

So having no AC on a plane is a problem for anyone, let alone a four-month-old. So, I kid you not, from almost the moment we sat down she lost her ever loving mind. She is crying. She is screaming and it did not matter what we did; nothing was working. I would take Jaycee and that would not work, so I would give her back to Adalee and then that would not work. Then I would take her back and that would not work. Meanwhile everyone around us is just staring at us. We just feel their eyeballs and feel their judgment. And can I just say that in that moment the parents of the baby are far more mortified than everyone else around you. In fact, if you dare judge a parent who's trying their best, I think that's the unforgivable sin. Don't you dare do that! We were trying our best in that moment and yet it got so bad that eventually people around us started giving us advice. I am so grateful for it... The guy behind us, he tapped my shoulder after a while and he goes, "Hey - I think she's hot." No duh Einstein! This was after we already had taken off her onesie. I was holding her up and blowing on her face. Adalee had the Delta safety pamphlet waving her off. We know she is hot! And it got so bad that eventually two of the three of us were crying. I think Adalee even teared up at one point as well.

It did not matter what we did. We tried everything! We wanted Jaycee to be more comfortable. We even more badly wanted everyone else around us to be more comfortable. It didn't matter what we did. We tried everything, but everything we tried to do was not working. Ever been there before? Where you are trying your absolute best. You are doing whatever you possibly can do to make your situation better, but it doesn't matter what you do nothing is working. Maybe it's you in your work – you are trying your absolute best in your work, but it still feels like

you are not measuring up. Maybe it's you in your relationship with your spouse – you are doing everything you possibly can do to be a better spouse, but it still feels like you're falling short of their expectations. Maybe it's you in school - you are trying your absolute best in school, but you're still not getting the grades you think you deserve. Maybe it's you as a son or a daughter - I'm not just talking about you teenagers - I'm talking about all of us. Some of us have spent our entire life doing whatever we possibly can do to feel the approval of our dad or to feel the approval of our mom, but no matter what we do we can't change our situation. You know it is a despairing feeling to know that you are trying your absolute best and your best isn't good enough. Your absolute best isn't good enough to change the situation that you're in. There will be times for all of us where that's true because sometimes life is just hard. Sometimes life will kick you in the teeth and it doesn't matter what you do you can't change your situation.

And all of us will have things that are far more difficult and overwhelming and despairing than a crying baby on a plane for an hour. All of us will have things that go longer than that hour, weeks, months, and years. Some of you have been dealing with seasons where you just have been overwhelmed by your situation. Maybe some of you are overwhelmed by your season of singleness and it feels like you're doing whatever you possibly can do to change your situation. You so deeply desire to start a family and you have been trying to change your situation, but you still feel stuck in that singleness. You do not want to be there, and it does not matter what you do, you cannot change it. Maybe for some of you it has been a struggle with finances. This is something that has happened even prior to Covid. You've been struggling with your finances for years after years after years and you're working hard at your job, you're doing everything you possibly can, but you're overwhelmed by your finances. Maybe it's relational strife with someone in your family. It's been years and years and years in the making and you are doing whatever you can to create reconciliation, but it doesn't matter what you do nothing seems to work. And you get to a point where you think I don't even know what to do anymore. I do not feel like I can change this situation. I am stuck and I have tried my best. I don't know what to do. Well, this morning we're going to look at a man in Scripture who has been in this situation.

As we continue on in our summer sermon series, we are actually finalizing it today. It's called BC as we have been looking at some of the most famous stories in the Old Testament. Today, we're going to look at a man who's doing his absolute best to follow God, but it was not good enough. Because his life had overwhelmed him, and he didn't know what to do next. You know some of our favorite stories in the Old Testament, and some of the stories that we've preached on this summer, are the big heroic stories. Stories like David defeating Goliath, or Daniel overcoming the lion's den, or Noah building the ark. Those are big stories! Those are heroic stories. But one of the reasons why I love this story, one of the reasons why I chose this text, is that it's not heroic. It is profoundly human. I read this story and I'm like, "Man I get it." I get where this guy is coming from. He's not doing something big. He's not doing something large, he's just human and I understand where he's coming from.

(There is a baby crying in the sanctuary and ironically Nate says) Man would those parents just work harder to... I am kidding! I'm kidding! I promise - please come back. Anyway, this story that we are in is in 1 Kings 19. Just open up your Bibles there, 1 Kings 19. We're going to be looking at the story of Elijah. We were there last week; in fact, we were in just the chapter before – 1 Kings 18. I thought Scott wasn't as clear as he could have been, so I just figured we're going to continue on. 1 Kings 19 - I chose this month before, Scott did a great job. If you missed it, go listen

to it. If you need a refresher, if you weren't here last week, in 1 Kings 18 Elijah is this prophet of God. He is God's representative to the people of Israel. But in that time, there were also people and prophets of Baal - a false God named Baal – there were 450 of them. And Elijah set up a showdown between the two of them to prove who was the real God. So, each of them made an altar and the goal was whichever god would create fire for the altar was the true God.

Again, we looked at this last week but the prophets of Baal - the 450 of them - they did whatever they could to bring down fire from heaven. They sang, they danced, they cut themselves, and they did whatever they could to bring down fire - but fire never came. This Baal was the false god. And Elijah went, and it was just him, and he took gallons and gallons and gallons of water and poured it on the altar. He asked God to bring down fire and fire came proving that Elijah's God was the true God. This moment right here, in 1 Kings 18, this is the pinnacle of Elijah's ministry. This is the peak of his ministry. But the very next chapter 1 Kings 19, one of the reasons why I love this chapter, is his lowest moment in ministry. I found that to be true about life, oftentimes your greatest successes are followed up by your greatest disappointments.

This is what happens here. He's been tremendously successful, but now he's tremendously attacked, and he's despairing and discouraged; but God responds to him. This morning that's what we are going to learn today - whenever we are beat down or overwhelmed or stressed out or worn out how does God respond to us. How does God respond to our humanity? That is what we're going to see in 1 Kings 19:1 – **“Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.” ³ Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.”** Now that surprises me. Is that not surprising? This is the man of God! The prophet, the man who trusted in God. Elijah's name means 'The Lord is God'. Just the chapter before he had proving the power of God! So, you would expect, as you're reading through this story, that there would be a threat from Jezebel, and I would expect – since this is the Old Testament - that Elijah would run towards Jezebel and call down bears to attack her or something. That's what I would be used to reading in the Old Testament. That's not what happens here. Rather than running to the problem, what does he do? He runs from it.

Why do you think that is? Why do you think Elijah ran from this threat; why do you think he ran from this problem? As we are about to see I actually don't think it's because Elijah is afraid. I know it says in verse three that Elijah is afraid, but this is one of the few times where the Hebrew to English translation isn't entirely correct. In the Hebrew it actually says, 'Elijah saw and ran away.' It does not actually say that Elijah was afraid and ran away. I understand why they did that, but that's not the Hebrew text. It says he saw and ran away. So, I don't think Elijah is afraid in this moment. I don't think he was lacking faith. What I think his problem was - I think he was exhausted. I don't think he ran away because he doesn't believe in God. I don't think he ran away because he's afraid of death. I think he's running from his life because he's tired of his life. Think about this - he's just defeated one enemy. He's gone all out, and he's put his life on the line to defeat one enemy. Then the very next chapter – BOOM - there's another one. It is like there is one thing after the next, after the next, after next. Have you ever been there before?

It's as if you are at work and you're putting out one fire at work only to go home and realize I still have to put out that one fire with your marriage. Then you go to your bathroom and realize

that your sink is still dripping and it's one thing after the next, after the next, after the next. Whenever those things happen what do you want to do? You want to run from those problems! So, you run and escape to things like Netflix because in those moments you just want to forget about your life. Or you run to the wine bottle. Or you run to social media. Or you run to online shopping. Whenever we run to those things, it's a coping mechanism. It allows us to forget, even for a little bit, about how tiring and how exhausted our life is. So, we run from our problems and it's not because you don't believe in God, it's not because you don't want to faithfully follow Him. It's just because you're tired. You don't feel like you have the energy it takes to keep fighting battle after battle after battle. That right there is exactly where Elijah is at.

Let's pick it up again in verse three and see what happens next. **“³ Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, ⁴ while he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it, and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said.”** You ever been there? Man God, I have had enough. **““Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” ⁵ Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” ⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”**

Now look at what the Angel of the Lord says. God sends this Angel from heaven, with a message, in the middle of Elijah's discouragement and despair and in this exhaustion. Look at what he says, **“Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”** What a horrible pep talk that is. This is not what Elijah needed to hear in the middle of his discouragement. The Angel says, “Hey, the journey is too much for you.” This is not what he needed to hear at his lowest point. He needed to hear keep fighting. I mean this this reminds me - imagine if the University of Texas president said, “You know we just keep losing and losing and losing. The Big 12 is too much for us so let's just give up and switch conferences.” Imagine if they would say, they wouldn't do that. They are tougher than that. (Crowd laughs.)

See this is not what Elijah needed to hear in his lowest moment. He needed to hear something better than this, something more encouraging than this. Because I've heard all my life this phrase, ‘God will never give you more than you can handle.’ Right? We've all heard that. God will never give you more than you can handle. But the Angel here says, **“the journey is too much for you.”** Well, it is because point one and the first thing we can learn from this story...

1. *God will give you more than you can handle.*

I just need to teach this phrase for a second. That phrase ‘God will not give you more than you can handle’ it is based in Scripture. There is Scripture there, but the scripture is this – 1 Corinthians 10:13. **“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”** You see that? Do you see how we misuse it? God will never give you more **temptation** than you can handle, but He will give you more **life** than you can handle. Sometimes in life you will be given a child that for whatever reason, for various reasons, is just difficult to raise. It's more than you can handle. Sometimes, some of you have been handed divorce papers and that's more than you can handle. Sometimes

you'll experience job loss, or breakup, or financial strife and in those moments, life is more than you can handle. It's not because you're not courageous. It is not because you don't trust God. It's because life is hard! It is OK to get to those moments, just like Elijah, and say, "God I have had enough!" It's OK to get to those moments because I think God loves those moments.

God loves to give us more than we can handle, because it is in those times when you realize that your life is too much for you. God wants to show you that it's not too much for Him. I also love how God responds to Elijah here. When Elijah says, "I have had enough" what God doesn't do is come down and sound like a lot of preachers today. He does not say, "Elijah you have got destiny inside your DNA. You have got royalty inside your DNA. You can do it bro!" He doesn't give him some weak pep talk. He's honest with him. He says, "Elijah, you are right. Your life is more than you can handle. So, take a nap and when you get up, I will have bread waiting for you." But some of you, that is not your picture of God. Your picture of God is not one of compassion and kindness and grace and mercy. Your picture of God is a God who is consistently disappointed in you. Because you don't feel like you're handling your fair share. You feel like you're overwhelmed with life, and you think God is frustrated with you and disappointed in you. But look at this! In the middle of Elijah's overwhelming situation what God doesn't do is He doesn't lecture him; He doesn't rebuke him. He bakes him some bread because the journey was too much for him. So, friends, if sometimes you feel like the journey is too much for you it's because it is and it's OK. Because point number one, God will give you more than you can handle.

So, let's see what happens next in this story. Is God going to remove every difficulty from his life? What is going to happen next in the story? Verse 8, this is what it says next, **"8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 9 There he went into a cave and spent the night."** He's running from his life; he's trying to escape his life so much so that he goes and hides in a cave. **"And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left..."** Remember that line. Do whatever you need to do to remember that line. We are going to come back to it so underline it, circle it, remember it. The specific line **"I am the only one left."** I am coming back to it. **"and now they are trying to kill me too."**

What I find interesting in this section is that I don't know if you notice this, Elijah doesn't answer God. He doesn't answer God's question. God goes, "What are you doing here Elijah?" And Elijah says, "I've been zealous for you, but the Israelites they have rejected you. They have torn down your altars and they put your prophets and servants to death and I'm the only one left and they want to kill me also." But I think God's going, "I didn't ask about them. I asked about you. What are you doing here Elijah? The prophet, the mighty man of God, Elijah. The name who means 'the Lord is my God', what are you doing here Elijah?" You know I get why he doesn't answer. I get why he is not honest. I get why he doesn't say, "I'm exhausted by my life, so I am hiding in this cave." Because he's not supposed to be there. He's Elijah! He's the prophet. He's not supposed to be hiding in a cave, he's supposed to be courageously standing in front of kings. He is not supposed to be cowering in a cave, but nevertheless this is where he's at. He's discouraged, dismayed, and stuck in a cave.

Let's hear God's response to him, continuing in verse 11. **"11 The Lord said, "Go out and**

stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.” So, what happens here is that God calls out Elijah from his cave. He says, “I’m about to pass by” and then three things happen. There is a powerful wind, but the Lords not in the wind. There’s a mighty earthquake, but the Lord’s not in the earthquake. Then there’s a fire that appears, but the Lord’s not in the fire. Then finally, there’s this gentle whisper. And the Lord was in the whisper. Why do you think He chose the whisper? Now of all the things it was the least impressive option. Why do you think God does not show His presence in the wind? This wind is so powerful that it shatters rocks in which Elijah would have been reminded of the strength of the Lord. If the Lord is present in the wind Elijah could have been encouraged by the strength of the Lord. Why wasn’t God present in the wind? Then there is an earthquake and what Elijah needed more than anything was a reminder that everything on earth had responded to the Word of the Lord – even Jezebel. So, if He had been in the earthquake, surely, Elijah would have been encouraged by the strength and the power of God. Why wasn’t God in the earthquake? Then there was this fire. If you made fire, wouldn’t you want credit for it? It is hard to make fire. But God was not in the fire, instead He was in this gentle whisper.

Why do you think He chose the whisper? It is because in this moment, Elijah did not need to be reminded of God’s strength, of His power, of his authority. What Elijah needed more than anything else was to be reminded that his God was close. See you can only whisper to someone when they are close to them. Remember, context is important, the chapter before – 1 Kings 18 – God had already appeared in a fire. Elijah already knew that God could do that. Elijah knew that his God was powerful. What Elijah needed to know was that his God was present. He did not need reminders of His power; he needed more reminders of His presence. So, this is why He appears in the form of a whisper. So, God comes near Elijah in his lowest moment and whispers too him; just to prove that He is close to him, that He is with him. Because point number two that we can learn from this story.

2. God will be close in your discomfort.

You know He’s always near - we can believe that God is always near us, He’s always close to us - but there’s a special closeness in our pain and discomfort. Psalm 34:18 says, **“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”** Recently JP asked our staff when a time is that you felt closest to the Lord. And person after person after person said when I felt rejected, when I failed, when I felt abandoned, and when I felt worthless. In those moments, my lowest moments, that is when I felt closest to God. Because He’s close in your discomfort. In fact, speaking from experience, just a couple of weeks ago I lost my grandmother. She passed away and it was a fast thing. We thought she was totally fine, totally healthy, but on Monday we found out she had blood cancer. The next day we found out she had days to live. A couple hours later I’m getting texts saying if you want to talk to Grandma for the very last time you have to call now. What do you say in those moments? I’m sitting in my car; I’m crying and hardly holding myself together. What do I say to this mighty woman of God who has faithfully followed Him all the days of her life? In fact, one of my favorite stories from her funeral was that her pastor said that just a year ago he got on stage and shared that they were out of elementary school teachers

for their Sunday school class, and they needed someone to take over. At 85 years old she was the first one to go up and volunteer because that is just who she was. What do you say to her? What do you say to someone who's loved her family so well; loved the Lord so well?

So, I'm at a loss for words and I am a pastor, I am supposed to be good at these things. So, I was just like, "God, what do you want me to say? God, would you direct me. I can hardly hold myself together right now." And I just felt the Holy Spirit directing me to read this verse. So, I called her up and said a few things and I'm barely, barely getting these words out. Isaiah 40:30-31, **"Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."** And then I hung up the phone. And a couple hours later I get a call from my dad, and he says, "Nate it's amazing that you remembered Grandma's favorite verse." (Nate shakes his head.) I had no idea. It's not my favorite verse, I had no idea that was her favorite verse. But how kind is the Lord that in that moment His Holy Spirit directed me to this verse to comfort my Grandma in her last moments, but also to comfort her family. It was in that moment where God just felt like He was close to us! He was in it with us. It was as if He was whispering to us, "I love you. I've never once forgotten you. Even now in the middle of your deepest, darkest pain I'm with you. I'm for you." He is close to you in your discomfort.

But why do you think that God feels the closest to you when you're in the most pain? Why does it work out that way? Why can we hear His whisper more clearly in those times compared to other times in our life? (YELLING) I think it's because the rest of our life tends to sound like this. We're going from one thing to the next thing, to the next thing. We have work, then I pick my kid up from baseball practice, then I have to get dinner for us, and I still have to respond to all those emails. Then we still have to talk as a family; I still need to pray with my kid; and oh yeah, I have to pay that bill and hopefully I can go to sleep whenever I want to go to sleep. But then, I have to wake up and do it all over again the next day and that's what our life sounds like. (Whispering) You can't hear a whisper when your life is that loud. Meanwhile God's calling you, He is saying 'Son, my daughter, I love you. I am for you. I have never once forgotten you or forsaken you.' But you can't hear a whisper because your life is loud.

(Regular voice) It is in those moments of pain and discomfort when we finally allow the rest of our world to just fade away. That's when we can hear the whisper of God, but we don't have to wait for those times. We can develop the discipline, and this is a discipline, to turn down the noise from the rest of your life. If you don't develop that discipline of turning down the noise from your life, it will drown out God's whisper and, in the process, it will drown you. You'll miss out on the presence of God because you're living a loud life and it's a shame. Because just like Elijah, what we need is not more reminders of God's power. Most of us understand that. Most of us need more reminders of God's presence.

That means spending time with Jesus - just you and Him where you can hear. Where the rest of your world is toned down. Where you're in the word of God - just you and Him; you're not listening to music and your phone is in the other room or your phone is off. It's just you and God. Or maybe, you are in your car with the music turned down, no podcast on and you are just talking to Him. It's in those moments when everything else is silent that you can hear His whisper. I do not know what I can do to convince you to do this. I know we say this every single week, to spend

time alone with Jesus. I don't want to judge you into it. I don't want to shame you into it. I just want to say that more than anything in my life this is what has changed me, time alone with Jesus. You don't need more sermons; you don't need better music. You need time with Jesus. It doesn't happen every time, but more times than I can count when I'm alone with Jesus, He's wrecked me, He's challenged me, He's changed me, and He's formed me into His likeness of God's son. I can't imagine where I'd be without it. So, point number two - God will be close in your discomfort.

Let's continue reading and see what happens next in this story. Remember the whisper of God has just appeared to Elijah and skipping ahead to verse 15 this is what God says next, **“¹⁵ The Lord said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha’s son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”**

Do you remember that part of the verse where I told you to underline it, circle it, remember it, whatever you did? Where Elijah says, “God I am the only one left!” He says it twice in this passage actually. God follows it up with saying, “No. I still have 7,000 people who are following after me.” Isn't that funny? How often, think about this, how often are our greatest anxieties things that God's already taken care of? It is funny how God works. Oftentimes the things that we're most concerned about He's already got taken care of. That's not the only thing I want to point out, the other thing I want to point out about this passage is in the beginning. The first thing that God says to Elijah in verse 18, after Elijah has run miles and miles and miles just to escape his life what does God say? Go back the way that you came. Go back to your problems; go back to your difficulties. I am not going to remove them; I am going to ask you to go back to them. He says, “Come out of the cave that you're living in because you still have a job to do. And then He lists out all the different things that He wants Elijah to do, because point number three of things we can learn from this passage...

3. God will restore your purpose.

Because God doesn't just come down to encourage Elijah, He doesn't just come down to make him feel better, He calls him to come out of his cave. He calls him to say, “I've got more work for you to do. I've got a mission for you to do. You still have a purpose.” God wants him back in the game. Maybe, just maybe, that is God's message to you this morning. Maybe this message hasn't even been all that applicable to you because you're not afraid or you're not overwhelmed by your life here. Maybe you're not all that tired and it is not because you're courageously living for Jesus, it's because you've lived in a self-created cave for years now. Maybe you haven't been hearing threats from Jezebel, you haven't been hearing threats from the enemy because you're no longer a threat to the enemy. You haven't been going out and working, you have been sitting in a self-created cave - living as a cave dwelling Christian. God is calling you to come out! He's got a purpose for you.

Maybe you've justified living in this place where you are. You have justified living in this self-created cave because yeah you know it's not God's best. Yeah, it's not all that warm or comfortable - but at least it's safe. At least you feel safe here as if the dangers of the outside world can't reach

you here in this cave. You feel safe here. Yeah, you know that God's been calling you to go out and find more godly friends, more godly community. But you feel the safest, you feel the most at home with those old friends that you've had for years that keep dragging you down. But that's just where you feel the safest, so you stay there. Maybe you know that God has been calling you to use your gift of hospitality. He's gifted you to welcome people into your home to show the love and care of Jesus, but you've been turned down one too many times. So, rather than risking yourself and putting yourself out there you just created this self-created cave, and you feel the safest here where you can't feel rejected anymore. Maybe you know that God has called you to be generous, but then COVID happened. Since then, it has made you nervous and now you're just storing and stashing and saving until you have money coming out of your eyeballs, but at least you feel safe here. Meanwhile you know in the back of your head God has got more for you.

If you are not feeling any fear or discomfort or pain in your walk with Jesus, it's for one of two reasons. It's either because you're courageously following after Him or you are a cave dwelling Christian and you're so far removed from the threats of the enemy because you're not a threat to the enemy. Where are you at? Well Elijah was in this cave and in this moment, God was calling him out. He is saying, "I've got a Kingdom I want to advance through you. I've got more for you. Because when you're in a cave, point #3, God will restore your purpose.

I just want to close with this thought because this is my take home from this story of Elijah. Close encounters with Jesus' change everything. If you want to change your life, if you want to be encouraged, if you want to change your life a close encounter with Jesus changes everything. But have you ever had anyone in your life where it's just awkward to be with them one on one? Maybe they are a loose friend, maybe they are a neighbor, maybe they are a coworker and most of the time you spend time with them in group settings. But then you get with them one on one and you're like, "Oh my gosh I don't know what to talk about. We don't have a whole lot in common. He doesn't have kids, he doesn't like sports and those are the only things that are in my life basically." Whenever you talk with that person you are just like, "I don't know what to do! This is awkward!" In those moments what I want to do is I want to get out of them, or I want to pull other people in because I feel uncomfortable with them one on one.

I think for a lot of us that's what our walk with Jesus looks like. I think for a lot of us we are comfortable with Him in group settings – we love being at church or we are comfortable being at church where we're talking **about** Jesus or singing **about** Jesus or learning **about** Jesus. But you've never really gotten comfortable being **with** Jesus. And your relationship with him looks a whole lot more like 1 Kings 18 - you're comfortable with the whole power part of God. You know that He is a God who can provide fire from heaven – but He is in heaven, He is distant, He is far off. But we serve a God who is not just the God of 1 Kings 18, but He is also the God of 1 Kings 19. He's not just the God of power, but He's also the God of proximity. He's the God of presence. If you want to experience it to the fullest extent you have to have both.

So, this week more than anything else my hope is that you would push through that discomfort and spend time with Him. Do whatever you possibly can to turn down the noise in your life and get with Him one on one. Get in the Word and have your phone in the other room, have the music turned off, have the TV turned off and get in the Bible. And if you are like, "Nate, I do not know what to do with the Bible. I am uncomfortable with the Bible." Go to BibleReading.org – we just started 1 Timothy – and it will change your life spending time with Jesus. Or if you are like, "Man

Nate, I've got the Bible – the whole thing I've got that down pat.” Then spend time every single day in prayer. Put everything else aside. Turn down the noise of this world and talk to Jesus – let Him get to know you. He knows you but share your heart with Him. In those moments when the rest of your world is silent, He will speak to you.

So, my challenge to you is to do that every single day this week. And if you have been following Jesus for a while and you are like, “Nate, that is a BIG ask.” I would say that you have a BIG PROBLEM. Because if you told me, “Nate, in order to have a healthy relationship with Adelle you have to spend time with her every single day.” If my reaction was, “That's a big ask. I don't know if I can.” It would be evident that there is a problem with our marriage. For some of you, there is a problem with your relationship with Jesus because you're not spending time with Him consistently. More than anything my desire for you this week is to remove all else and spend time with Him - sit with Him in the stillness. Let Him call you out of your discouragement, call you out of your despair, and call you into your purpose. He is not just a God who does that with Elijah, He wants to do that with you. Let's pray that He would.

God, thank you that your Word is applicable. I know that some of us we look at the Old Testament and we say we just don't understand it. That was years and years and years ago and it seems like a distant God. But God thank you for the remainder of this story that you're not distant, you're in it with us. In each and every season and in the highest mountain tops and the lowest valleys you are with us, and you are near to us. Father I pray that our church would develop the discipline to turn down the noise and to sit in the stillness so that we might hear your whisper. Your still small voice telling us “Son/Daughter I love you. I have forgiven you. I have never forsaken you.” May that whisper change our life?

Father would you raise the dead? Would you raise those of us who walked into this room feeling dead and broken inside? Would you give us life? And God, those of us who have been following you for a while – God I pray that we would fall more in love with you. That you would tune our hearts to sing your praise because you are worth of it. You are not just a God of power, but you are also a God of presence. So, God, you are good. Thank you for Jesus - that you sent your son for us. That He did not just die, but He rose again that we would have a hope forever. So, God, we love you and it is in the powerful name of Jesus that we pray – amen.