Out of the Cave

Five Days of Learning to Be Quiet With God

Church, on Sunday we followed Elijah from the fire on Mount Carmel to a cave on Mount Horeb. He was worn out and scared, and he was sure he was the only one left. God fed him and let him sleep. He listened to Elijah. Then, after the wind and the earthquake and the fire, “there was the sound of a gentle whisper” (1 Kings 19:12).

Some translations say a still small voice. Others say a sound of thin silence. The Hebrew word demamah has to do with stillness or quiet. It doesn’t mean God only speaks in silence, and it isn’t a secret code. God has spoken clearly in his Word and in Jesus. But a lot of us have filled every quiet minute, and we rarely stop long enough to pay attention to him.

This week is a place to start wading in. Each day has a short reading, a few thoughts, and a quiet practice that grows a little each day, from one minute to about five. If five minutes is too much right now, stay with a shorter time. There is room on the page to write. If nothing comes to mind in the quiet, you haven’t failed. You spent time with God, and that matters.

Keep the Pray again alarm from last week. When it goes off, put your phone on Do Not Disturb and turn it face down. Words in quotation marks are from the New Living Translation. Everything else is my summary.

Get quiet enough to hear God. Then be brave enough to obey him.

Pastor Daniel

DAY 1

Start With Bread and Sleep

READ SLOWLY

1 Kings 19:1 - 8 and Matthew 11:28 - 30

Elijah ran a full day into the wilderness, sat under a broom tree, and asked God to let him die. “I have had enough, LORD” (1 Kings 19:4).

Look at what God does first. He doesn’t give Elijah a lesson. He lets him sleep. An angel wakes him with bread and water, and Elijah lies down again. The second time the angel says, “Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you” (1 Kings 19:7).

God cared about Elijah’s body. He still cares about yours. Some of us think the most spiritual thing we can do is push harder. Sometimes the faithful thing is to eat a real meal, go to bed on time, or call the doctor.

A nap won’t cure depression, and I’m not saying it will. If you are carrying something heavy, getting help from a counselor or a doctor is not a lack of faith. Receiving that care can be a faithful next step.

Jesus says, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He doesn’t ask tired people to clean up first. He asks them to come.

God started with Elijah’s body before he talked about his calling.

BE QUIET

- Set a timer for two minutes. Sit somewhere comfortable and take a few slow breaths.
- Read Matthew 11:28 once, slowly. Then just sit with Jesus. You don’t have to say anything.
- If your mind wanders to your to do list, that’s normal. Have a paper to write them down and move themyou’re your plate or just mentally push them aside. Come back to the words of Jesus, Come to me.

Like Elijah, what does my body need from me today? What would God tell me to tend to physically?

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YOUR NEXT STEP

Pick one simple thing that cares for your body today. Eat lunch away from a screen. Go to bed thirty minutes earlier. Take a short walk. Make the appointment you’ve been putting off.

PRAY

Jesus, I’m tired. Thank you that you don’t shame me for that. I’m coming to you the way I am. Show me how to rest today. Amen.

DAY 2

Tell Him the Truth

READ SLOWLY

1 Kings 19:9 - 10 and Psalm 62:5 - 8

When Elijah gets to the cave, God asks him a question. “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:9).

I don’t hear that as God being angry. God already knew the answer. The question gave Elijah room to say out loud what was going on inside him. And he does. He tells God the truth of how he feels and perceives his life and circumstances.

Most of what Elijah said was true. One part wasn’t. We’ll get to that on Day 4. For today, notice that God let him say it, INVITED him to say it.

David writes about this in the Psalms. I’d like you to get your Bible out and find and read them. Underline or highlight them even. They’re worth opening and engaging in. Psalm 62:5 and Psalm 62:8

Waiting quietly and pouring out your heart go together. Before you can get soul still, you might need to get honest. God can handle what you’re really thinking.

God’s question gave Elijah room to bring what was hidden into the open.

BE QUIET

- Set a timer for two minutes.
- Imagine God asking you, What are you doing here? Write down your honest answer below. Don’t clean it up.
- Then read Psalm 62:5 slowly and sit quietly for the rest of the time.

What I would say to God if I were completely honest:

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YOUR NEXT STEP

Tell one trusted person one honest sentence about how you are actually doing. You don’t need to cover your struggle with a quick I’m fine.

PRAY

Father, here is what’s really going on in me. You already know it, but I want to say it to you. You are my refuge. I’m pouring out my heart to you. Amen.

DAY 3

Learning to Listen

READ SLOWLY

1 Kings 19:11 - 13 and John 10:1 - 5, 27 - 28

God tells Elijah to go out and stand before him on the mountain. A windstorm tears the rocks loose, then comes an earthquake, then a fire. Each time the Bible says the Lord was not in it. “And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper” or as we discussed, the silent voice. (1 Kings 19:12).

God had answered Elijah with fire on Mount Carmel. This time he came in the quiet. God isn’t limited to one way of showing up. But Elijah had to learn that God was still with him when things were still.

In John 10, Jesus calls himself the good shepherd. Read John 10:27. See that? The point is relationship. Jesus knows his people, and his people recognize his teaching and follow him. Jesus isn’t promising private messages on demand here.

So listening starts with Scripture. We read what Jesus has said and pay attention to how it applies to our lives. Sometimes a verse sticks with you, or a person comes to mind. Those things can be helpful, but they aren’t guaranteed, and a feeling of peace or a strong conviction doesn’t prove where a thought came from.

Our hearts can make up a voice that tells us exactly what we want to hear. God will never contradict what he has already said in the Bible. Hold your impressions loosely, and test them with Scripture and with people you trust.

Listening to God starts with what he has already said.

BE QUIET

- Set a timer for three minutes. Phone on Do Not Disturb and face down.
- Read John 10:27 slowly two or three times.
- Pray, “Jesus, I want to follow you.” Then be quiet. Don’t try to force a thought or feeling.
- If something comes to mind, write it down. If nothing does, write down the verse. Either way is fine.

What came to mind, or what verse I am holding onto:

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YOUR NEXT STEP

Look at what you wrote. Does it line up with what Jesus clearly teaches? If it’s still on your mind in a few days, talk it over with a mature Christian friend before you act on anything big.

PRAY

Jesus, you are my shepherd, and I want to follow you. Quiet the noise in me. Keep me close to your Word so I don’t mistake my own voice for yours. Amen.

DAY 4

You Are Not the Only One

READ SLOWLY

1 Kings 19:13 - 18 and Hebrews 10:23 - 25

After the silent whisper, God asks Elijah the same question again. And Elijah gives the same answer, almost word for word. “I am the only one left” (1 Kings 19:14).

Meeting God didn’t fix Elijah instantly. That’s good news if you’ve ever felt disappointed that one prayer or one Sunday didn’t change everything. Healing usually takes time.

Then God tells Elijah what he couldn’t see from the cave. “I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal!” (1 Kings 19:18). Elijah’s loneliness was real. His belief that he was completely alone was not.

Pain and isolation shrink what we can see. Sometimes we really are alone in a hard season, or we don’t have safe people yet. If that’s you, I’m sorry. You matter to God and to us. Your church or small group can help you find one safe person to start with.

Read Hebrews 10:24 – 25. This is one worth remembering. The church and faith community are Jesus’s ideas and invention, not ours. Following Jesus was never meant to be done alone.

God saw faithful people that Elijah couldn’t see.

BE QUIET

- Set a timer for four minutes, or keep a shorter time if that works better.
- Read 1 Kings 19:18 slowly. Ask God, Where have I believed I’m the only one, alone in my struggle?
- Sit quietly. Then ask, Who are the safe people around me?
- Who would you have me talk to and open up to about this area of isolation?
- Write down any names that come to mind. If no names come, that’s okay too.

A story I’ve been telling myself, and people who might walk with me:

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YOUR NEXT STEP

Reach out to one person. Send a text, make a call, or ask them to grab coffee. You don’t have to share everything. If no one comes to mind, ask a pastor or group leader to help you connect.

PRAY

God, I’ve been telling myself I’m alone. Thank you that you see what I can’t. Open my eyes to the people you’ve given me, and give me courage to let someone close. Amen.

DAY 5

Go. Return.

READ SLOWLY

1 Kings 19:15 - 21 and James 1:22 - 25

God didn't restore Elijah so he could live in the cave. "Go back the same way you came" (1 Kings 19:15). God gave him real work to do and a person to walk with. Elijah found Elisha plowing a field, and Elisha went with him as his assistant.

The cave can be a place where God meets you. It isn't meant to be where you stay.

For some of us, returning means coming back to church after being hurt. For others it's reengaging with our family, picking up a calling we set down, or finally calling a counselor. Most of the time it isn't dramatic. It's one step.

I want to be careful here. Returning doesn't mean going back into something unsafe. If a relationship or situation is abusive or harmful, God is not asking you to walk back into it. Recovery also isn't on a deadline. God gave Elijah food for the journey before he gave him the next step.

Read James 1:22, another verse worth knowing for your faith journey. When Scripture is clear, don't keep waiting. Obey. When a thought in prayer would lead to a big decision, take time and get wise counsel before you act.

God meets us in the quiet, then sends us back out.

BE QUIET

- Set a timer for five minutes, or a shorter time if you need to. Read 1 Kings 19:11 - 18 slowly.
- Tell God honestly what the cave has been saying to you.
- Ask, Jesus, where are you asking me to return? Then be quiet.
- Start with what you already know from the Bible. Some of you already know the person, the conversation, or the place.

A possible next step to consider in light of Scripture:

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YOUR NEXT STEP

If your step is something Scripture already makes clear, like reconciling, coming back to church, or getting help, take it this week. If it's a bigger decision, share it with someone you trust and give it time. Either way, tell someone what you're thinking.

PRAY

Lord, thank you for meeting me in the cave and not leaving me there. I'm scared to step out, but I want to obey you. Give me strength for the next step, and wisdom where I'm not sure yet. Go with me. Amen.

I hope you have heard the voice of God to your spirit this week. I hope you have felt His presence. If you have not, that is not evidence to stop this practice, it is a spark to press in further next week. Final question is this, if hearing the voice of God is the most VITAL resource in this whole life, what could you do to prioritize these types of moments into a lifelong habit?