

The God Who Whispers

In this scripture passage, Elijah, a prophet of ancient Israel, is at the lowest point in his life: alone, afraid, and hopeless. In his despair, he asks to die. Instead of honoring Elijah's death wish, God responds to his deeper need for hope and safety. God's "messenger"—perhaps an angel or a stranger—gently takes care of Elijah, builds his strength, and invites him to a holy place. On Mount Horeb, Elijah speaks with God, repeatedly explaining his situation and voicing his frustration. Eventually, Elijah hears God whispering into the silence, giving him a plan and a purpose.

This story reveals a gentle, patient God who shows up in unexpected ways when we are at our lowest. God reached out to Elijah through the kindness of a stranger, who very well could have been an angel, providing a good meal and a quiet moment in nature. Through Elijah's example, we can learn to hear God's voice in the stillness of our own hearts.



1 KINGS 19: 3-15

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life, going to Beer-sheba of Judah. He left his servant there and went a day's journey into the wilderness, until he came to a solitary broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death: "Enough, LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." He lay down and fell asleep under the solitary broom tree, but suddenly a messenger touched him and said, "Get up and eat!" He looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water. After he ate and drank, he lay down again, but the angel of the LORD came back a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat or the journey will be too much for you!" He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

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There he came to a cave, where he took shelter. But the word of the Lord came to him: Why are you here, Elijah? He answered: "I have been most zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, but the Israelites have forsaken your covenant. They have destroyed your altars and murdered your prophets by the sword. I alone remain, and they seek to take my life." Then the Lord said: Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord; the Lord will pass by. There was a strong and violent wind rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the Lord—but the Lord was not in the wind; after the wind, an earthquake—but the Lord was not in the earthquake; after the earthquake, fire—but the Lord was not in the fire; after the fire, a light silent sound.

When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, Why are you here, Elijah? He replied, "I have been most zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, but the Israelites have forsaken your covenant. They have destroyed your altars and murdered your prophets by the sword. I alone remain, and they seek to take my life." The Lord said to him: Go back! Take the desert road to Damascus. When you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king of Aram.

FOR REFLECTION:

1. As an LGBTQ+ person or ally, when have you experienced despair, depression, or temptation to give up? How did God nourish you and care for you through that time?
2. Elijah journeys 40 days and nights on foot to reach a holy place, Mount Horeb. What has your faith journey as an LGBTQ+ person or ally been like? What encouragements and challenges have you met along the way?
3. How would you answer God's question to Elijah: "Why are you here?" (Feel free to interpret "here" in any way that is relevant to you.)
4. Where do you go to hear God's voice more clearly?
5. Elijah discovered God's voice, not in the dramatic earthquake or fire, but in the silence. What time do you have in your day or week for silence, away from distractions and technology? How could you make more time to hear God's voice in silence?
6. At the end of this passage, Elijah receives very clear instructions from God for what to do next. These instructions restore the sense of purpose he had lost. What might God be calling you to do?
7. How does this story resonate with you as an LGBTQ+ person or ally?



PRAYER

Hear the good news of God's love for us;
not in the earthquake, not in the storms, not in the mighty deeds
but in the silence, in the gentle touch, in the quiet rain
God says,
again,
"You are my Beloved. I love you."

~ written by Katherine Hawker (1995), and posted on Liturgies Outside.

<http://liturgyoutside.net/CPr5.html>

(found at https://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/worship_resources/elijah-and-the-still-small-voice/)

VIDEO MEDITATION

Practice listening for God in the silence, as Elijah did. If we are to encounter God, we must carve out space for silence in our own lives, away from the distraction of our to-do lists, screens, and other stimulation. Meditation is one way to cultivate this interior quiet.

This video begins with a seven-minute audio guided meditation. It will walk you through the process of quieting your mind and heart, using the story of Elijah you just read. This is followed by five minutes of silence.

[“The Still Small Voice” Guided Meditation for Calm and Peace](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ML4hRn2I-q4)

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