

Read: 1 Kings 19:9-18

Listen for the LORD's Gentle Whisper

1 Kings 19:9-18

There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, *(author's note: read the following words with an angry, self-righteous tone)* "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, and now they are trying to kill me too." 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. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" *(author's note: read the following words with a humbly relieved, but tired and wondering tone)* 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, and now they are trying to kill me too." 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. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. 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. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Do you ever feel down in the dumps? Has it ever happened that you've tried your hardest and done your best, but your plan—and seemingly everything else!—doesn't work out the way you hoped? This can happen to God's children. It can happen to his little children and his big kids too.

It once happened to a man named Elijah. He was God's prophet, a person who tells God's Word to God's people. He was so down about how things were going that he even prayed that he would die. Wow! What was going on with Elijah?

During his life there were many people who weren't listening to God's Word. They weren't believing what God said, and they weren't living like God's children. The king and queen, who were supposed to be encouraging God's people and supporting his prophets, were getting rid of

them and replacing them with false prophets and false gods. Elijah thought he was the only believer left. And now, the royal couple was after him too. Elijah had been so faithful to the LORD and to his job of speaking the LORD's Word, but it just didn't seem to be working.

Elijah was down in the dumps.

Then the LORD appeared to him. Elijah saw and heard powerful forces of nature. But was the LORD in those show of forces? Were the displays of mighty power meant to get Elijah back to work? Did the holy LORD use a scary threat to set him straight? Nope. God revealed himself in a gentle whisper. By this gentle whisper Elijah was reminded who the LORD is, the God of free and faithful grace. By this still, small voice the LORD reminded Elijah that he gets his kingdom work done through simple promises of forgiveness and salvation in a meek Messiah. By this quiet word he reminded Elijah that he changes hearts and wins them to himself through the Spirit's power, not through mighty signs. Elijah had a change of heart, and then he went back to work.

What does God use to get us out of the dumps? What does he do to give us renewed courage and strength? The same thing. In a gentle whisper he tells us that Jesus is our Savior. In a still, small voice he reminds us that we are still his children and he is still with us. In his own quiet Word he says, "I love you, and I always will. And that's what matters most.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Who was God's prophet in this story?
- What was wrong with him?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What is a prophet?
- Why was Elijah down in the dumps?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Describe a time you were down in the dumps. Why does that happen to you?
- What part of God's Word does he want you to use to help yourself and others when you get down about life in this world?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, continue to speak to our hearts and to renew our faith by your gentle whisper in the gospel. Amen.