

MIDWEEK EVENT

This week's main point is: We always have hope in Jesus.

SCRIPTURE | 1 Kings 19:1-18

THEOLOGY CONNECTION | FAITH

Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation (John 3:16-21). More than being simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4:13-16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one's life (John 1:10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith—it rests on the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ, like Elijah, confronted the religious leaders who were leading people astray. He boldly proclaimed the truth of the gospel and called people to repentance. Christ is the only way to the Father and the only way to salvation.

1 1 KINGS 19:1-5

SOMETIMES WE BECOME DISCOURAGED IN OUR FAITH.

Our faith, belief and trust in God, isn't based on circumstances even if we often act like it is. We see this truth so clearly in Elijah's story. In 1 Kings 18, which we studied in our main session, we saw Elijah's epic faith as he faced down the prophets of Baal, showing that "The LORD, he is God!" (v. 39). Can you imagine the way it felt to watch God reveal Himself in such a powerful, consuming fire? Then, pretty much immediately, the narrative shifted. Queen Jezebel issued a death threat to Elijah. We would probably expect the prophet to stand his ground, to "fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). Instead, Elijah turned and ran all the way to the southern wilderness, where he prayed for death. We might say that Elijah had what some Bible scholars call "spiritual depression." When we trace a path through the events leading up to this moment, it's actually not hard to understand how he got there. Think about how exhausted (physically, emotionally, and spiritually), disappointed, and isolated Elijah must've felt. He believed the revival failed. An evil queen wanted him dead. It seemed all hope was lost. But it wasn't. Not by a long shot. The issue might seem obvious to us, and yet we struggle with the same thing: Elijah took his eyes off God. When we're tired, we drift from our routine and begin making decisions based on what we want or think we need instead of looking to God for guidance. When we take our eyes off God and place them firmly on our circumstances, we can become gripped by fear. But that's not what God wants for us. He has a better plan, a better way. In Him, we always have hope.

- › **WHEN HAVE YOU HAD AN AMAZING SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE, LIKE AT CAMP OR A WEEKEND CONFERENCE? WHAT HAPPENED?**
- › **WHEN HAVE YOU, LIKE ELIJAH, EXPERIENCED "SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION"?**
- › **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE ISN'T ALL SPIRITUAL HIGHS?**
- › **WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN FOCUS ON JESUS EVEN WHEN HOPE SEEMS LOST?**

MIDWEEK EVENT

2 1 KINGS 19:6-18

GOD RESTORES OUR FAITH WHEN WE'RE WEAK.

When God addressed Elijah, He didn't call him out for his lack of faith. No, God approached Elijah with compassion and tenderness. He began by giving Elijah food and rest—twice. After that, Elijah took a forty day and night walk to “Horeb, the mountain of God” (1 Kings 19:8), where God came to him once again. This passage emphasizes two things: (1) The truth that God restores those who trust in Him (Isa. 40:31); and (2) the truth that sometimes God works quietly and gently in our lives. In verses 9-18, Elijah openly talked with God about his exhaustion and fear, and God invited Elijah into His presence. But to identify God's presence, Elijah had to pay attention. Because God wasn't in the first three signs He sent: “a great and mighty wind,” “an earthquake,” and “a fire” (vv. 11-12). The way Elijah experienced God's presence might seem surprising to some of us because our world is so loud: God approached Elijah in “a soft whisper” (v. 12). We see this idea in other places in the Old Testament, and in each, the “soft whisper” is tied to themes of rest and restoration in our fear and depression (Ps. 107:29). God's restoration starts with softness, which might seem jarring in a culture that prizes speaking your mind, being bold, and confronting problems head-on. God's way has and always will sharply contrast the surrounding culture. While that might seem intimidating, His way is always best, and His example shows us the best way to approach those who are tired and hurting too. Though we might not actually hear God whisper softly like Elijah did, He speaks to our hearts quietly through His Word and His Spirit. Just like it did for Elijah, the instruction will come (vv. 13b-18), but first comes grace and understanding.

- › **WHEN HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED GOD'S GENTLENESS AFTER YOU MESSED UP OR WALKED THROUGH SOMETHING DIFFICULT?**
- › **WHY DO YOU THINK WE STRUGGLE TO FOLLOW GOD'S EXAMPLE WHEN WE APPROACH SOMEONE WHO'S HURTING OR WHO'S HURT US?**
- › **WHERE DO YOU NEED GOD'S GENTLE, QUIET RESTORATION RIGHT NOW?**
- › **WHAT ARE THE WAYS YOU EXPERIENCE GOD'S PRESENCE MOST OFTEN?**
- › **HOW WILL THIS UNDERSTANDING CHANGE THE WAY YOU APPROACH GOD WHEN YOU'RE HURTING AND THE WAY YOU APPROACH OTHERS WHO ARE HURTING OR STRUGGLING?**

WRAP UP

We saw God's power on display in 1 Kings 18, and we saw His gentleness and compassion in chapter 19. Explain to students the importance of not seeing God as either powerful or gentle and compassionate but recognizing that all of His characteristics are always present. God's love is in His judgment just as much as in His mercy. This is a tough concept for us to grasp though. On a whiteboard or poster board at the front of the room, write the following characteristics of God: gracious, good, holy, eternal, just, loving, merciful, righteous, all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), always present everywhere (omnipresent), sovereign, active in creation, unchanging, incomparable. Invite students to pair up and choose an attribute. Then tell them to give an example of an argument someone might make against God having that trait and see if they can turn that argument around and show how God could be present in that situation. Allow pairs to share and discuss as long as time allows.