

ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH JANUARY 28/29, 2023

1 KINGS 19:9-13

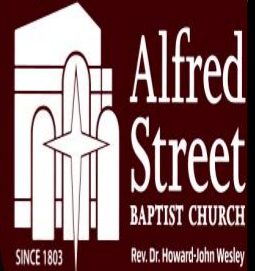
CAN YOU

HEAR ME

NOW?

SEEK: PART 4

A SERMON BY
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@PASTORHJW



SINCE 1803

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Date: January 28 and 29, 2023
Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Sermon Title: “Can You Hear Me Now”
Scripture: I Kings 19:8b-12 (NIV)

“Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 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, “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 still, small voice.”

SERMON SUMMARY

The prophet Elijah is in a world of trouble. He has killed 450 prophets of Baal and their benefactor, Jezebel, is out to do the same thing to Elijah. One word of threat from Jezebel and Elijah takes off running, first to Beersheba and then to Horeb/Mount Sinai. There God shows up and speaks to Elijah. But God does not speak to him through the earthquake, wind, or fire. Instead, God speaks to Elijah in a quiet whisper.

Using this powerful story, Pastor Wesley illuminates ways that God speaks to us. Adding to last week’s sermonic list of three, God not only speaks to us through open and closed doors, dreams and visions and by the Spirit of Christ; God also speaks to us:

- Through extraordinary signs and wonders;
- Through the power of his Holy Word;
- Through angels/messengers; and
- Through the intelligent discernment of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Wesley also wants us to know there are three specific lessons we can take from Elijah’s story. God speaks to each of us:

- In various ways as noted above;
- In the manner that is best for us, individually and
- Through the ordinary things of everyday life.

As we continue in our SEEK journey, may we pray to hear, discern, and obey the voice of God.

***Village Members and Facilitators,
The Curriculum Team does not expect you to cover all the questions.
We ask facilitators to choose the best questions for your Village from each section.***

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS

1. If the primary goal of SEEK 2023! is to “come out on the other side. . . able to hear, discern, and obey the voice and the will of God” what is your secondary goal? Even if you did not officially sign up for SEEK 2023!, what else do you desire from this season?

2. Pastor Wesley defines an angel as “anything or anyone God uses to get a message to someone else.” How does that change the way you see and experience people? How does this knowledge change the way you interact with people?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Throughout the Bible, God shows up in burning bushes (Exodus 2:3-10), thunder (Job 37:4-5), pillars of fire and pillars of clouds (Exodus 13:21), and light so bright human eyes cannot take it in (Ezekiel 1:28). These appearances of God are called *theophanies*. A theophany (thee **af** fan nee) is a visible manifestation of God to humankind. Even though God does not show up to Elijah in I Kings 19 in a theophany, why do you think God shows up in theophanies elsewhere? What is God trying to teach through these miraculous appearances?

2. Elijah was scared witless by Jezebel’s threat (I Kings 19:1-2). Even though he had accomplished a feat that proved Israel’s God was more powerful than any other, less than 24 hours later, he lost all of his nerve. All of the heroes and sheroes of the Bible (except Jesus) are a hot mess. All of them fumble and flail; all fall apart and fear. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Peter, Paul, Sarah, Rebekah, and Job’s wife share significant dysfunction. Yet, they are the heroes of our faith. What do Elijah’s fearful running away and the stories of all of the others teach us? How do we resemble them? How do they help us?

3. Pastor Wesley refers to the Prophet Elijah at Horeb in this week's sermon. After the wind, earthquake, and fire, God speaks softly in a still, small voice.” However, there are times in the bible when God speaks loudly. Please consider some of those times and share the the bible story when God speaks loudly.

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Pastor Wesley says God communicates with us through various means. For example, God can speak to us without words through the song of a bird, the colors of a flower, the notes of a hymn, the prayers of a child, or the smell of a home-cooked meal. What are some of the unusual ways God speaks to you?
2. God uses signs and wonders to get our attention so that we are positioned to hear God speak. What signs and wonders has God used to get your attention? What did God reveal once God had your attention? How did this shape your life?
3. The sermon suggests that believers “need to be in the word of God in order to fully discern the will of God.” How do you make time to read the word of God consistently? How is your life impacted when you are in the word? What steps can you take to strengthen your study of the word? *(Please see additional resources).*
4. In I Kings 18, God gave Elijah victory over 450 foreign gods. However, that accomplishment did not bolster him to stand against Jezebel’s threat. Have you ever lost courage after a significant achievement? What feelings and emotions did you have? How long did it take you to remember how God helped you before? What did you need to strengthen your resolve to move on?
5. Pastor Wesley gives examples of the intelligent discernment of the Holy Spirit in this sermon. He included intuition, a gut sense, a strong feeling, and others. When God speaks in a personal way that only you can hear, how do you know the difference between your intuition and the intelligent discernment of the Holy Spirit?

“CAN I PUSH IT?” QUESTIONS?

1. Pastor Wesley has an amazing gift of forcing your ‘*spirit-man*’ to meet your ‘*intellect-man*’. In the times that you are challenged by what Pastor Wesley says, how do you gain clarity? Are you aggressive or passive in finding understanding? How does your approach assist your growth in Christ Jesus?
2. God uses the extraordinary to speak to us. This weekend, America and the world witnessed something extraordinarily disturbing, the violent depiction of the murder of Tyre Nichols. **God is speaking to us through this video.** What is God saying to you, and what will you do with this new understanding? God is speaking to the church, as well. What do you hope the church will do with this new understanding?

3. This sermon can be frustrating to the people who sense God has not or does not speak to them. Are we excluding people from our discussions by assuming everyone has heard from God? What is our responsibility to one another not to judge but encourage? How can we encourage someone who wants to hear from God but has not?

ACTIVITY

1. We learn in this sermon that angels are messengers used by God to speak encouragement, words of warning, words of hope, and words of blessings. Examples given were VBS volunteers, Sunday School teachers, and pastors. Who are the angels in your life, and who are the angels of your past? How have they blessed you? If they are alive and you know where they are, please send them a note of gratitude. If God has called them home or you do not know where they are, please find a way to honor their memory.
2. As we end the first month of this new year, have you been the messenger God has called you to be? Have you resisted your assignment? As you consider the month of February, set some goals to help you be a better messenger for God.

SPIRIT WORK

In Hebrew, the *still, small voice* is *d^omāmâ daq qôl* (*Dee mama dock cole*). This is how God spoke to Elijah in a tiny whisper. Each day this week, find a place (cars and bathrooms qualify) where you can sit in (relative) silence. Breathe deeply, in and out, three to five times, and then let the silence speak to you in whatever way it will. When you are finished sitting in the silence, notice how you feel. Don't be impatient. God may speak, or God may speak in silence. Receive whatever God offers, even if it is the simple gift of silence.

As you learn to fine-tune your "receiver" to God's still, small voice, journal what you hear throughout the week. Identify thoughts, beliefs, or situations that cause you to question or doubt what you are hearing from God. Replace those negative thoughts with scriptures that encourage you and deepen your relationship with God. Continue to journal how this process helps you grow and develop intimacy with God.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Within the structure of Village, there are various affinity groups. Each week the team creates questions specifically for the individual groups. However, any village may draw from the questions listed below if the Spirit moves.

For Married Couples

1. This sermon reminds us that God speaks to us through the Bible. Have you ever had a practice of reading or listening to the Bible with your spouse? If so, what did you receive from that shared time? If you have not (and most couples have not), what do you think might happen if you selected a Bible with notes and exercises designed to assist couples?

2. All married couples benefit from mentors or those to whom they can look up and model aspects of their marriage. Who are the angels in your married life that have shown you how to be married? What did they model before you? How has it shaped your marriage?

For Young Adults

1. This sermon teaches us that God's omnipotence is tempered by love. We also learn that God's mercy is more primary than his authority, and God's grace is overall. One way to understand the difference between mercy and grace is this, mercy is God withholding ***what we deserve***, and grace is God bestowing ***what we do not deserve***. Has there been more mercy or grace in your life, and how has that shaped you?
2. The sermon tells us that God spoke in a voice that only Elijah could hear. What do you do when God directs you to do something that your friends cannot seem to understand or that goes against societal trends? How do you keep external pressures from influencing God's direction? What was the outcome of following God's direction and not succumbing to external pressures, and vice versa?

For Parents

1. Pastor Wesley notes that his two sons are very different. What works for one does not work for the other. What is distinct about your child/children? How does this impact the way you support them?
2. In I Kings 19, God speaks to Elijah in a whisper. However, sometimes parenting voices can be a ***bit*** louder than a whisper. How can you create a balanced approach in speaking to your child/children, especially when they experience difficult situations?
3. Elijah must have been exhausted after his fight with the prophets of Baal. Parenting is 24/7 and can also be exhausting. What strategies do you use to hear from God clearly, even when you are exhausted?

For Seniors

1. Recall a time when “the intelligent discernment of the Holy Spirit” was operating in your life, and you ignored or dismissed it. What did that choice cost you? Did you learn anything from that experience that helped you the next time? If so, please share.
2. Pastor reminds us that a sound mind is a great gift. Being ‘in the community’ and sharing in Village is one way to strengthen a sound mind. What other strategies do you use to continue to nurture your mind?

For Women

1. God speaks to us through the extraordinary and the everyday. But one is not better than the other. Are there ways God speaks to you through the unique status of being a woman? How might that differ from the way God speaks to a man?
2. Take a moment to reflect on a time when you believed you were being guided by “women’s intuition” and now know that it was God protecting and guiding you. In what ways can you further develop and honor that God-given intuition?

For Men

1. Quoting II Timothy 1:7, Pastor Wesley says, God has given us a sound mind and speaks to us through our sound mind. Merriam-Webster says a sound mind is *a rational and sane mind*. How might one develop a sound mind? What things do you have to guard against to keep your mind sound?
2. Positive male role models have a significant impact on the life of young adults. How has your experience as a recipient of an angel’s blessing motivated you to serve as an angel in a young man’s life?
3. Pastor Wesley spoke in this sermon about intelligent discernment. Can you recall a time in your life when God’s speaking to you through intelligent discernment changed the course of your actions? What was the result? How did it change your perspective on trusting “your gut feeling” (intelligent discernment)?

For Returning Citizens

1. God has to get our attention before God can speak to us. How has God gotten your attention in your life? Was it easy for God to get your attention? Once God had your attention, what did you do differently?
2. Since Pastor Wesley says God's love outweighs his omnipotence in the end, how would you describe God's love in your life?

For Differently-Abled Persons/People

1. Pastor Wesley reminds us near the end of the sermon that God speaks to us in everyday things such as a sunrise, a warm shower, and selecting our clothes for the day. God speaks to us through these simple blessings, opportunities, and hope for a new day. Think about this day. Can you name one small thing that happened that, as you reflect on it, you know God used to speak to you? Describe the moment and how God used that simple thing to speak to you.
2. Wherever you are right now, be very still and quiet for just a few moments and listen with your whole heart. What did you hear that you had not noticed earlier? Can you imagine using your ability to be quiet and still before God, listening for what God will speak to your soul? What would be different in your life if you had a daily practice of silently waiting before the Lord?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. Specialty Bibles
 - a. Many Bibles are designed to include questions, exercises, and meditations for specific audiences. There are couples' bibles, men's, women's, etc. To select a Bible for your need, start with the translation you prefer (Pastor uses the New International Version and Dr. Judy uses the New Revised Standard Version, just saying), and then look to see if that version has a specialty Bible. The NIV, in particular, has several versions.
 - b. Some Village team members highly recommend The CEB Women's Bible.
2. Bible.Is/Audio Bible
 - a. [Bible.Is](#): Bible.is is a free service that will read the text to you. You can listen in your car, as you walk, or as you sit at home and study. The above link is to a dramatized version of the Bible. is. But if you go to
 - b. However, if you go to the following link, you can learn all about it and download it to your devices. <https://www.faithcomesbyhearing.com/audio-bible-resources/bible-is>

3. Basic Bible Study Overviews
 - a. If, as you read or listen to the Bible, you have difficulty understanding and may benefit from an accessible overview of individual books of the Bible, try, <https://bibleproject.com>
 - b. This website offers 5 - 8 minute video overviews of the books of the Bible and so much more. It is a personal favorite of Rev. Zina.