

When Your in a Crisis - How to Hear From God

by Bayless Conley

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God's voice and strength during times of crisis, using the story of Elijah as a key example.

Duration: 56:58

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:11, Psalm 46:10, Matthew 6:33, Luke 24:32, John 10:27, Hebrews 12:18

Topics: "Crisis"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Elijah and how he heard from God in a time of crisis. The speaker emphasizes the importance of removing distractions and hindrances in order to hear from God clearly. He also highlights the significance of finding rest and nourishment during difficult times. The sermon concludes by encouraging listeners to seek God's guidance and direction when facing challenging situations.

Transcript

Show up in your Bibles, have one with you to 1 Kings chapter 19. We're going to read quite a bit there. Lift your heart to the Lord with me, I want to pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for another amazing day. Seems like every day has got new facets and new things to discover, new relationships to deepen, new things to see. We're not done yet.

Lord, we realize that tonight can literally change our lives. Just one word from you can change us so radically that we'd never be the same. Lord, we want that.

We want to hear from you. We realize it's not just hearing somebody speak, but literally hearing the Holy Spirit whisper to our hearts to confirm something in us, to quicken something to us. That's what can change us.

So Lord, even as the disciples walk with you on the road to Emmaus, and their hearts burned within them as you opened the Scriptures to their understanding, Lord, we want our hearts to burn tonight. We ask you to open our eyes that we might see. Open our ears that we might hear.

Open our understanding, Lord, that we might comprehend. Jesus, we give you all of the praise and all of the glory. Amen.

I want to talk to you tonight about how to hear from God when you're in a crisis. We're going to read quite a bit of 1 Kings chapter 19, but let me just give you the background of the two preceding chapters. Israel has backslidden from God the entire nation.

Ahab is their king. His wife's name is Jezebel. They have led the nation into idolatry.

And God had promised that if Israel forsook Him, that He would shut up the heavens and there would be no rain, that if they turned to idol worship. Well, it doesn't just automatically happen. Most of God's promises need to be claimed.

They need to be received. In the book of Hebrews, in the 11th chapter, it talks about people that by faith they received promises. And it's interesting, even though God had promised that it would happen, year after year, rainy season after rainy season, those thunderclouds would roll in, the heavens would give their rain, the earth would produce its crops, and even though God said He'd shut the heavens, the heavens remained open until Elijah prayed.

Elijah the prophet prayed, he took those scriptures and he prayed, and then there was no rain. For three and a half years there was a drought in the land. Elijah was taken care of supernaturally.

First, as he stayed by the brook Cherith, and ravens came and fed him, and then he went to a widow in a city called Zarephath, and she sustained him through miraculous means. And then after a long period of time, God said, no, go reveal yourself to Ahab. And Elijah did, and Ahab accused him of being Israel's problem.

And Elijah said, no, you're the problem, king. And they had a showdown on Mount Carmel. All of the false prophets of Baal met there, all of Israel gathered together, and Elijah challenged them to call out to their God, and he would call out to the living God, which everyone answered by fire, that's the God they would serve.

Well, the prophets of Baal all day long cut themselves with knives, they cried, they prayed, and nothing happened, and Elijah just mocked them and mocked them while they were doing it. It's really quite funny if you read some of the things he said, and especially I think it's funny from the living Bible, because he even said, hey, well, you know, maybe he can't hear you, maybe your God's on vacation, maybe he's going to the bathroom. And, I mean, the guy just, he had an edge on him that's interesting.

And then he called out to God, God answered by fire, the nation falls down and says, the Lord is God, the Lord is God. Elijah kills all those prophets with the edge of the sword, and then he has a little prayer meeting, and clouds begin to form, and he tells Ahab, you better get to the palace, lest the clouds overtake you. And then the Spirit of the Lord comes on Elijah.

He supernaturally outran Ahab's chariot to the summer palace in Jezreel. All right, so there's been this time where God has used him mightily to turn a nation back to God. He has used him to shut up the heavens and then to open the heavens miraculously.

The rain came down, all of these false prophets have been killed. So a number of major things have happened for the kingdom of God, and Elijah has been the tip of the spear to cause all of those things to come to pass. And the next thing that happens, we find in 1 Kings 19 and 1, and I want you to just follow along silently, and I want to read the first 19 verses of this, and then I'm just going to teach you from it.

And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with a sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. When he saw that, he rose and ran for his life and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die and said, It's enough. Now, Lord, take my life, for I'm no better than my father's.

Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, Arise and eat. Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals and a jar of water, so that he ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came back and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.

So he rose and ate and drank and he went in the strength of that food, 40 days and 40 nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. And there he went into a cave and spent the night in that place. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him and he said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? So he said, I've been very zealous for the Lord.

God of hosts for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars and killed your prophets with a sword. I alone am left and they seek to take my life. Then he said, Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.

And behold, the Lord passed by and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake.

But the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire.

And after the fire, a still small voice. So it was when Elijah heard it that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah? And he said, I've been very zealous for the Lord.

God of hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars and killed your prophets with a sword. I alone am left and they seek to take my life. And the Lord said to him, Go return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.

And when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. Also, you shall anoint Jehu, the son of Nimshi, as king over Israel. And Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of Abel, Mahola, you shall anoint as prophet in your place.

It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill. And whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Yet I've reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.

So he departed from there and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him. And he went with the twelfth and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him.

And so it began, he went and anointed those three people. That's quite an interesting story here. Elijah goes from this mountaintop experience, this marvelous breakthrough, this being used by God to turn a nation back to the Lord.

He goes from that to running for his life and being suicidal. Friend, just a little thought before I give you the points that I want to give you. It's always wise to keep your armor on.

After great victories, many times come great trials and temptations. King David, after God had supernaturally dealt with him and he had this amazing experience with God, you find him getting involved with Bathsheba and falling morally. Samson, after he kills a thousand Philistines.

God uses him to bring great deliverance. You find Samson talking about his death and getting suicidal. Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

You know, God comes down and speaks to him in a cloud. He gets down to the bottom of the mountain and he meets a demon-possessed boy. Just very interesting.

Sometimes after the highest and brightest times we have in God, we're the most vulnerable. And I think sometimes it's just because we sort of take our armor off. We've had this great experience, you know, we just put our sword down, we put our shield down, we kind of loosen the helmet and take it off and we get caught by surprise.

You need to always keep your armor on. Now, this is a critical and a difficult time for Elijah and he needs some fresh direction. Perhaps you're in a very stressful or critical time yourself right now and you need guidance from God.

Well, I want to share with you four thoughts from this story to help you hear from God when you're under pressure and when there's a crisis going on in your life. You ready? All right. Number one, realize that zero is not a bad place to be.

Realize that zero is not a bad place to be. Now, when this crisis arose, when his life was threatened, Elijah knew he needed to hear from God and it came in his heart to go to Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai. That's the same place where God had spoken to Moses from the burning bush.

It's the same place that God spoke to all of Israel and Moses after the Exodus. And Elijah knows that and it's his heart to go there. And we know that was his intended destination because when the angel, you know, begins to minister to him, says, look, you know, you need to eat because the journey referred to as a specific, referred to a specific journey, the journey is too great for you.

And it's quite obvious that Elijah obviously knew what and where he was referring to. It was in his heart to go there. But before he could get too far, he sits down under a tree and he's ready to give up.

He says, I've had enough. I just can't take anymore. I'm played out.

I'm used up. I'm done. And maybe tonight you're on the verge of quitting.

You think I've had enough. I'm done. Enough pressures, enough hassles.

I'm at the end of my strength. I cannot ride this thing out anymore. I've had enough problems in my marriage and a financial pressure and of harassment on my job.

Enough struggle over my health and a bad reports about my kid. I can't take anymore. My strength is gone.

And maybe you're here tonight. You've even sunk to the depths that Elijah had gotten to. He said, God, just take my life.

You're thinking, you know, Lord, it'd just be easier if I just died and went home to be with Jesus. I wouldn't have to face this, you know, tomorrow morning when I wake up anymore. Maybe you've even bought the lie.

The devil's whispering in your head, you know, your kids would be better off without you. You know, your husband would be better off without you. Your wife would be better off without you.

You know, the church, the world, no one would miss you. And that is just a lie of the devil. And I know some people get down that way.

They just get worn down in their problems. Gnaw away at them and gnaw away at them like a dog on a bone until they get to the point. They just say, man, I'm spent.

I'm through. I'm done. Well, did you notice that when Elijah was at the end of his strength? That's when God intervened.

Being out of strength, being at zero is not a bad place to be. That is, if you look to God. Chua, mark this because we'll come back here.

And look at me in 2 Corinthians, if you would. Zero is not such a bad place. 2 Corinthians chapter 1. And I'll refer you to another verse.

We won't take time to turn there. It's in the same book that we're looking at now, but the 12th chapter. When Paul was being harassed everywhere he went by an evil spirit that he referred to as a thorn in the flesh.

He said it was a messenger sent from Satan to buffet him, to constantly harass him. And it happened everywhere he went. And he got to the end of his rope, the end of his strength.

And he besought God three times for the thing to depart. And it's interesting. The response of the Lord to Paul was, my grace is sufficient for you.

And my strength is made perfect in weakness. God's strength is made perfect. That means it comes to full maturity.

It blossoms. It is expressed fully in our weakness. Paul went on to say, therefore, most gladly, I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches and needs and persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. It's a secret that we need to learn, friend, that his strength can be made perfect in weakness.

And look at me at second Corinthians chapter one, verse eight. Paul's writing here. And he said, I'm in the wrong book.

I'm in first Corinthians. Second Corinthians chapter one, verse eight. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened beyond measure above strength so that we despaired even of life.

I want to stop right there. You don't generally hear that from preachers. Paul said, hey, I don't want you to be ignorant.

It was it was to our situation was too big for us beyond measure. We couldn't cope. It was above our strength.

We even despaired of life. We thought it was over. Look at the next verse.

Yes, we have the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver us in whom we trust that he will still deliver us past, present and future deliverance. And maybe you're in a situation that's above your strength right now. That's not a bad place to be as long as you have the sentence of death in yourself and you're looking to God.

I'll never forget my wife and I. We. I don't know how long it was after we'd been married. I got some time off from the church where I was an assistant pastor and we went on a 10 day camping trip in my Volkswagen van and just drove up the coast.

No intended destination. But we just stayed in different places on the beach and, you know, made campfires and had a good time. And on the way back, we stopped in northern California to see some friends that I hadn't seen in a long time.

And they passed through a little country church and we actually got there during the service and sat in the back. He stopped the service, came back and hugged us. I mean, right in the middle of his message, something I don't think I would do, but quit preaching, came back, hugged us and then went back to the pulpit and finished his message.

Well, we spent the night with him. And the next day I was walking with my friend and he was sharing with me some of the troubles they were going through. There was some some really hard stuff going on in the church and he was having some severe.

Physical problems that could have even been life threatening. And so we're walking along this dirt road talking about it and I'll never forget him. He said, Bayless, he said, I'd be worried if I was trusting me.

He said, but I have the sentence of death in myself and my trust is in God. And I knew right away he was referring to that scripture. But it so struck me that in the midst of his challenges, in the midst of his problems, he said, I have the sentence of death in myself.

He was admitting it was too big for him, that it was beyond measure, something that he couldn't cope with. He was at zero. But he said, I'm not worried.

Because my trust is in God. Zero is not a bad place to be. Look at Acts 27.

Book of Acts in the 27th chapter. And we will get back to our story there in 1 Kings. Acts chapter 27 and verse 20.

Paul and his companions are with quite a few other people on a ship that they never should have got on. And in verse 20, it says, Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and no small tempest beat upon us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up. Let me just ask, is there anybody in the house that knows anything about going through a storm? Any of you, you've been through a storm or two in your life? Anybody in a storm right now? Okay.

Looks like everybody. All right. He said, No small tempest beat on us.

All hope that we would be saved was taken away. There is zero, not a bad place to be. God intervenes when you come to the end of yourself.

Look what happens. Verse 21. But after long abstinence from food, Paul stood in the midst of them and said, Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.

And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of God to whom I belong and whom I serve saying, Do not be afraid, Paul, you must be brought before Caesar. And indeed, God has granted you all those who sail with you.

Therefore, take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island. It's interesting when they're at the end of themselves.

God spoke to Paul and gave him direction. Now, I'm sure he was praying every day and every night, every day and every night for many days. It said this tempest beat on them.

And it wasn't until they came to the end of themselves till all hope was thrown out. We can't fix this ourselves. We can't we can't get out of this ourselves.

This is beyond us. And it's just interesting to me. It wasn't until they got to that point that the angel appeared.

And then Paul received the direction that they needed. If you are there tonight, I must say it again. Zero is not a bad place to be.

It seems that sometimes we have to get to the end of ourselves before we will fully look to God. But when we do, we find out that he's more than enough. And if you're there tonight or close to that point, lay hold of God's strength.

Put your trust in him. He will bring you to the place of your breakthrough and you'll find the direction you need. But don't rely on your own strength.

My wife and I, again, this is back when I was serving as an assistant pastor in another church. There was a lady in the church whose husband was not a godly man, wasn't interested in God, wouldn't come to church. And we prayed with her for, I don't know, a year and a half.

And she'd been standing for a long time before that for his salvation, for him to come to the Lord. Many times she was so discouraged and we encouraged her, said, you know, just hang in there, you know, trust God. God's going to get a hold of him.

And I was there the Sunday morning. He finally came to church. And he came forward, responded to the altar call, gave his life to Christ.

And when he got saved, she left. And it's so threw me for a loop. We had prayed with her.

She had cried. She had wept. We'd encouraged her every way we knew how.

She's trusting God for her husband's salvation. He finally comes to Christ and she leaves and goes off with another guy. And I just, I just could not work it out.

And so I went to the pastors and pastor. You're going to have to help me. I'm stumped on this one.

I just, I just don't get the math here. And he said, and I'll never forget what he told me. He says, Bayless.

He said, he says, I couldn't understand it either. Says, I prayed with her as much as you guys did. And here, you know, when finally her prayers answered, she bails.

And he said, I felt like God spoke to me that instead of trusting him, she's been relying on her own strength completely. She never really had her trust in God. And she just got to the end and her strength was used up.

She had nothing left. And that's why she bailed out that she'd never really been anchored in God. And for me, it satisfied my heart.

And I think some people, they go to the end of their strength and they just get used up. You see, zero is a great place to be as long as you're looking to God. Zero sucks if you're not trusting God.

But if you have your hope and your trust anchored in him and you've taken hold of his strength, things will be all right. So if you're a zero, cheer up. Have the sentence of death in yourself.

Don't trust yourself, but trust the living God who has delivered, does deliver and will yet deliver you. All right. Number two, lighten the ship.

Second thought, lighten the ship. And I want to use it right from the story here. Just back up with me.

Verse 18, if you would. It acts 27. It says, And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.

And on the third day, we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our hands. It's interesting. They lightened the ship.

Sometimes in a storm, you need to throw some things overboard. It's a great time to evaluate any baggage that you're carrying in your life when you're in a storm. Sometimes we don't tend to evaluate some of the things we have attached to our life until we get in a storm.

And I think it's good to take survey of the things in your life and things that maybe you need to jettison and get rid of. Now, look back with me, if you would, at 1 Kings chapter 19. It's exactly what Elijah did.

Here he gets the threat from Jezebel. And he runs nearly something like 80 miles from Jezreel to Beersheba. Look in verse 3 of 1 Kings 19.

And when he saw that, he rose and ran for his life and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah. And he left his servant there. He never came back for this guy.

Ever. He just cut the guy loose. He left him there.

End of story. This guy's never mentioned again in the Bible. Elijah never went back for him.

Now, this servant may have been somebody that Elijah picked up on his own. It may have been someone that was recommended to him by another person. But he was not God's choice for a successor.

Because as we read at the end of the story, God told Elijah, Go anoint Elisha to be prophet in your place. This servant, whoever he was, was the wrong person. Now, maybe this servant was hindering Elijah's progress.

Maybe he was keeping him from where he needed to get. And I think sometimes we need to take stock of our relationships and determine whether they're aiding us in fulfilling the will of God and taking us where we need to go, or whether it's pulling us down and holding us back. You can't walk with fools and get the reward of a wise man.

The Bible says a companion of fools will be destroyed, but he that walks with wise men will be wise. And when I'm talking about evaluating your relationships, of course, I'm not talking about your marriage. You just need to work that one out.

But there's some relationships you need to cut loose. Because they are hanging you up and keeping you back. And they're hindering you from getting to where God wants you to be.

And Elijah cut this guy loose. It's interesting. It wasn't until Abraham separated himself from Lot that God showed him the promised land.

Right as soon as he cut that relationship loose with Lot, that God showed him what he had for him. Remember, after I got saved, I was... Actually, at the time, I was above a bar on Siskiyou Boulevard in Ashland, Oregon. A friend of mine, this girl I knew, she had an apartment.

And with her apartment, there was this room across the hallway. It didn't have a restroom or anything in it, but it was just a room. And I actually rented that from her.

And so I'm living up there above the bar. And I got saved gloriously. You know, my life got changed.

And I met this guy. Kind of a background like mine. Drinking, drugs, the whole deal.

And so we started to hang out some. He's a Christian brother. But I was always having to pick him up off the floor.

He was always stumbling. You know, one way or another. You know, he'd be passed out somewhere.

You know, he'd go out and get drunk. Or he'd go out and get high. Or he'd mess up with some girl.

I can't remember how many times I prayed the guy through. And it got to the point. And I'm a young Christian.

I'm trying to get my life to change. And this guy is trying to bring things into my life. Influences into my life that are not going to be a help to me.

But I'm trying to help him out. And I remember I even left town and let him stay at my place one time. And he messed it up so bad.

It got me in trouble with the girl that I rented from. In fact, it took me a week to get the smell out of there. And then I got him a job.

I got a job with a Christian lady at a peach orchard. I'm working out at a peach orchard. I got him a job.

I vouched for him. He turned up the first day. He never turned up again after that day.

Got me in trouble with my boss at work. So now I'm in trouble with the lady I rent from. I'm in trouble with my boss at work.

And this guy is still just wanting to hang around. But he's dragging me down. And if he would have really wanted to change, I would have hung in there.

But you know what? As a young Christian, just learning the ropes myself, I was wise enough to realize, you know, this guy's a fool. And if I hang around with him, he's going to end up influencing me. And I'm not going to end up influencing him because he doesn't want to change.

He won't go to Bible study with me. You know, he's just drinking. He's bringing drugs to my place.

I just don't need it. Man, I cut him off. I said, that's it, man.

I'm done with you. It's one of the wisest things that I ever did. I probably wouldn't be standing here today had I not made the decision to jettison that relationship and some other relationships that I had as well.

I'm convinced that when God wants to bless you, He sends a person into your life. And when the devil wants to mess you up, He sends a person into your life. You need to determine which is which.

Sometimes we just do need to cut certain relationships out of our life. Lighten the ship. And not just relationships, but any other baggage that you shouldn't be carrying.

The book of Hebrews in the 12th chapter. It says, hey, let us lay aside. Everybody say, lay aside.

Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us and let us run with confidence the race that is set before us. Looking on to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. And sometimes it's not.

I mean, it's obvious that we need to jettison the sins in our life. You know, if you're in a crisis, it's interesting how quickly we repent sometimes when we're in trouble. And people will throw their sins overboard.

You know, that familiar sin that's tripping them up because they think, man, I got to hear from God. And I realize I've been playing patty cake with this thing, man, overboard it goes. But he said not just to lay aside the sins, but lay aside the weights.

There's some things that may not be a sin to you, but they are a weight to you. In other words, they will burden you down. They will hold you back.

And if you're, you know, hopefully you don't have to get to a critical situation to do this. But if you are in a critical situation, you need to look around. There's some stuff you probably need to throw overboard.

I mean, watching TV may not be a sin, but it can sure be a weight, baby. And it can sure be a hindrance to you hearing from God, especially when you're in a time of crisis. One of the worst things you can do is sit in front of the tube instead of having your Bible in front of you.

Now, if you really want to hear from God and get yourself unstuck and progress, lighten your ship. All right, the third thought. Get some rest.

Get some rest. Interesting in this story in verse 5, he slept and then he got up and he ate this food and drank this water that the angel had prepared for him. And then it says after he ate and drank, he laid down again.

And then he got up again and he ate again. Some of you, you're just sleep deprived and you don't eat right. And you know what? Your body and your soul and your spirit are all tied together.

What you do to one affects the other two. It affects the whole. We are intricately woven together.

And the wisest thing that some of you could do is just give your body a rest because it's affecting every other part of your life. Get some rest. Here's my spiritual counsel.

The best thing some of you need to do, get a good night's sleep and some home cooking. Because right now, because you're burning the candle at both ends, you're sleep deprived, you're not taking care of your body, you're putting the wrong kind of fuel in it, everything is blown out of proportion. And to you, it looks like your whole world is falling apart and it's not really.

It's like Mark Twain said, I've been through a great many crisis in my life, most of which never happened. And it's so true sometimes. You know, I mean, chicken little, the sky is falling, the sky is falling, but it's not really falling.

You just think it's falling. Is there anybody here besides me that gets cranky when you're tired? God have mercy on the family when Pastor B is worn out. I really, my flesh just tends to get the better of me and things get blown out of proportion.

Anybody here get in a fight with your wife or your husband that you never would have gotten in if you weren't tired? A whole bunch of you are just telling fibs right now by not lifting your hands, because I know better. It does affect you. You do need to rest.

You do need to have a Sabbath day, in fact. A lot of Christians don't have a Sabbath day. Listen, even God took a day and rested.

On the seventh day, God rested and He didn't need a rest. But He did it as an example to us. And if the Creator, who didn't need a rest, took a rest day just for an example to us and you work 24-7, it will take a toll on you.

You see, some people just don't think right because they're overtired. And like I said, they put the wrong kind of fuel into their body all the time. Just a second application to this part.

Looking at this story from a spiritual standpoint, you know, He rests, and then He gets up, and there's the cake, the bread, and the water. Well, the bread represents the Word. Water represents the Spirit or prayer.

If you're in a crisis, you need to hear from God. Saturate yourself in the Word. He ate, and then He ate again.

Friend, eat the bread of life, and then eat some more. He drank, and then He drank again. You need to pray, and then pray some more.

For some of you, the wisest thing you could do, just sit down and read Matthew. You know, read the book of Galatians. Read 1 and 2 Timothy.

You know, get up in the middle of the night and read the book of Jonah. Just saturate yourself in the Word. It's amazing, if you will do that, how God will begin to speak to you.

And if you'll pray, especially praying in the Spirit. By that I mean praying in other tongues. The book of Isaiah, I think it's the 20... maybe the 28th chapter.

Prophetically, looking forward to the new covenant. Actually, there are verses that are quoted in 1 Corinthians in reference to the infilling of the Holy Spirit and speaking in other tongues. The Apostle Paul quotes those very verses from the book of Isaiah.

And Isaiah says, you know, that God will speak to men with another tongue to whom He said, this is the rest and this is the refreshing. To get your spirit refreshed spiritually, pray in the Spirit. Praying in other tongues will bring a rest and refreshment to your spirit.

And feeding on the Word of God will bring nourishment to your spirit. You see, some people, they're like a guy that's been lost in the desert for a long time. He's had no food, no water.

He's absolutely famished. And somebody finds him in the desert and he's sort of just a living skeleton laying there. He's gotten hardly any strength at all.

Well, you know what? When somebody's in that kind of state, they're not too open to instructions. What you need to do is get them rehydrated and get them nourished. And once that person that's been wandering around in the desert with no food or no water, that's totally famished to the point of starvation, is completely dehydrated to the point of death, once they take a while and get rehydrated and begin to get nourishment inside of them and their physical strength begins to revive, well, then they're going to be in a position where you can talk with them.

Some people's spirit is the same way. You need to rehydrate your spirit and you need to nourish your spirit because you're not in a place spiritually for God to really give you the kind of instructions perhaps that He wants to give you. And you just need to take time in the Word and take time waiting on God, feeding on the bread of life, and praying.

Be the wisest thing that you could do and then you'll be ready for your instruction from the Lord. All right, number four. Fourth thought is refresh yourself on how God leads you.

Refresh yourself on how God leads you. In verse 11 in this story, God told him to go stand outside of the cave and there was the mighty, the strong wind tore the rocks, but it says God wasn't in the wind. And

then there was the earthquake and God wasn't in the earthquake.

And then there was the fire, but God wasn't in the fire. And then it says, then there was a still, small voice. Very interesting.

Now, I want again, just bring your remembrance back to this is the place that God spoke to Israel and to Moses. Mount Sinai. He's at the exact same place.

And if you want to take time, you can read the stories in Exodus 11 and it refers to it in Hebrews chapter 12. Now, when Moses and the people gathered together on Sinai and God came down, it's interesting, three things happened. When God came down on Sinai, all of those years before with Moses and the people.

First of all, it says that God came in a tempest. There was a strong wind. Second thing it said there was an earthquake.

And third thing it said there was a fire. Same three things that happens here. And then a trumpet sounded and they heard God speak audibly.

Everyone freaks out and they said, look, Moses, we don't like this. You talk to us, you go talk to God and whatever you tell us that he says, that'll be fine. But we don't want God speaking to us directly anymore.

Now, Elijah knows all of this and God is teaching him a valuable lesson. And at the same time, he's speaking to us. It says the Lord wasn't in the wind.

He wasn't in the earthquake and he wasn't in the fire, but then there was this still small voice. Now, just keep your finger here. We'll probably come back and look in Hebrews chapter 12 with me where it refers to that time where Moses and Israel were there and God had come down.

Beginning in verse 18 of Hebrews 12. Hebrews 12 and 18. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 18.

For you have not come... Everybody say, I have not come. Alright, you've not come to the mountain that may be touched and burned with fire and to blackness and darkness and tempest and to the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. For they could not endure what was commanded and if so much as a beast touches the mountain it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.

And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, I am exceedingly afraid and trembling. But you have come... Everyone say, I have come. You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

See that you do not refuse him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from him who speaks from heaven. Now, won't you just think with me for a minute.

What he's saying, at least in part. Elijah's at the same place. His mind is filled with these thoughts.

I've got to hear from God. I'm in a crisis. God, what do I do next? They want to take away my life.

I'm the only one that's left. In fact, he said that three times, if you noticed in the story. I'm the only one that's here.

They've torn down your altars and they seek to take my life. Three times he said it. And he said, I've got to hear from God.

And so it's in his heart. He goes, man, I need to hear from God like Moses heard from God. Man, I've got to hear from God.

This is critical. So he goes to Sinai and he knows that when God came down on Sinai, there was a wind. There was an earthquake.

There's a fire. And all those things, those three things happen. But God wasn't in any of them.

And then it's still small voice. And here we come to the New Testament. I see God was teaching Elijah something and through him he's teaching us.

He said, we don't come to the mouth that can be touched and to the fire and to the tempest and all those things into this audible voice. In other words, that's not the way God speaks to us under this covenant. But we have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant who speaks to us from heaven.

All right, Jesus, how do you speak to us? Jesus told us exactly how we would do it in John 14 through 16, right before his crucifixion. He got the disciples together and said, look, I know you're sad, but it's better for you that I go away because if I go away, the Holy Spirit will come. And when he comes, he's not just going to be with you.

He's going to be in you. And when he's in you, he's going to lead and guide you into all the truth. He'll take the things that belong to the Father and belong to me, and he'll reveal and transmit them to you.

He won't speak on his own accord, but what he hears, that will he speak. And friend, when God's going to lead us, it's going to be through the still small whisper of the Spirit in our heart. Yet many people want more than that.

Some people think, I'm in a desperate situation, I need something more. That is the point. And that's what God's telling us through this story.

This is a new covenant. We have God on the inside. If God's going to guide us, he's going to do it from within.

Think about the greatest event that could happen to a human being is the new birth. And how does God let us know that it's happened to us? We know that we're the sons of God because we have the inward witness of the Spirit. It says in Romans chapter 8, angels don't come and unroll scrolls and tell you that you're saved.

Fire doesn't, you know, dance around your living room and tell you that you're saved. God doesn't send an earthquake or a mighty rushing wind to let you know that you're saved. And understand me, I'm not putting God in a box.

He can do anything He wants at any time He wants to anyone that He wants to. He's God. But generally under this covenant, my friend, that we live under, that's not the way God is going to communicate with you.

I mean, and obviously, we know God speaks to us first and foremost through His Word. But when Jesus speaks to us, He does it through the Spirit. Now, if God lets us know that we're saved by the inward witness of the Spirit, the most important decision we'll ever make in our life, why should we look for some outward sign if we're supposed to move or not? Oh God, I've got to make a decision.

You know, should I move to this place? Should I take this job? God, you've got to show me. You know, I need a sign. Wait a minute.

Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. God, I'm under pressure. I don't know what to do.

You know, you've got to... I need something big. No, you don't. In fact, if you look for the spectacular, you're liable to miss the supernatural that's right in front of your nose all along.

You know, I had a friend. We used to run around together in high school and his girlfriend, she went to Europe and ended up not coming back. He was, you know, pretty sad about that and contacted her.

She was staying in Germany and so he's going to go over and get her. Well, she's gotten in a relationship with some other guy over there. She told me this afterwards, you know, when she'd come back to the States that, you know, she'd kind of gotten into this whole spooky deal and, you know, he went there and she's packing up.

I mean, he goes, so she's getting ready to come back to the States with him. They're in Germany there and there was this, like, laundry hamper that, you know, would open and close. And so she closed the laundry hamper and, boom, it fell again open.

And she said, Baylis, that was a sign that I wasn't supposed to go. I said, oh. And so she told him, go back on your own, I'm not coming.

And he came back here empty-handed, didn't bring his girlfriend back with him because the laundry hamper fell open. It was a sign. You laugh, but Christians do that same kind of thing all the time.

I remember this lady, I went to rent an apartment from her. She's a Christian, a spirit-filled, tongue-talking, church-going, Bible-totem Christian. And she wouldn't rent me the apartment.

I found out later why. She said, God, if I'm supposed to rent the apartment to Baylis, the telephone needs to ring so many times before 2 o'clock. And the phone didn't ring enough times before 2 o'clock and so it obviously wasn't God's will for her to rent the apartment to me.

If I would have known that, I would have called her myself. Friend, that's not the way that God guides us. We're not to be led that way.

It's that inward witness of the spirit, that still, small voice. And some of you, you're in a crisis, it's crunch time, and you're wanting fire, and you're wanting the earthquake, and you're wanting the strong wind. God's not going to give you any of them.

But what he will give to every one of his children is that still, small whisper of the spirit. Jesus said, My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me. And he speaks to us through the Holy Spirit who's taken up residence within us.

You just got to get quiet enough to hear. Now, here's just a short postscript. As I mentioned, you go ahead and turn back there.

We may look at the verses, we may not. Three different times, Elijah, you know, God says, What are you doing here? And his response to what he's doing there, Well, you know, they've torn down your altars, everyone's forsaken you, I'm the only one that's left, and they seek to take my life. They want to kill me, God.

He was absolutely stuck on that. He's concerned about his safety. And that's all he's praying about.

God, you know, they want to kill me. Jezebel, she threatened me, and they want to take my life, and I'm the only one that's serving you. And he just said it over and over and over.

It's the only thing that came out of his mouth. And it's interesting, God did comfort him in one way when the Lord finally began to speak to him. But he really doesn't give him the kind of answer that he probably wanted.

Now, he does tell him, You're not alone. I got 7,000 others that haven't bowed the knee to Baal. So you're not by yourself.

And I want to tell you tonight, you're not by yourself. There are other people going through the same things you're going through. And I'm sure that brought some comfort to Elijah.

But then God doesn't even address the second part of his thing. They want to take my life. God doesn't even address that.

I mean, Elijah probably wanted to hear, You know, I've got 7,000 that haven't bowed the knee to Baal, and I'm going to judge Ahab and Jezebel shortly, and all will see that you have served me in righteousness. No, God doesn't tell him anything about that. What God does do is instruct him to anoint several people, and God makes no mention of Jezebel and her threats.

Don't be surprised if the direction that God gives you in your crisis is a bit different than you expect. God, you know, He's doing this to me here. God, she's doing this, or they're doing that, and God, when God may speak to you, He'll certainly bring you a degree of comfort, but He may not give you the answer you're looking for at all.

He will likely lead you to bless others and to minister to them rather than just making you cozy, which is what He did to Elijah. Didn't even address that part of Elijah's concern. He just said, Hey, there's other people, and you, you need to get busy.

I've got ministry for you. There's people that need to be anointed. There's people that need to be blessed.

You get out and get busy. You will find that when you water others, God will see that you're watered yourself. Some people want to, you know, just curl up and make sure that everything's, you know, just right for them, and God, you've got to speak to me.

You know, for me, I'm in trouble. I've got this problem, and they're not doing this. They're not doing that.

God may not even address that. He may say, Hey, you know what? You need to go work in children's church. Or you need to go get involved in prison ministry.

You've got a lot more than you think you have. You need to go give something away. See, some of you didn't even want to hear that.

And as you obey God, listen to me. As you obey God, God will deal with whatever opposition you face. It's interesting that one of these guys that God tells Elijah to anoint ends up being the one that called for the servants to throw Jezebel out of the window.

Elijah didn't know that. And Jezebel certainly paid for her sins. I mean, when the dogs got through eating her all, she was left with the palm of her hands and her skull.

That's what the Bible says. So she certainly paid. And I'm sure Elijah would like to have heard that right then.

But God didn't tell him at all. But through getting busy and ministering and doing what he was supposed to be doing, if he hadn't got busy doing that, you know what? Jehu never would have been there to tell the guys to throw Jezebel out the window. God will certainly take care of you, but it's only as you get out and get busy doing what he tells you to do, even if you can see whether it's connected or not.

You water others, you will get watered also yourself. Why don't you bow your heads just for a minute if you would. Hallelujah.

Now, when I asked if anybody knew anything about a storm, everyone raised their hand. And when I asked if anyone is in a storm right now, almost everyone raised their hand. All right.

You're in a storm. Got to hear from God. What do we do? Think about it.

What do we do? First of all, realize zero is not a bad place to be. And if you're relying completely on your own savvy and understanding of the situation, if you're relying on your own strength, make the decision right now. All it takes is a quick adjustment in your heart to put your trust in God.

He has delivered, he does deliver, and he will deliver. Don't rely on your own strength. Zero is not a bad place to be if your trust is anchored in God.

You may feel that you're spent, you're played out, you came in here, last-ditch effort. It's time to look to God. When you come to the end of yourself, you find out God's more than enough.

Hallelujah. Lord, we bless you. We put our trust in you.

Right now, Lord. We roll our burdens and our situations over on you. We bless you, Lord God.

Maybe there's something in your life you need to cut loose. Maybe you need to lighten the ship a little bit. Are there relationships in your life? And again, I'm not talking about your marriage.

But have you been hanging around with fools? Do you have relationships in your life that are keeping you from reaching the will of God? That are hindering you from going where God wants you to be? Maybe you need to lighten the ship. Lord, any relationship, anything that we need to cut loose, show us now. We ask

in Jesus' name.

And then whether it's naturally or spiritually, if you're sleep-deprived, not taking care of your body, chances are, even if there is a very real problem and you're in the midst of a very real crisis, chances are, things are blown out of proportion and they seem bigger and worse than they actually are. And you make the determination to take care of that temple that you live in. That's God's house.

Your body is His property and you are a steward. And you need to take care of it. If you haven't gotten proper rest, make the decision you're going to do it.

And from the spiritual standpoint, feed on the bread of life and get yourself rehydrated through prayer. And then finally, just think for a moment. God, if we need direction, how are you going to lead me? What is that still, small voice whispering to your heart? What has He already been saying to you? I always figure that when we get together like this, it's never a matter of coincidence or accident that the people that are here are here.

I think God always has a purpose and He has a plan in it. I think, obviously, God wants people to hear the message. And I think you need to take it to the point that if you were the only one that it was for, that it's for you.

God would set an entire service up just to get the truth across to you because He loves you. Just to get you the information that you need. And so you need to grab whatever it is that stood out to you, that spoke to your heart.

And don't let it escape you by the time you get to Starbucks tonight. Second thing, is I know there are most generally always people that come in, sometimes with a friend, sometimes by themselves, that have not yet committed their life to Christ. And I'm not going to take time.

We generally like to get out at 8.15 on Wednesday nights because kids have school and everything the next day. So I'm not going to take long. But I want to tell you, I don't believe it's a coincidence that you're here tonight.

And if you've not committed your life to Jesus Christ, I've got good news for you. It's not about empty religion. It's not about ceremonies.

It's about having a relationship with God. We all were separated from God because of sin. And the Bible says there's one way into a relationship with God.

And that is through His Son, the Mediator. That means the One that stands between. Jesus Christ.

On the cross, He died for your sins and the sins of the world. He died for my sins. The price was paid and that thing that kept us from a relationship with God has been taken out of the way.

And now we have access to God if we will just come. And the way that we come to Him is by putting our trust in Him. Some guys asked Jesus once, you know, what do we need to do to work the works of God? Jesus says, this is the work of God that you believe.

And we need to put our trust in Him that He died for our sins, was raised from the dead. The Bible says, if you believe that and confess Him with your mouth as Lord, and here's what it means. It means boss.

It means I die to my rights of independent living and Jesus, I'm willing to come under Your authority. You be my boss. When you come to Him that completely, He so radically changes you on the inside.

Jesus called it being born again. The Apostle Paul called it becoming a new creation in Christ. You literally enter into a relationship with God and your whole world changes.

You don't have to have a preacher pray with you. You can pray on your own. You can have a friend pray with you.

But it's not a decision that you want to put off. And so I want to encourage you, friend, before you lay your head down on the pillow tonight, if you are not saved, if you're not right with God, commit your life to Jesus Christ. A simple prayer.

Tell Him that you believe in Him. Tell Him you want to follow Him. Even if you don't understand the whole deal, confess Him as your Lord.

Watch and see what happens.

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