



Week three
Elijah's
horeb
'fear and
flight'

- Welcome (5-10 minutes)

Talk about your all-time favourite action heroes . Who can make a case for theirs being the 'definitive' action hero?

- Worship (10-15 minutes)



pray

*Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.
From the ends of the earth I call to you,
I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to
the rock that is higher than I
For you have been my refuge, a strong
tower against the foe*

Psalm 61:1-3 (NIV)

- Word (50 minutes)

Elijah has brought shame on Ahab for his false religion as King over Israel. Mount Carmel with its amazing display of power from Yahweh showed the people the awesome might of God. The drought that Elijah spoke into being is ended, again at Elijah's say-so. His God is mighty and powerful indeed. Notable by her absence is the evil Queen Jezebel. She is unimpressed by Elijah's victory and unmoved by the tales of Yahweh's brilliant power. Revenge is uppermost in her mind as she seeks to gain the upper hand in events.

Read the passage:

1 Kings 19 1-18 (NIV)

1 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." 3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under

it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. 7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he travelled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

9 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?" 10 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken 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." 11 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. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 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?" 14 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken 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." 15 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. 16 Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. 17 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. 18 Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."

It is fear which strikes at the heart of the man, Elijah. Fear is a pernicious feeling that blows events out of all proportion. He hears Jezebel's threat and does not show any of the fortitude or courage that have characterised his actions so far. He runs, as he sees it, literally 'for his life'.

- Talk about times in Elijah's life when he could legitimately have allowed fear to overwhelm him. (1Kings 17 onwards)

It can so often be the that after a period of struggle, a posed threat can be the 'one thing' that cause us to give up or give in. It is in these times that we need people around us who can make us see the reality or truth of a situation.

- Who can you trust to help you see reality? How do *you* find that these 'huge situations' are best diffused?

Jeff Lucas writes;

When I was a pastor, I remember storming into our house one dark Monday morning. After a difficult weekend, someone had made what I felt to be an unkind remark at the office, and it was to me the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. My wife Kay was ironing as I rushed in, and I yelled at the top of my voice 'that's it! I'm resigning'.

She carried on ironing. I was irritated beyond belief. Here was I, limping pathetically in the shadow of death, and she had nothing to say. I repeated the statement again, with increased decibels. Silence. For the third time I repeated my statement of defeat, by now desperate for a reaction. I got one. Without even looking up from



her ironing, Kay said, 'You don't even know how to spell resignation.' I couldn't help it, I had to laugh, and in a few moments was amazed that I could have read so much significance into one earlier comment. (p.85)

We are often better with people around us who can show us the route back to sense. Elijah is so freaked out by Jezebel's threat that he even dismisses his servant so that he is totally isolated. He is not prepared to listen to reason, and after a long period of being tuned in to hear God, he is not prepared to allow God to make himself heard.

- What are the dangers of being alone in your faith?

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Even though Elijah is deaf to God's voice, he is never out of God's sight. God sustains him in his misery and calls Elijah's name, giving him humanity when all Elijah wants to do is run from people and cease to be.

- Talk about Elijah's name. What is significant about it? How can it help Elijah to focus on his purpose. If you could name yourself to describe your beliefs or your purpose, what meaning would your name carry?

pray

In a time of quiet reflection, remember times when you have overreacted to guard yourself from a threat. Ask God to redeem that time of fear with the Truth of his perfect love and his living presence.



Elijah continues his journey with a sense of purpose to Horeb. Sinai. The mountain of God where Moses was given the Law and saw God. It is also far away from Ahab's territory. The cave that he sleeps in is believed to be that which Moses used at that time. It is a place of spiritual significance for a prophet of Yahweh.

- Look at verses 9 & 10. How much of what Elijah is feeling is true and how much is exaggerated?

- Where is your spiritual safe place?

We briefly looked at fear earlier, remind each other of God's promises regarding fear. Throughout the Bible, there are references reminding the troubled believer to trust God. Trust that he's there, that he knows what's going on, that he is with you.

It is through prayer that this deadlock within our hearts is broken. Fear expressed, explained and prayed about can be given a more realistic set of dimensions. God wants us to choose to confide in him.



- What general areas of your life do you shy away from praying about to God or talking openly with your group about. Think about what reasons you have for this. Talk about whether your fears are real, or a subtle trickery to keep you locked into a mindset that is defined by fear.
- Look at verses 11-18.

It is an act of decision to turn back to God that is required of Elijah. This act will need him to set aside his complaining, his analysis of the situation and to listen to God.

- Talk about political situations where we are called to make a stand for the poor and needy who are being taken advantage of by a morally moribund society.
- Can the church speak with the same level of impact and authority that Elijah commanded? What practical ideas do you have regarding this?

- **Witness** (20 – 25 minutes)

Briefly share how your prayer challenge is progressing.

Elijah's disobedience to God in the final verses shows that he doesn't fully trust God. God's promise is eventually fulfilled, but it takes longer.

How is the work of God hampered by the Church in our community? What can we do to ensure God's will is done to God's timetable and plan?

Time for refreshments, you've earned them!



Bibliography
Lucas, Jeff; *Going Public- The Life & Times of Elijah*; Authentic Books; 2008