

# Communication: God Speaks to Us

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] So we're going to have our reading now. This might work or it might not work, but I'm looking for a volunteer for the reading and a volunteer who wants to be Elijah. Who wants to be Elijah? There you are, you look like an Elijah. You need to find your, actually I've got a Bible here, so hopefully this is the same version as I've got. Right, so 1 Kings 19 is what we're looking at. 1 Kings chapter 19 and we're going to start reading at verse 9. So if you stand there, then I'll, we'll, microphone, we'll probably, will the microphone pick both of us up? Yeah, it should do. I've got a big mouth there. Right, okay. And the word of the Lord came to him. I'll read the Lord and you read Elijah. Oh right, okay.

Okay, that's the way it works. That's the way it works. Okay, okay. And the word of the Lord came to him. What are you doing here, Elijah? I've been very, very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars and put your prophets to death with a sword. I'm the only one left and now they're trying to kill me too. The Lord said, go 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 and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, what are you doing here, Elijah? I've 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'm the only one left and now they're 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 from the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape from 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. Thank you very much. Thank you, Jess. Yeah.

He's got a beard as well, so it's definitely the right person to be Elijah. So, sounds like you might have heard a bit about Elijah a few weeks ago, so I'm sorry if I'm repeating anything that was said before. So Elijah at this point is in a very extreme situation.

He's actually afraid for his life. He knows that the queen of Israel, Jezebel, is out to get him. And, you know, in those days, if the queen was out to get you and sent her soldiers after you, that was the end. So it was a really dangerous situation. And you'll remember that he ran for his life. He found he went into a desert, prayed that he would die, because he thought it was preferable to die than to give up on his mission that God had given him. And God strengthens him, and he has to go to Horeb, the mountain of God. This is the mountain where, traditionally, God met Moses as well. So it's the place where special things happened. And God speaks. Now, when we saw that video just now, God spoke in a way which was awesome, frightening. Definitely you couldn't ignore him.

[ 4 : 19 ] But God didn't speak in that way this time. He shows he can do it if he wants to. There's an earthquake, there's fire, there's a wind, there's rocks falling everywhere. But he doesn't. He speaks through a whisper. Back to your point about very quietly. He speaks through a whisper.

And often, I think the reason we don't hear God speaking is because we're not listening for the whisper. You have to listen for the whisper. The whisper might be something that somebody says to you.

The whisper might be something that you read in the Bible. The whisper might be something that happens that you're supposed to interpret. The problem is, we're listening to whispers. You know, I have hearing aids. You probably can't see them, but I have hearing aids. And when people are whispering, and I haven't got my hearing aids in, I can't hear them at all. There's too much noise around.

And we all have that problem. There's a lot of noise around. Really interesting when you said you hear God speaking quietly when you're praying, because when you're praying, presumably, it's quiet.

There's not so much noise around. You're shut away. You're in a place which is quiet. And often, literally, it's important to be quiet, to hear God. But it's also important to be quiet, I find in the mind as well. And this is really difficult. Our lives are busy. We're full of things that we have to do. Our minds are still turning them over all the time. You know, whether it's the, you know, the jobs you've got to do tomorrow, the, you know, what's going to happen when you get to school tomorrow, what's going to happen when you get to work tomorrow, what are the people you need to see, who you need to worry about, etc. And cutting all that out so we can hear what God has to say is really difficult. But I also ask myself another question. Why does God speak in a whisper? Why doesn't he speak in a loud voice so I can hear it easily? Why doesn't he put letters across the sky so I know exactly what's going on? And I think there's a reason for that. If God spoke in a loud voice all the time, then we'd be forced to listen. We'd be compelled. And God treats us not as people who are compelled to do things. He doesn't force us. He wants us to love him. He wants a relationship of love with us. And he wants to treat us as his children. So we have autonomy. So we have a way of thinking about things ourselves, so that we grow up, so we become mature. And so God speaks quietly and expects us to learn to listen. So that's what happened to Elijah. He learned to listen.

[ 7 : 14 ] And he got an encouraging message from God. There are still seven thousand. You think you're the only person left. You think you're the only person left, but you're not. There are actually seven thousand other people like you who haven't taken up with false gods, who haven't gone the wrong way, who are the people in Israel who I know I can trust. And there's a plan for you, or things I still want you to do. And that's what Elijah heard. So that's how God spoke to Elijah, through a whisper.

And we pray that we would listen to the whisper, too. We're going to pray together now. And a little bit of joining in again for all of you. You have to say one thing every so often. And what you have to say is, speak, Lord, your servants are listening. And if you know the Old Testament, you'll know that's the words that Samuel was told to say when he was listening for God. So speak, Lord, your servants are listening. Let's try it now. Speak, Lord, your servants are listening. So we pray.

We pray for those people in this congregation and elsewhere who are suffering crises in their lives.

Illness, physical or mental, bereavement, breakdown of relationships, lack of direction, loss of jobs, all these things that can make us very uncertain about what you're doing. We pray you would speak into that situation. We pray you would speak your peace, your love, and your guidance, because we know that you can give wisdom as to what to do in all those situations. We say together, speak, Lord.

Lord, your servants are listening. We pray for the things that are going on in the world. We think of the famine in Gaza. We think of the situation in Sudan. We think of other places in the world where there is war, where there are shortages of food, where children are finding it difficult to find the food they need. We don't know the answer to those situations. We continue to pray for wisdom for those who have power as they think about what to do. We pray for politicians who are involved in those situations, both in those countries and outside them. We pray for those involved in aid agencies and others who are helping. As we pray, we pray for ourselves and we pray for all of those people.

[ 10 : 13 ] As we say together, speak, Lord. Your servants are listening. This week, we've heard the news of the closure of Spurgeons College, which has been teaching Baptist ministers for over 150 years. Father, we pray for the staff and students of Spurgeons College as they face an uncertain future.

We pray that you will continue to raise up men and women who will serve you in the ministry, in the Baptist ministry. We pray you'll continue to raise up those who will do the work that's needed to train those ministers and to do the work that's needed to help us to understand what you're saying to us through your word.

We pray for leadership in our denomination and in the colleges that train, the other colleges that train ministers in Bristol, in Cardiff, in Manchester, and in Yorkshire, and in Scotland.

As we pray for all these people, we say together, speak, Lord, for your servants are listening. We're going to say the Lord's Prayer together. I think that may appear on the screen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

[ 11 : 50 ] Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our trespassers, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen. Amen.