CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
MARCH 23 2024

**Scripture Story:** 1 Kings 18:20–22; 19:14–18; Revelation 18:2, 4, 5.
**Commentary:** *Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 14.

# who's counting?



Photo by Alden Ho

## flashlight

"Among earth's inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. . . .

"Then let no man attempt to number Israel today, but let everyone have a heart of flesh, a heart of tender sympathy, a heart that, like the heart of Christ, reaches out for the salvation of a lost world" (*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 188, 189).

## keytext

"[Elijah] replied, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant. . . . I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.'

"The LORD said to him,' . . . I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.' "

**(1 Kings 19:14, 15, 18, NIV)**

# what do you think?

**Either/Or**

Think through the following questions and prepare to defend the side you take.

1. Since it is so difficult to know a person's heart, do you believe a majority of people will be saved, or a minority of people will be saved?
2. Do you think we will be surprised by who is saved (since man looks on the outside, but God looks on the heart), or will we not be surprised by who is saved because our lifestyle tends to convey our deepest values (by their fruit you will know them)?
3. Do you think it is easier to be faithful (obedient) to God in adversity or is it easier to be faithful to God when positive things are happening?

# did you know?

**In an informal survey given to col-** lege students, 8 out of 10 young adults reported that they grew closer to God in trials and adversity as opposed to seasons of ease and prosperity. If a similar survey were given to church members and your friends, do you think the numbers would be similar? Why or why not?

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# INTO THE STORY

**"Elijah went before the** people and said, 'How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.'

"But the people said nothing.

"Then Elijah said to them, 'I am the only one of the LORD's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets.' "

"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 gentle whisper. 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?'

"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 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 the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape 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.' "

**(1 Kings 18:21, 22; 19:9–18, NIV)**

# OUT OF THE STORY

Read the story and note what insights are new to you.

As you read through the story, what words, phrases, or themes are repeated?

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What do you think is the message God is trying to convey through this story?

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What emotions do you see displayed in Elijah's experience?

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Is there a promise to claim?

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Is there a lesson to learn?

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Is there an action to take?

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Is there a decision to make?

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What are similarities between Elijah's experience and our lives today?

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Some have suggested that the people who hear God's voice often appear peculiar to the world they live in. Who are some other biblical characters who were clearly listening to a different voice from the one the world was listening to? (Examples: Noah, Moses, Esther, David—taking on a giant, Daniel and his three friends, etc.)

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# punch lines

**"I am the good shepherd;** I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" **(John 10:14–16, NIV).**

**"Enter through the narrow gate.** For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" **(Matthew 7:13, 14, NIV).**

**"Though you have not seen him,** you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy" **(1 Peter 1:8, NIV).**

**"Help, LORD,** for no one is faithful anymore; those who are loyal have vanished from the human race" **(Psalm 12:1, NIV).**

**"Here is a call** for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus" **(Revelation 14:12, NRSV).**

# further insight

**"Patience under trials will keep us from saying and doing those things which will injure our own souls and injure those with whom we associate. Let your trials be what they will, nothing can seriously injure you if you exercise patience, if you are calm and unexcited when in trying positions."**

—Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 70

## Sabbath

**Read Matthew 7:13.**

The *What Do You Think?* exercise invites you to take a side and explain your response. Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it" (Matthew 7:13, NIV). Do you think today's reading is difficult to explain or easy to explain? Why?

List a few examples of what the easy road looks like in your everyday life as well as what the narrow way looks like.

Easy Road: _____

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Narrow Road: _____

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## Sunday

**Read Revelation 14:12.**

Read the *Into the Story* verses about Elijah's struggle and answer the questions listed in the *Out of the Story* section. How would you explain Elijah's state of mind? What are some other stories in Scripture that portray similar themes as the one in this week's lesson?

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In what area of your life might you look "peculiar" to those around you if you were to obey God fully?

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## Monday

**Read 1 Kings 19:14, 15, 18.**

The *Key Text* for this week combines Elijah's despair and God's encouragement. As you read today's passage, think of someone you know who feels alone because of their faith in God. Take time today to pray for them and perhaps write a note or convey the message to them that they are not alone. What are some other Bible passages that you can use in your note of encouragement? Use a concordance and look up the word "alone" to begin your search for those additional verses.

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Why do you think God spoke to Elijah in a gentle whisper rather than through a powerful earthquake? What does this tell us about how we seek to hear God in our own life?

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## Tuesday

**Read Psalm 12:1.**

As you read the *Flashlight* quote from *Prophets and Kings*, notice the simple reminder that when you think very few are even paying attention to God, many have given their undying allegiance to Him around the world. How might this encouragement inspire you and your church to renewed faithfulness?

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The next time you hear numbers of people baptized or added to the church, remember the many who are not counted or even known.

## Wednesday

Read through the *Punch Lines* carefully and *underline* or *highlight* the key phrases in each verse. How do these verses relate to the story of Elijah's struggle?

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As a young person in the church, which passage is the most helpful to you? If you were to choose one passage to apply to your life this week, which one would you choose? Why?

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## Thursday

**Read Matthew 10:32.**

In what area of your life do you need to make a decisive stand for God? Write out your commitment below:

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## Friday

**Read 1 Peter 1:7, 8.**

Take time this week to listen for God to speak to you. It may be that He speaks in thunderous ways, but more likely you will hear His voice in the silence. Journal below what you have "heard" Him impress on your heart this week.

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## this week's reading*

*Prophets and Kings* (or *Royalty in Ruins*), chapter 14.

**Royalty in Ruins* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.