

# Youth Teaching Resources

August 9, 2020



## What the World Needs Now...

Genesis 32:22-32—"The World Needs Engagement"

**1 Kings 19:9-18—"The World Needs Faith"**

Isaiah 56:1-8 (RCL 1, 6-8)—"The World Needs Justice"

Isaiah 51:1-8 (RCL 51:1-6)—"The World Needs to Remember"

Jeremiah 15:15-21—"The World Needs Mercy"

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# The World Needs Faith

1 Kings 19:9-18

## YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGE

Turn off your social media. Start with a section of the day and then add time away throughout the week.

## TEACHING THE LESSON

### Fellowship

Begin your session with silence. The video clips that are usually shown during this time are 3 to 5 minutes long. If your group is able, sit in silence for the length of time a video clip will usually run. When the time of silence has concluded, facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What was it like to sit in silence for that long?
- 2) Have you ever sat in silence that long?
- 3) Did the silence seem uncomfortable? Explain.
- 4) What did you hear during the silence?
- 5) How is silence “counter-culture”?
- 6) How could your faith be deepened with silence?

### Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading 1 Kings 19:9-18. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony’s commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What has happened to Elijah right before the reading for this session?
- 2) What does God ask Elijah? How does Elijah answer?
- 3) Where did Elijah find God?
- 4) Why is it important how Elijah found God? How might Elijah’s response been different if he had found God in the tempest of the storm?
- 5) How does God help Elijah?

## Information *continued*

- 6) Why does God ask Elijah the same question throughout the passage?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the “Digging Deeper” portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) How were curses used during this time?
- 2) What does “from Dan to Beersheba” mean?
- 3) What is a broom tree?
- 4) Who brought Elijah the message?
- 5) How are Elijah and Moses’ experiences similar?

You may also want your group to discuss “The Hardest Question” if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as “The Hardest Question”: What was Elijah doing there?

## Transformation

Conclude your time together by introducing the Social Media Challenge for the week:

Turn off your social media. Start with a section of the day and then add time away throughout the week.

After introducing the Social Media Challenge, facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What is your initial thought about this challenge?
- 2) Will you be reluctant to do it? Will you cherish the time away?
- 3) Why is silence important?
- 4) How can silence be scary?
- 5) How can you be more aware of God in your life when you take time to be silent?

Close with the following prayer:

*“God, grant that we may be silent before you, that we may hear you . . .  
let us be open to you, that you may enter . . .  
empty before you, that you may fill us . . .  
let us be at rest in you, that you may be at work in us . . .  
let us be still, and know that you are our God . . . (silence) . . . Amen”*

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**The text**—The Revised Common Lectionary text for the day is 1 Kings 19:1-4 (5-7), 8-15a, but there’s no need to skip any verses, so we will study 1 Kings 19:1-15, stopping at the point where Yahweh sends Elijah on a mission.

**Curses**—Jezebel’s warning was in the form of a Hebrew oath, which consisted of a curse followed by a promise. Literally, it would read: “Thus may the gods do to me, and thus add more if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like the life of one of them.” The self-imprecation of calling upon the gods to punish her if she didn’t keep the promise added serious emphasis to the threat: she meant business. A paraphrase could be “May the gods do whatever they want to me, and even more, if I do not make you as dead as one of the prophets of Baal by this time tomorrow.”

**From Dan to Beersheba**—Beersheba was so far south that it was commonly cited alongside Dan, the northernmost city, to indicate the whole of Israel. The expression “from Dan to Beersheba” can be found, for example, in Judg. 20:1; 1 Sam. 3:20; 2 Sam. 3:10, 17:11, 24:2 and 15.

Elijah must have been quite a runner. Near the end of the previous chapter, we are told that Elijah had outrun King Ahab from Mt. Carmel to the city of Jezreel, 20 miles away, even though Ahab was in a horse-drawn chariot. Now we are told that—presumably leaving on the same day—he “fled for his life” to Beersheba—another 95 miles south as the crow flies, and undoubtedly longer by road and path—a true ultra-marathon.

**Seeking solitude?**—Jerome Walsh notes that Elijah’s actions reflect “a series of abandonments” as Elijah leaves his homeland for Judah, leaves settled land for the wilderness, and finally leaves all human companionship behind to venture on to Mt. Horeb alone (*1 Kings*, in *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* [The Liturgical Press, 1996], 266).

**Broom tree?**—The tree in question, called a “broom tree” in Spanish, is a variety of juniper, more of a large shrub than an actual tree. It can tolerate dry conditions, and it continues to grow in many parts of Palestine.

Note that the shrub is described as “one tree.” Elijah’s own loneliness is emphasized by his attempt to find shade beneath a solitary shrub that probably offered little comfort.

**Touched by an angel?**—The Hebrew does not specifically identify the visitor who brought Elijah food as an angel: the word used is *malak*, which means “messenger” (for example, the prophet Malachi’s name means “My messenger”). The word could be used of human messengers, but it was also used of angelic messengers. The NRSV, based on the context, translates the word as “angel,” for the appearance of a provision-bearing messenger in the

## Digging Deeper *continued*

middle of nowhere seems to suggest divine providence, and the second mention describes him as a “messenger of Yahweh.”

In either case, the Hebrew grammar indicates a level of surprise, for the messenger’s touch apparently woke Elijah, who may not have expected to awaken at all. The NRSV has “All at once an angel touched him ...,” while NET has “All of a sudden an angelic messenger touched him ...” A closer translation would be: “And look here ... a messenger is touching him!”

**Word play**—The Hebrew contains an interesting word play. When Elijah collapsed beneath the broom tree and asked God to take his life, he began by saying “I’ve had enough!” (v. 4). When the angel provided food for Elijah the second time, he told him to get up and eat, “for the journey is more than enough for you,” (v. 7), using the same word (*rab*, which means “a great many,” or “enough”). The NRSV has “too much for you,” which gets the idiom but misses the repetition of “enough.”

The angel’s repetition of Elijah’s own word provides God’s answer: God is not through with Elijah: it’s not yet enough.

**Elijah and Moses**—The astute reader will note several parallels between Elijah’s experience and that of Moses. Both met God on Mt. Sinai/Horeb. Moses fasted alone on the mountain for 40 days, while Elijah ate nothing for 40 days during his journey to Horeb. Both Moses and Elijah complained to God that they were left alone to carry the burden of Israel’s recalcitrant people, and both were granted a theophany in which Yahweh appeared to them by “passing by.”

**Silence**—Mother Teresa of Calcutta once spoke of our need for silence this way: “We need to find God, and God cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature—trees, flowers, grass—grow in silence; see the stars, the moon, the sun, how they move in silence . . . The more we receive in silent prayer, the more we can give in our active life. We need silence to be able to touch souls. The essential thing is not what we say, but what God says to us and through us. All our words will be useless unless they come from within—words which do not give the light of Christ increase the darkness” (Quoted in James Roose-Evans, *The Inner Stage* [Cambridge, Mass: Cowley Publications, 1990], 130).

**Prayer**—Here’s a suggested prayer to use in closing the class, perhaps asking members to spend some moments in silence, as each one seeks to hear the gentle whisper of God’s voice to us:

*“God, grant that we may be silent before you, that we may hear you . . .  
let us be open to you, that you may enter . . .  
empty before you, that you may fill us . . .  
let us be at rest in you, that you may be at work in us . . .  
let us be still, and know that you are our God . . . (silence) . . . Amen”*

(Adapted from Sir Paul Reeves, as quoted in *Homiletics* 4[April-June 1992], 49.)

# The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

## What was Elijah doing there?

Elijah's long journey south had to have a greater purpose than simply escaping Jezebel's murderous threats: the frazzled prophet traveled a day's journey south of Israel's southernmost city, then 40 days more into the desolate Sinai Peninsula.

It is unlikely that Elijah had traveled all the way to Mt. Horeb (an alternate name for Mt. Sinai) unless he had a purpose in mind. Some optimistic interpreters have suggested that Elijah made a pilgrimage to the root place of God's covenant with Israel so he could renew and revitalize his commitment to Yahweh, and to service as God's prophet.

If that is the case, he didn't act like it.

Others have suggested, perhaps more accurately, that Elijah traveled to the mountain so associated with Moses in order to renounce his calling and throw in the towel. On the journey south, he asked God to put him out of his misery (19:4), which is one way of being released from his obligations. "I am no better than my ancestors" (19:4b) carries the sense of "I've been no more successful than the prophets before me" at persuading Israel to follow God faithfully.

When Elijah reached the mountain, he was full of complaints, suggesting that his efforts had been fruitless (19:10, 14). It is as if he were saying, "I give up." Jerome T. Walsh suggests that "The pilgrimage is an act of defiance, not devotion; the prophet does not seek renewal, he demands release; and the deity seems indifferent to Elijah's ultimatum" (*1 Kings*, Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry [The Liturgical Press, 1996], 281).

It's also possible that Elijah didn't have any particular agenda, that he was simply lost and searching for hope in this midst of a stormy career that had left him feeling like a failure.

In any case, God's question, twice offered, was most appropriate: "What are you doing here, Elijah? (19:9, 13). The Hebrew construction puts emphasis on the word "here," as if God expected Elijah to be somewhere else and is asking "What are you doing *here*?" Some scholars have noted that, when God sent provisions to Elijah under the broom tree, the angel said he would need it for his "way" (*derek*), perhaps to fortify Elijah on the way back to his work in Israel. This would suggest that Yahweh was frustrated by Elijah's insistence on diverting from "his way" and continuing southward to Sinai. Thus the question: "What are you doing here?"

Elijah gave every appearance of wanting to give up and resign his office, but Yahweh refused to accept the resignation, instructing him to return to his "way" (using *derek* again). As a compromise, perhaps, God instructed Elijah to anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat to serve as his successor, showing the prophet that there was light at the end of the tunnel. (For more

## The Hardest Question *continued*

on this, see Walsh, 271-278).

In our prayers, it might be worthwhile to imagine that God is asking us what we are doing here—in this place, in this job, in this stage of life—and if there are situations in which we might be avoiding the way God has in mind for us.