

- What are the messages you hear in this passage about the power of God and the presence (or voice of God)
- Are these conflicting or contradictory, or somehow complementary images of God?
- What does the passage show us about how we can hear from God? How can you develop your ability to hear from God, to experience his peace?



The Discipline of Solitude

Christian meditation involves becoming detached from the controlling and wearying influences of the world and attached to the living God through Christ. Such a 'coming away' better enables us to live for God and with God each and every day. Indeed, there are some simple practices we can all practice daily, even when in the midst of stressful situations.

You might like to begin by using one of the breathing prayers / mantras we explored in previous sessions.

For example; Maranatha (Aramaic for 'Come Lord Jesus') or the ancient 'Jesus Prayer' work as follows:

In Breath—Ma
 Out breath—ra
 In Breath—na
 Out breath—tha

The Jesus Prayer

In Breath—Lord Jesus Christ

Out breath—Son of God

In Breath—have mercy on me

Out breath— a sinner

Solitude is taking ourselves away from the busyness of our lives and silently giving God space to speak to us.

It's about being alone but not loneliness; about silence but not emptiness; about listening, not just hearing.

Think about these things:

- Do you enjoy your own company? Why? Why not?
- How often do you make space to be alone? How often do you truly do nothing?
- How much do you hear from God? Do you ever feel like he's guiding you or speaking to you? Do you think you might hear from Him more if you created more space to be with Him?

We're going to attempt an extended period of silence today, again using your preferred mantra.

Before we do that we're going to consider a passage from the Old Testament: 1 Kings 19: 1-13

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."

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, 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." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. 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. 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?"

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?"