

ELEVATE: Panorama

Session #3: Hearing God ... in silence

Session Objective: This session encourages students to create quiet spaces to hear God.

Minimum Prep:

- Read through the entire session outline.
- Have a stereo with CD/tape in it (hard rock or heavy metal would work best – (Darren suggests: “try Stryper, the kids love it!”)
- Have pens/pencils and paper available for each person.

Extended Prep: If you have some extended prep time, try following option:

- Do a re-telling of 1 Kings 18:1-19:18. You can have your group re-enact the scenes. Be as elaborate as you’d like. There are some exegetical notes available for your use in Appendix 1. Make sure the amount of time needed is appropriate to your time allotted to complete this lesson.

Session Outline

Pre-Session

1. **A quick follow-up question from last week: how did your moment of helping someone else out go? How did you feel before, during and after it happened?**

Leader’s note: Allow 2-3 people to share at your discretion.

Leader Preamble:

Ever heard the “hum”? A couple of years ago, CTV news did a story on a man in Vancouver who heard “the hum”¹. It was a “deep, rumbling, pulsating sound” he persistently heard. He tried to find its source, but couldn’t. Another person named Bernie Krause, who records sounds, said that back in 1968, in order to record 1 hour of natural undisturbed silence (e.g. no airplanes or other artificial sounds), he would have to record up to 15 hours. Today, to record that 1 hour of natural silence, he’d need to record up to 2000 hours.²

¹

http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20020923/stevenson_noise_pollution_020920/SciTech/story (June 3, 2004)

² “Noise” © 2003 Fringe

We are bombarded by noises. The Environmental Protection Agency suggests that 183 million people are regularly exposed to noise levels labelled as excessive.³ Even now, you might hear a car passing by, the hum from the fluorescent lights, or even someone tapping on the wall next to you. When you walk outside, there's a lot of noise you hear (cars driving, construction, airplanes overhead, etc.). With all this noise, can we really hear what God is really saying?

Small Group Questions:

2. How do you think God talks to people? Have you ever heard God talk to you?

Leader's note: *This is an open-ended personal question. Be prepared to share your own experience.*

Say something like: *Let's try an experiment. I'm going to crank this stereo really loud while I try to tell you a short message by whispering. I'll gradually turn it down. When you can understand what I'm saying, raise your hand.*

Leader's note: *Play the music. As you turn it down, note at what level people begin to raise their hands at. Make sure you speak quite softly when conveying your message (e.g. I've got my hand stuck in my ear).*

3. How hard was it to hear what I was saying?

Today, we're going to look at an instance where God was trying to say something to a guy named Elijah. Turn to 1 Kings 19:9-18. While you're doing that, let me bring you up to speed what's happening here. Elijah's a prophet of God. God spoke to him at various times and Elijah conveyed that message to the king of Israel. Just before this event, Elijah challenges the queen who's got Israel worshipping another god named Baal and Asherah. The challenge is to prepare two sacrifices without setting it on fire, one to the Lord and one to Baal; the real god would burn up the sacrifice himself. The god Baal "failed", but the Lord sent a fire and proved that He is the one true God. The people turned against the Baal prophets and killed them. The queen found out about this event, and vowed to kill Elijah for making her look bad and killing off her Baal prophets. Elijah, afraid for his life, takes off to Mount Sinai (the same place where God gave the commandments to Moses). And this is where we pick up the story.

Leader's note: *Instead of telling more of the statement above, you can have them do their story re-enactment here.*

4. After hearing about these events and travelling for 40 days to get to Mount Sinai, how do you think Elijah feels?
tired, weary

³ Ibid.

5. Paraphrase Elijah's response to God in v10.

Israel has all deserted You, and I'm the only one left whom they're trying to kill.

6. Bonus question: Is this true?

no (see 1 Kings 18:4, 13)

7. What does God instruct Elijah to do?

Stand on the mountain

8. Where does God appear?

In the gentle whisper.

That word "whisper" in Hebrew can also be translated as silence. Elijah covers his face to respect God's holiness because he knows God is actually present.

9. What's the difference between Elijah's response in v14 and his previous one in v10?

When Elijah recognizes that God is there, it seems his attitude has changed.

Leader's note: *The following is an interpretation on this text. You may or may not agree with it, and need to adjust this lesson accordingly.*

Elijah, since running away for fear of losing his life, comes to God in v10 seemingly focused on him and probably running on adrenaline. Because of this, God knows Elijah isn't ready to listen yet. In v13, when Elijah realizes that he's before God in his presence, though he uses the same words, seems to be ready to listen now. And God responds to his statement in v15ff.

It wasn't until Elijah was in silence that he began to acknowledge and hear what God was saying. Many times, though God speaks in different ways, God speaks through silence. It's when we're silent before God that we can begin to hear what He's saying.

We'll remain in silence for about 5 min. I'd encourage you to have a pen/pencil, a piece of paper, and find a spot in the room by yourself. Spend that time just listening to God. Try to block out any sounds you hear. Write down whatever God says to you.

10. What was being silent like for you? Why?**11. Why is finding quiet so difficult?**

12. What are some practical ways we can create quiet spaces and times in our lives? Brainstorm in your group for a few minutes, and be prepared to share with the large group.

Leader's note: Jot down some of their brainstorms on a whiteboard/flip-chart. Pray for them and dismiss.

Leader Note: Contact Rob McAlpine at compass@baptist.ca with any thoughts, questions or suggestions.

Comments and Feedback:

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.