

STARTING SLOW: LISTENING

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1 Kings 19:9-13

⁹At that place, he came to a cave and spent the night there.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' ¹⁰He answered, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.'

¹¹ He said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.' Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an

earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; ¹²and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

¹³When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. This famous scene depicts the prophet Elijah's encounter with God. There are lots of stories in the bible about God's presence revealed in wind, fire, and earthquakes—like Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3:2), or the quaking, smoking, and fire at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:18). But to Elijah, there is added another way to experience God: in the "sound of sheer silence."
 - a. What do you make of this?
 - b. Have you experienced God or found spiritual insight in stillness or silence? If so, what was it like, and what did you learn?

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- c. Do you have any regular practices of keeping silence? What are they? How did you discover and come to practice keeping silence?
3. Have you ever gone too fast or been in too much of a hurry? What happened? Did it result in a tumble, a misunderstanding, a left-behind item, or something else?
4. In what ways do you sometimes move through life with too much hurry or haste? How can you slow down to notice what matters most, to see who or what is overlooked, or savor a relationship more deeply? What gets in the way of slowing down? What helps you slow down?
5. Like anything in life, we can engage with scripture too fast—skimming along the words and rarely, if ever, experiencing God speaking through the words *to us*. An ancient spiritual practice called “sacred reading” or *Lectio Divina* is designed to slow down the heart and mind, and engage with scripture so that God might speak through it once again. Review the Lectio Divina guide below. Have you done this kind of sacred reading before? If so, what did you find challenging or inspiring? If not, in what ways do you think it might challenge or help you engage with scripture?

LECTIO DIVINA

Learn more and find individual and group guides at:

www.southelkhorncc.org/lectio



Statio (Position)

Find a place that is quiet and peaceful, without distractions. Settle into a relaxed position. You can light a candle and welcome God's presence as the Living Word moving through scripture. ***Begin with 1-2 minutes of silence.***

Lectio (Reading)

Read a passage of scripture ***out loud***. A couple of paragraphs (about a dozen verses) is usually a good length. You can use the scripture passage from the previous week's sermon or select any place in the four gospels of the New Testament. ***Read slowly.***

Meditatio (Meditation)

Take a moment and reflect on the reading. What parts of the passage catch your attention? What words, phrases, or images do you hear as though for the first time? Read the passage again, if you like, ***savoring each word.***

Oratio (Prayer)

Pray for insight into how this scripture is calling you to live. Ask God for the strength to carry out this insight in your life.

Contemplatio (Contemplation)

Now rest in the presence of God and give thanks for this reading. ***Dwell in silence for 1-2 minutes.*** Extinguish the candle.

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