

Questions God Asks Us

Chapter 5: What are you doing here?



Welcome

- What question or insight from the last gathering have you continued to think about or wonder about (if any)? Have the readings or discussion changed how you connect with God or with others in any way?

Opening Question

- When you've had a long or exhausting day, what is a simple thing that brings you comfort or renews you?
- When you are driving around, are you more likely to listen to the radio or a recording or do you prefer the silence? What do you enjoy listening to?

Responsive Reading – Psalm 139

One: O LORD, you have searched me and known me.

All: *You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.*

One: You search out my path and my lying down

All: *You are acquainted with all my ways.*

One: Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

All: *If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.*

One: If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

All: *Even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast. Amen.*

Bible Text

1 Kings 19: 1-15, 18 (NRSVUE)

¹Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ²Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." ³Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you." ⁸ He got up and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. ⁹ At 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?" ¹⁰ He 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, ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³ When 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?" ¹⁴ He 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." ¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram... ¹⁸ Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

Questions

1. What did you notice in the Bible reading or in the chapter? What spoke to you or surprised you? What resonated with you? What was a new idea?

Allow for a few minutes of silence as you gather your thoughts.

2. When have you experienced exhaustion or burnout? What was it (or is it) like? How do you feel that God might have used that time in your life – what do you think God was doing in those seasons? How might God have been present with you?

3. Prior to Elijah's journey to the cave, God provides Elijah with food and sleep. How does this story help us see the deep connection between our spirit and body? What role does our physical well-being play in our spiritual health?
4. What does this story tell us about Sabbath rest? When do you take time to stop and how have you learned to do that?
5. We're often looking for God in the wind, earthquake, and fire – but often God's ways are much more ordinary. How does God meeting Elijah in a gentle, quiet whisper go against much of our Christian cultural expectations that God tends to work or speak to us in extraordinary ways? How do you think God might speak to you? How do you know it is God speaking?
6. What would it mean for you to look at your present life from God's perspective?
7. How will you respond to God's question this week? How can you intentionally carve out space, stop, find rest, tell God about the things on your heart, and then listen for God's still, quiet whisper? What would make this possible for you?

What's Next?

- At the end of the small group or between gatherings, spend some time in silent reflection using "Answering God's Question" at the end of the chapter.
- It can be difficult to see the big picture, or what God sees, when we are running, busy, and pulled in many directions. Imagine how you could carve out time to be quiet with God in your day, in the coming week, or during a month. Give it a try. Write it in your calendar. What do you need to do to make this possible?
- What are the warning lights in your life? Are they difficulty sleeping, tiredness, uncharacteristic behavior such as anger resentment, self-pity... or something else? Make a plan for how you can slow down when you start to see a warning sign.
- In your quiet time, reflect on one or more of these questions. If you'd like, try journaling or doodling as you reflect.
 - What do you think God wants you to be doing? How are you living this out? What are the barriers and how can you overcome them?
 - Tell God how you have come to be where you are. Then be quiet and listen for what God might be saying to you.
 - Look at your life through God's eyes. Do you see your life differently in any way? Where have outside pressures or a human perspective shaped your life more than God's perspective?

Closing Prayer - *Share the date, location and reading for the next gathering.*

Loving and ever-present God, when we awaken and when we sleep, you are there; in our striving and in our stillness, you are there; in our failure and in our success, you are there; in living and in dying you are there. We thank you for your enduring love that will never leave us and will always sustain us. Amen.

One: God is with you no matter what. Go, now, in God's presence and love. Amen.

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This outline is to be used alongside Questions God Asks Us by Trevor Hudson. Some of the questions and reflection prompts questions listed here also come from Questions God Asks Us.

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