

When we came to the church, we were introduced to a whole new world of signs, miracles and wonders. Our powerless lives were immediately transformed, we were speaking in tongues, amazing changes began to take place, both in our lives and the lives of other church members. A steady build up of God's blessings served to motivate people to greater heights and expectations... then the unexpected happened... God seemed to ignore us for no known reason!

Doubt, fear, weakness and disappointment quickly follow. How then can we deal with such a situation? These moments are more common than we might expect and even occur to bible heroes.

Elijah the great prophet, is a surprising example of such a mystery. One day he takes on a whole city, revelling in the miracle working power of God.

1 Kings 18:37-40 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. *The power of God was overwhelming, confidence and faith are high.*

However, the next day is another story. He is running for his life, because of a single threat.

1 Kings 19:1-3 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. *This is the position many of us find ourselves in. This leads us to a great discovery... Not all of God's dealings are spectacular... Sometimes he is a quiet voice in the darkness. Elijah thought God would answer him in some great way, but not so.*

Elijah thinks God will speak through a dramatic display, but nothing happens. God's doesn't always reveal himself in the manner that we might expect. Elijah was confronted not just with a problem, but also with a mystery. He didn't understand how God works... in his fear, Elijah makes his way to a cave and waits for the Lord to speak to him.

1 Kings 19:9-13 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. *God said, "What are you doing here?", indicating that he was in the cave with Elijah. The promise is that God will be present with us always.*

As a child I feared every night when I had to sleep in the back porch of the house. Strange noises, isolation, fear of the unknown had me petrified, yet by day everything was fine. I played and rested with supreme confidence. Likewise, our walk in the Lord can seem to be the same... we can become afraid when we can't see what's coming next, when we think we are alone.

Similarly, pastors, houseleaders, even evangelists face a mystery each week, wondering what to say or preach. As we are about to discover... God may speak to people through seemingly unimportant parts of a talk or a witness, not necessarily through the main points.

God comforted Elijah with a clear demonstration, although it confounded Elijah's expectations.

1 Kings 19:9-13 cont... And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks 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: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: *Elijah had just faced all the major signs that you might expect God's presence to be found in, but God was not in them.* and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah. *Elijah learns that God doesn't always speak to us in loud ways; sometimes he whispers in the dark.*

*This should act as a revelation to us... many times we expect to find our blessing in the midst of a great healing, or a great witness, or even a great miracle, but this is not always the case. In simple terms, God is with us because he dwells within us... not because of the signs and miracles that we might expect to prove his presence... **Hebrews 13:5** ...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*

As Elijah discovered, God is with us because he is within us, he is with us because he loves us, he is with us despite our human fears and failings... At God's good pleasure, we will hear the voice in the dark.?