



# ELIJAH AND ELISHA

MESSENGERS IN WORD AND DEED

# Life of a Prophet

- The life of a prophet can be dangerous and spiritually burdensome.
- 1 Kings 19:1-4
- The Lord proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that He is the one true God, and the chapter ended with Elijah's slaughtering of all the prophets of Baal, and God's finally bringing the rain.

# Life of a Prophet

- This was a moment of tremendous victory for Elijah.
- Then why, just a few verses later, would he run away from Jezebel in fear for his life?
- Didn't he trust that God was more powerful than she was?
- Didn't he trust that God would protect him?

# Life of a Prophet

- It's easy to criticize Elijah.
- But we have to remember that when Elijah had announced the drought, God told Elijah to run away and hide from Ahab and Jezebel.
- God hid him for three and a half years. He had only just brought him back out of hiding to challenge the prophets of Baal.

# Life of a Prophet

- Running and hiding would have felt like a natural reaction to Elijah. In the past, hiding had been an act of obedience.
- But this time, God didn't tell him to run and hide.
- He ran out of fear, not obedience and wisdom. Elijah knew Jezebel was ruthless. She had killed all the prophets of the Lord and had been hunting Elijah for years.

# Life of a Prophet

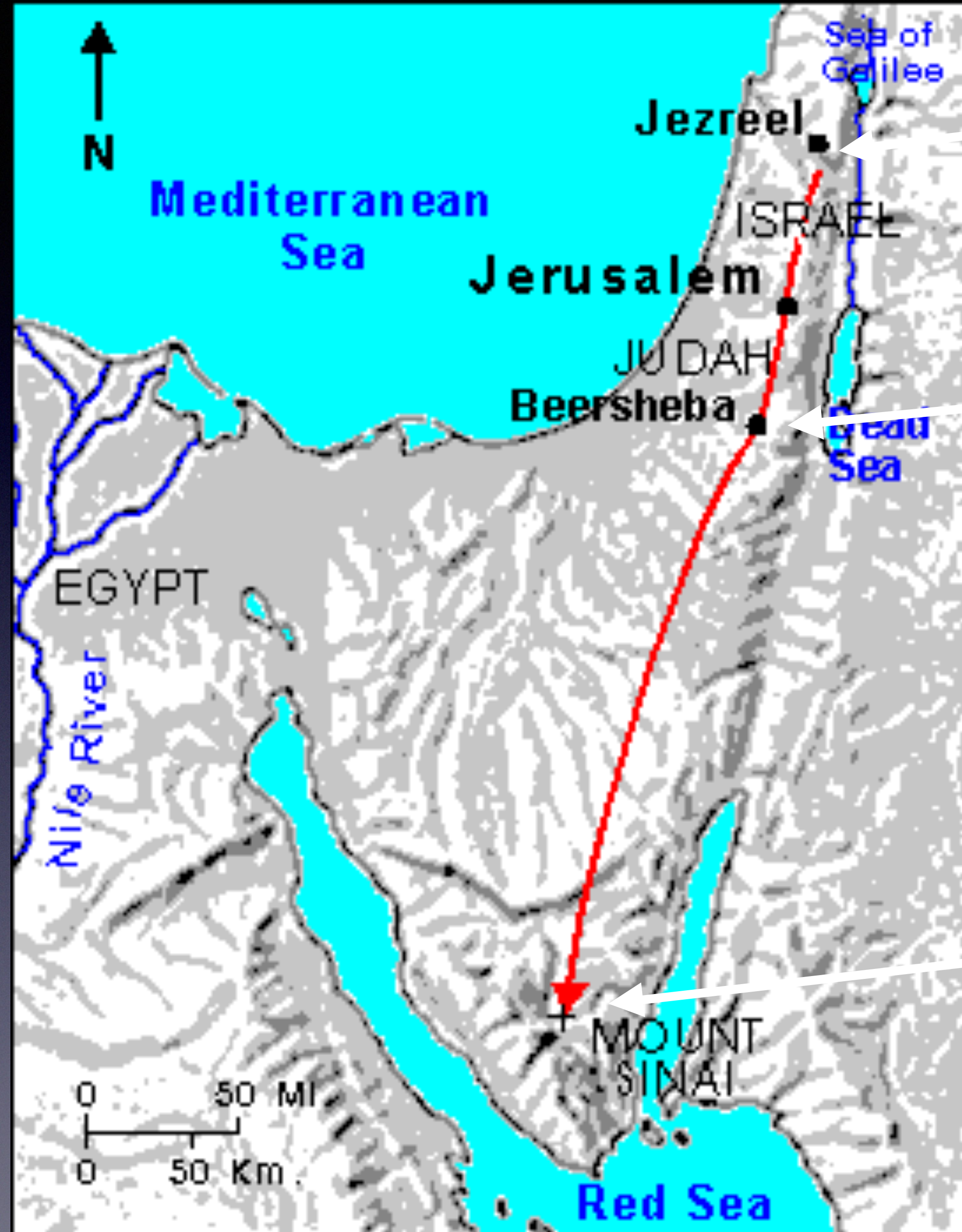
- Jezebel's threat was immediate and specific. She sent a message directly to him, declaring he would be dead within 24 hours.
- So Elijah did what anyone would do; he ran. It wasn't exactly disobedience; God didn't tell him to stay and let himself be martyred. God didn't tell him to run or to stay. His running was just a natural reaction to a threat.

# Life of a Prophet

- Elijah may not have felt as confident as we think he should have.
- But that's easy for us to say as we read the story thousands of years later from our safe vantage point.
- Yes, Mount Carmel was a huge victory for God, and the people turned their hearts back to Him.

# Life of a Prophet

- But Ahab and Jezebel didn't repent, and God didn't remove them from power.
- Jezebel was still in control, and Elijah had killed her prophets; she was out for revenge.
- Elijah ran to Beersheba, at the very southern border of Judah; beyond it is the wilderness.



Jezreel

Beersheba

Mt. Horeb

# Life of a Prophet

- Mount Carmel is at the northern end of Israel, which means Elijah ran all the way through Israel and Judah, as far away as possible. Beersheba was the last city before the wilderness, so he left his servant there.
- Then he went alone into the wilderness and sat under a “broom tree,” a small bit of shade in the hot desert, and asked God if he could just die.

# Life of a Prophet

- Elijah was spent.
- He had endured three and half years of drought and famine, during which he was hunted by a wicked and powerful king and queen.
- Then he faced an intense spiritual confrontation against 450 prophets, a huge “high” but one that ended with a threat of immediate death.

# Life of a Prophet

- He ran away through the entire land of Israel and Judah to escape. He was exhausted, physically and spiritually. He also felt a deep sense of failure – “I am no better than my fathers.”
- Mount Carmel had felt like such a big moment, a chance to turn Israel back to God, but in the end, it hadn't worked. Jezebel was still on the throne and still bent on Baal worship.

# Life of a Prophet

- Feelings of failure can happen often to prophets because their messages are often rejected by the people they have come to help.
- People who don't want to listen to their hard truths.
- Even Moses had a moment of despair like this and asked God if he could just die (Numbers 11:15).

# Life of a Prophet

- But a prophet's mission isn't about "failure" or "success," it's about God's plan.
- Good pastors and other spiritual leaders feel a responsibility for the people under their care.
- It can be easy to feel like a failure when they don't seem to respond to the message.

# Life of a Prophet

- But God tells us our job is only to plant the seed and water the seed; it is His job to make it grow (1 Corinthians 3:5–7).
- Leaders have a responsibility to teach the truth, share the Gospel, and lead with love, care and compassion.
- We all have a responsibility to share the Gospel and to speak the truth in love to those in our circles of influence. But we can't control the way people respond.

# Take Refuge in the Lord

- When we take refuge in the Lord, we find rest and rejuvenation.
- 1 Kings 19:5-8
- Elijah collapsed under the broom tree and fell asleep.
- These juniper trees grow to six to 10 feet tall, and have long green branches that look like a broom.

# Take Refuge in the Lord

- Common in the desert, they were often the only source of shade in the hot sun.
- Theologically, they represent God's provision in times of wilderness and suffering.
- In Elijah's case, the broom tree was a place of refuge, rest and rejuvenation.



# Take Refuge in the Lord

- After Elijah slept, an angel awakened him and gave him food and water.
- Then he slept again.
- Then the angel gave him food and water a second time.
- Elijah was in despair emotionally, but the angel focused on his physical needs – rest, food and water.

# Take Refuge in the Lord

- This reminds us that our bodies and our mental health are connected.
- When we're tired, we tend to lose our patience and snap more easily. We might feel foggy and not be able to focus as well. When we're hungry, we can find ourselves irritable or angry.

# Take Refuge in the Lord

- Modern slang calls it “hangry,” which may sound like a joke, but it’s a real thing. When we don’t eat, our blood sugar drops, which releases adrenaline and cortisol, the “fight or flight” hormones, which leads to dysregulation of our nervous systems.
- God knew this about the body long before any modern science. He sent His angel to bring Elijah rest and food.

# Take Refuge in the Lord

- God knows we need rest and rejuvenation. He built Sabbath into our weekly rhythm and sleep and food into our daily routine.
- Of course, there are times when we fast as a spiritual discipline, but on a regular basis, getting good sleep, eating a healthy diet, and doing regular exercise are the best preventative care for our bodies and our minds.

# Take Refuge in the Lord

- There was no lecture from the angel about Elijah's failure or his lack of faith. In fact, just the opposite.
- The angel gave him reassurance about his feelings of despair – “The journey is too great for you.”
- This wasn't just about the physical journey he was about to take to Horeb but his whole mission.



# Take Refuge in the Lord

- When Elijah said, “I am no better than my fathers,” he put the focus on himself, but his journey was not about his being righteous enough or faithful enough or good enough or strong enough. It was about God’s power through him.
- It was natural for Elijah to feel despair, but God wasn’t going to leave him there in that feeling. He gave him rest and food and supernatural strength to take on the next part of his journey.

# Take Refuge in the Lord

- The text tells us that on the strength of that little bit of food, Elijah was able to journey 40 days and nights to Horeb.
- This was supernatural sustenance, just as God had provided for Israel in the wilderness.
- Because Elijah took refuge in the Lord, he found rest and rejuvenation that carried him through to the next part of his mission.

# Take Refuge in the Lord

- Taking refuge in the Lord in times of trouble and finding strength and peace – those are a recurring theme of the Psalms (Psalm 46; 91; 141).
- Elijah didn't just run away from Jezebel.
- He ran to the Lord for refuge.
- This is what saved him.

# Take Refuge in the Lord

- At his moment of deepest despair, even when he wanted to die, he cried out to the Lord. He didn't take his own life; he put his life in God's hands.
- Elijah's story shows us it's human to experience fear, exhaustion, self-doubt, worry, inadequacy and even despair at times. But the right response is to turn to God for refuge and strength.

# Discernment

- Discernment is the key to hearing God's voice.
- 1 Kings 19:9-18
- Elijah had rested and recharged in the wilderness outside Beersheba, but he was still feeling very alone and overwhelmed when he got to Horeb.

# Discernment

- Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments, met with God, and saw His glory pass by (Exodus 19–34).
- By going from the wilderness to Horeb, Elijah retraced the steps of Moses and Israel, coming from Egypt to Sinai, where they committed to their covenant relationship with Yahweh.



# Discernment

- Just as it took Israel 40 years, it took Elijah 40 days.
- When he arrived at Horeb, God asked him, “What are you doing here?”
- Again, God didn’t chastise him for his lack of faith or his feelings of despair, self-doubt, inadequacy or loneliness.

# Discernment

- God was inviting Elijah into a relational moment with Him.
- God was giving Elijah permission to share his true feelings. God invites us to pour out our heart to Him in prayer.
- He doesn't expect us to always only have positive feelings.
- He is our loving Father who invites us to be our authentic self with Him, and promises to be our refuge.

# Discernment

- God didn't just ask Elijah what he is doing, but what he is doing "here," specifically there at Horeb, the place of meeting with God, the place of the covenant.
- The prophet's role was to remind the people of the covenant they had made, the consequences of breaking it, and call them to repent.

# Discernment

- Elijah used covenant language when he answered God – “The people have forsaken your covenant.”
- Yes, they had repented on Mount Carmel, but nothing had really changed; Jezebel was still in charge.
- Elijah still felt as if he were the only one who cared about following God.

# Discernment

- God didn't answer Elijah with a lecture, commands or instructions; He answered him with His presence.
- Because our God is a God of relationship, comfort and love.
- Just as a struggling child goes to a parent for a hug or just to sit in the parent's lap, the parent's presence is the comfort.

# Discernment

- This moment stands in deliberate contrast to when Moses saw God's presence on Sinai; we can tell by the use of the phrase "passed by" (Exodus 33–34).
- God's glory was so bright that Moses could not look upon it. When God first appeared before the people on Sinai, He appeared in thunder and lightning (Exodus 19).

# Discernment

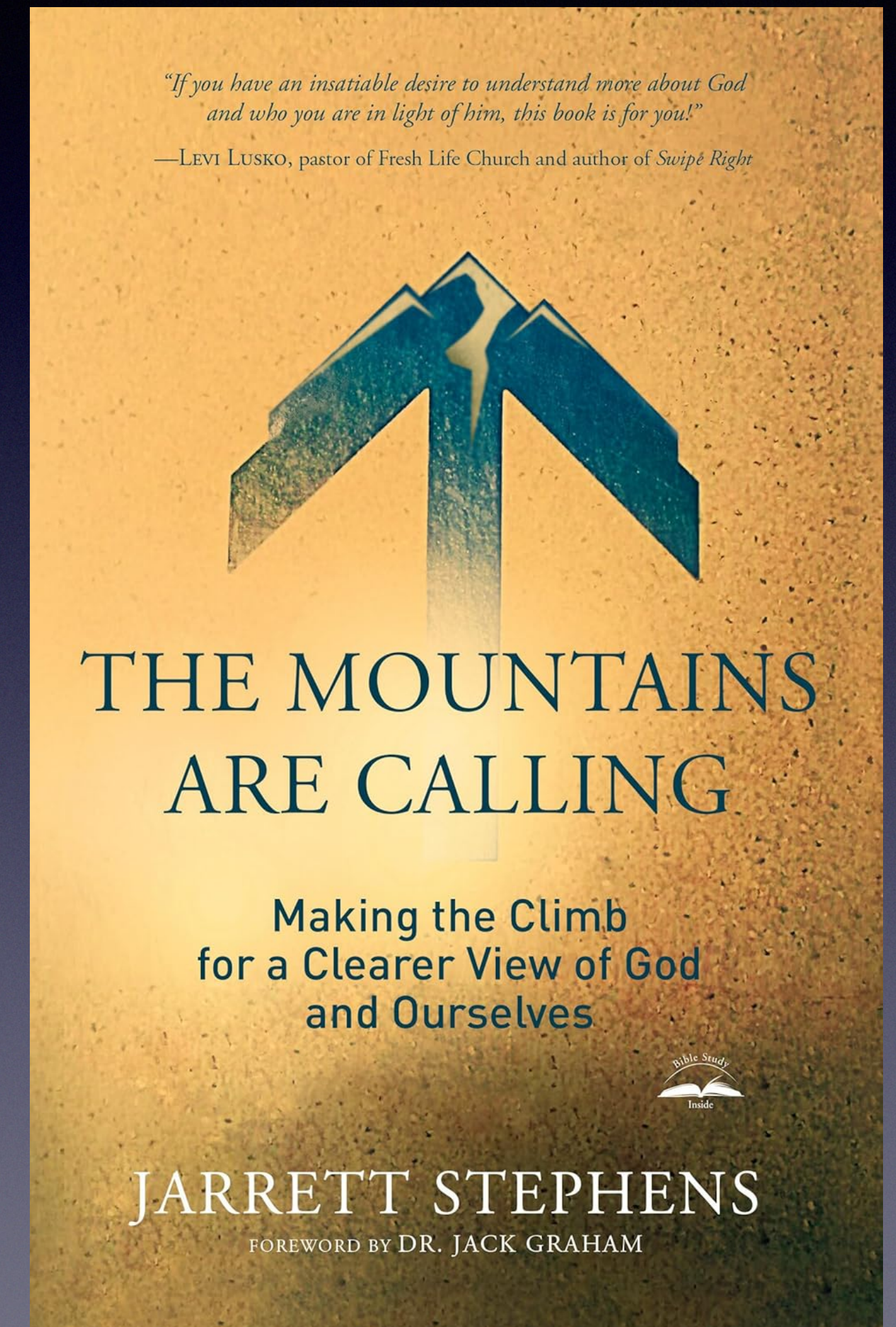
- The experience of God's presence in Exodus was loud and dramatic and powerful.
- That is likely what Elijah expected. But when God passed by Elijah, He wasn't in the wind or the earthquake or the fire.
- God's presence caused those things because of His great power, but now He was in the "still, small voice."

# Discernment

- In the context of what Elijah had just gone through, God was telling him something important about His presence and His power.
- On Mount Carmel, Elijah experienced a miraculous “mountaintop” type of event with God.
- On Carmel, God came down in fire, but on Horeb, He was not in the fire.

# Discernment

- God was telling Elijah that He not only works in the big shows of power, He also works in small and quiet ways.
- It's not only the mountaintop experiences with God that matter.
- It's the day-to-day walking with Him, listening for His voice.



# Discernment

- God was also releasing Elijah from the high expectations he had of himself as a prophet, from the pressure of feeling like the success of God's mission depended on him.
- Elijah had said "I am not ..." and "I have been ..." and "Only I am left."
- He had put all kinds of pressure on himself to be the hero of the story.

# Discernment

- But we are not the hero; God is.
- The very next thing God told Elijah to do was to anoint a new king and to anoint Elisha in his place to show him it wasn't about him and what he could do.
- God would carry on his mission with others long after Elijah was gone.

# Discernment

- Through these three men, God would avenge the deaths of His prophets and deal with the Baal worshippers.
- God also told him there were 7,000 others who had not bowed to Baal. He was not alone.
- God didn't shame Elijah for his feelings, but He corrected his misconceptions with the truth.

# Discernment

- A lot has been made of the “still, small voice” of God from this passage. Some people have used this to say if we want to hear God’s “true voice,” we have to be quiet enough to hear the whisper.
- It is true that we need to quiet the noise and distractions of our lives to hear God’s voice. But this isn’t teaching us that God only speaks in whispers.

# Discernment

- He spoke in loud, booming voices and big miracles other times. Sometimes He spoke in dreams and visions. The takeaway isn't that we need to get really quiet to hear God's voice.
- Satan can speak in a quiet whisper, too, or a loud, booming voice.
- The key to hearing God's voice is discernment.

# Resources

