



Prayer-filled life.

Discovering ways to keep the heart and mind focused on God and find rest in him.

### REVIEW

Recap on your experience of the challenge. Ask the following questions:

#### How did it go? Was it helpful?

If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question:

#### Where and how did you experience God last week?

### STILL LYFE

## SILENCE & SOLITUDE

We are never alone – but often lonely. Jesus was often alone – but never lonely. There were many times when he 'went off to a quiet place' to be with his Father. Silence and solitude are fundamental to the spiritual life. In silence and solitude we purposefully cut ourselves off from conversation, interaction and stimulation. We confront our soul and who we are before God.

### READ



## 1 Kings 19.

### 7-13 Elijah runs away from Ahab and Jezebel

<sup>7</sup>Soon the Lord's angel woke him again and said, "Get up and eat, or else you'll get too tired to travel." <sup>8</sup>So Elijah sat up and ate and drank. The food and water made him strong enough to walk forty more days. At last, he reached Mount Sinai, the mountain of God, <sup>9</sup>and he spent the night there in a cave.

## The Lord appears to Elijah

While Elijah was on Mount Sinai, the Lord asked, "Elijah,

why are you here?"

<sup>10</sup>He answered, "Lord God All-Powerful, I've always done my best to obey you. But your people have broken their solemn promise to you. They have torn down your altars and killed all your prophets, except me. And now they are even trying to kill me!"

<sup>11</sup>"Go out and stand on the mountain," the Lord replied. "I want you to see me when I pass by."

All at once, a strong wind shook the mountain and shattered the rocks. But the Lord was not in the wind. Next, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup>Then there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire.

Finally, there was a gentle breeze,

<sup>13</sup>and when Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his coat. He went out and stood at the entrance to the cave.

The Lord asked, "Elijah, why are you here?"

Contemporary English Verse - CEV

*"Our greatest temptation is toward too many words. They weaken our faith and make us lukewarm. But silence is a sacred discipline, a guard of the Holy Spirit'."*

Henri Nouwen *The Way Of The Heart*

### REFLECT

Setting the scene:

- ▶ Elijah was a prophet (a messenger from God) who ended up in the middle of a heavyweight contest between God and the false prophets of Baal. God won (of course) by raining down fire upon a drenched altar of wood and stones. God's power was displayed through dramatic and powerful manifestations.
- ▶ Queen Jezebel is mad at Elijah and seeks revenge. Despite witnessing

God's miraculous power on more than one occasion (Elijah brought back to life the son of a widow – 1 Kings 17) – he's had enough and runs 27 km towards Horeb (Mt Sinai – where Moses met with God) to escape. Alone, afraid, mentally exhausted, depressed and scared (he had already asked God to take his life) – he meets with God.

- ▶ 'Elijah, why are you here?' Then after more fireworks and miraculous displays, God comes to him in the gentle breeze (some translations say 'sheer silence'). Elijah lived an amazing life – seeing God at work

in ways few others have. Yet he needed times of solitude where God could meet him alone to give him refreshment and guidance

- ▶ What are the 'shockers' and 'blockers' for you in this passage?
- ▶ How much silence and solitude do you experience each day / each week?
- ▶ Why might silence and solitude be a good thing for us?

### RESPOND

Silence Challenge: This session leads us to explore the benefits of silence and solitude. As a group, try to create a challenge to help you experience more silence and solitude this week.

Challenge ideas: If you struggle to come up with your own challenge then why not try one of the following...

#### 01 Time-Out

We are surrounded by constant noise. Create space for silence this week by turning off the radio or your ipod on your journeys and allow the car

to become a place to find quietness and listen to God. If you walk the dog – resist the urge to listen to music. Instead observe, listen, notice sights and sounds of nature. Just find space, even for 10mins each day to be alone and quiet with God – even if that means getting up a little earlier each day or staying up later at night. Perhaps, like Elijah, God has a question he would like to ask us?

#### 02 Wilderness Time

Plan a time to get away – borrow a friends house or pack a tent and head for a campsite. Take a couple of books, a Bible and take time to read, nap, walk, rest. Try to get away to be with alone with God. Perhaps the group can help by looking after children for each other to make this quality time happen?

#### 03 Last Words

Silence does not require us to be alone or even silent. To cultivate an inner silence means that we can turn our hearts and minds towards God even with background noise or in

conversation with others. This week practice the art of listening and refrain from talking too much. Practice not having the last word – allow others the freedom to speak – just listen to them and to God.

#### GROUP PRAYER:

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you look to find times to create silence and solitude. Pray for individuals to have a strong sense of meeting with God during the challenge this week.

#### Don't Forget

1. To record your experience of the challenge so that you can accurately share it with your lyfe group when you next meet. You might like to text/tweet each other throughout the experience!
2. Consider posting your created challenge on the lyfe facebook site for others to view.