

1 Kings 19:9-18 NIV

"Prophets get lonely, too"

"And the word of the LORD came to him: 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"

(10) He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.'

"(11) The LORD said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. (12) After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. (13) When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, **"What are you doing here, Elijah?"**

(14) He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.'

"(15) The LORD said to him, 'Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. (16) Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. (17) Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. (18) Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.'"

Thesis: We cure loneliness by honoring God and doing His will.

When the Lord asked the prophet: "What are you doing here?" Elijah had just spent the night alone as a fugitive.

Elijah hid in that remote mountain cave because virtually every military and law officer in Israel hunted for him.

Queen Jezebel issued a death-order for him.

Israel’s King Ahab and Queen Jezebel were ruthless.

During their rule, hired false-witnesses testified against innocent, God-fearing people, condemning them to die.

Ahab and Jezebel subsidized Baal and Asherah worship—religions that practiced appalling immorality.

Few Hollywood actors would publicly admit to doing what worshipers of Baal practiced.

Jezebel daily fed over 800 priests, who promoted vile, repulsive behavior.

The Lord sent Elijah to speak against Ahab’s and Jezebel’s repugnant immorality and greed.

Almost singlehandedly, Elijah opposed the callous king and queen.

Elijah predicted a 3½ year drought-famine.

Once food shortages began, he lived by a brook east of the Jordan River (Cherith); ravens brought him his food.

He later went northwest to Zarephath near Sidon to help a widow and her son survive.

The son died, but Elijah miraculously raised him.

On Mt. Carmel, near modern Haifa, Elijah faced-off against all Jezebel’s well-fed prophets and he oversaw their lawful execution near Jezreel.

When not a cloud was in sight and no one else predicted rain, Elijah forecast a torrential cloudburst.

He warned Ahab to hurry home in his chariot.

Ahab drove furiously yet Elijah outran him, a distance farther than any marathon today.

Elijah excelled in many regards:

**He spoke candidly about immorality;
raised the dead;**

**traveled extraordinarily long distances;
faced odds of 850 to one;**

survived wilderness conditions.

He could call for drought and rain.

He probably could have won the Boston Marathon.

After all of his success, he failed in one area.

“King Ahab told his wife, Jezebel everything that Elijah had done and how he had put all the prophets of Baal to death. She sent a message to Elijah:

‘May the gods strike me dead if by this time tomorrow, I don’t do the same thing to you that you did to the prophets.’

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life.”¹

Queen Jezebel’s threat terrified Elijah.

That’s why Elijah spent the night alone in a mountain cave hundreds of miles from home.

Thus our text begins:

“And the word of the LORD came to him: ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’

In reply Elijah complained: “Our country’s in a mess; they have

killed all the good people. It seems as if I’m the only one trying to do right.

Now, Jezebel wants to kill me.”

From Elijah’s remote hideout, He watched a mountain shredding, rock shattering wind.

Next he felt an earthquake and saw a fire.

The Lord didn’t reveal himself in the fearsome wind, the earthquake, or the fire.

But then Elijah heard a gentle whisper:

“He wrapped his face in his scarf and went out and stood at the entrance to the cave.”²

That’s when the Lord asked Elijah again:

“What are you doing here, Elijah?”

Elijah muttered the same lame answer he gave the first time.

“Lord, I’ve been faithful, but no one else seems to care. I’m the only one left.”

Loneliness and self-pity keep repeating the same messages, don’t they?

Three truths regarding loneliness.

¹ 1 Kings 19: 1-3a TEV

² Verse 13, *Living Bible*

1. People who serve God often face lonely situations and decisions.

Though innocent, Jesus faced violent death to help folks who horribly treated him.

In addition, Jesus spent three years teaching and training twelve men to carry on his work. The night before Jesus’ execution, one of the 12 betrayed him for some extra cash and the other 11 argued about who is the greatest.

He asked the 11 to accompany him to the Mt. of Olives so he could pray for strength.

He requested them to stand watch while walked a little farther. After he prayed intensely, he returned to find them asleep.

An oft-sung communion hymn about Jesus in the garden emphasizes his loneliness.

“Tis midnight and on Olive’s brow, the star is dimmed that lately shown;

Tis midnight in the garden now, the suffering savior prays alone.

Tis midnight and from all removed the savior wrestles lone with fears. Even that

disciple whom he loved heeds not his master’s grief and tears.”

Jesus’ endured unspeakable loneliness.

Toward the end of the Apostle Paul’s life he, too, felt alone and wrote to Timothy:

"Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me."³

Many great literary works were built around the loneliness theme:

King Kong, Moby Dick,

And numerous Shakespeare plays.

Recall E.T., the brilliant little creature with a crooked neck and sad Albert Einstein eyes?

We empathize with many characters because of their loneliness.

Loneliness respects no one.

There’s no immunity to loneliness; all of us feel alone at times.

³ 2 Timothy 4:9 NIV

“The deepest need of man is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his loneliness,” wrote Erich Fromm in *The Art of Loving*

“All man’s history is an endeavor to shatter his loneliness,” observed Norman Cousins in his essay, Modern man is Obsolete.

“We’re all sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins, for life”:
Tennessee Williams in *Orpheus Descending*

All can identify with loneliness.

How do we deal with it?

2. If we think only of ourselves, we will only get lonelier.

I've done a lot of crazy, stupid things.

I did most of those foolish things, in attempts to satisfy loneliness I felt.

Once I did the crazy things, I usually felt lonelier.

I went to a riverboat once, not to gamble, but to observe—people mostly by themselves.

At any casino, you find crowds of lonely people staring into gaming machines.

Can you see greater collections of lonely people than you find in casinos and bars?

Decades ago I attended many AA meetings with an MS friend who struggled with alcohol.

At the time, many people addicted to drugs had begun attending AA meetings.

Their attendance made some of the alcoholics uneasy and resentful.

At one of those AA meetings, a young attractive woman with a drug problem said, "Regardless of whether you're involved with alcohol or drugs, you're still running."

Running to alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc. is mostly a lonely escape.

Reviewing briefly:

- Folks serving God get lonely at times.
- Second, if we serve only ourselves; we get lonelier.

Third, the cure comes when we answer God's question and completely serve him.

David's elder brothers served in the army and David's father, asked him to check on them.

His father instructed David:

Take these ten loaves of bread and ten hunks of cheese to the commanding officer.

"Find out how your brothers are getting along and bring back something to show that you saw them and that they are well,"⁴

How did David's brothers react?

Eliab, David's eldest brother heard him talking with the men (re: Goliath) and spoke angrily:

"What are you doing here? Who is taking care of those sheep of yours out there in the wilderness? You smart aleck you! You just came to watch the fighting!"⁵

David's reply, "Now what have I done?"

We hear hints of loneliness in his reply, but David kept his focus on doing God's will.

At the point of discussion in Elijah's life, he felt sorry for himself:

"He (Elijah) answered, Lord, God Almighty. I have always served you-you alone. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant

with you, torn down your altars, and killed all your prophets. I am the only one left and they are trying to kill me."

Briefly said, here's what God said to Elijah:

"Stop feeling sorry for yourself, Elijah.

First, get back to work. I need you to anoint some new kings for me.

Second, get some help. I've already selected a guy by the name of Elisha to assist you. Go find him and enlist him.

Third, Elijah, you're not alone.

I've got 7000 other persons out there in Israel who are faithful to me.

The greater responsibility one has the greater the prospect for lonesomeness.

No scene in all of literature—in all of history equals Jesus' cry on the cross,

"MY GOD, MY GOD. WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Jesus admitted his loneliness, didn't he?

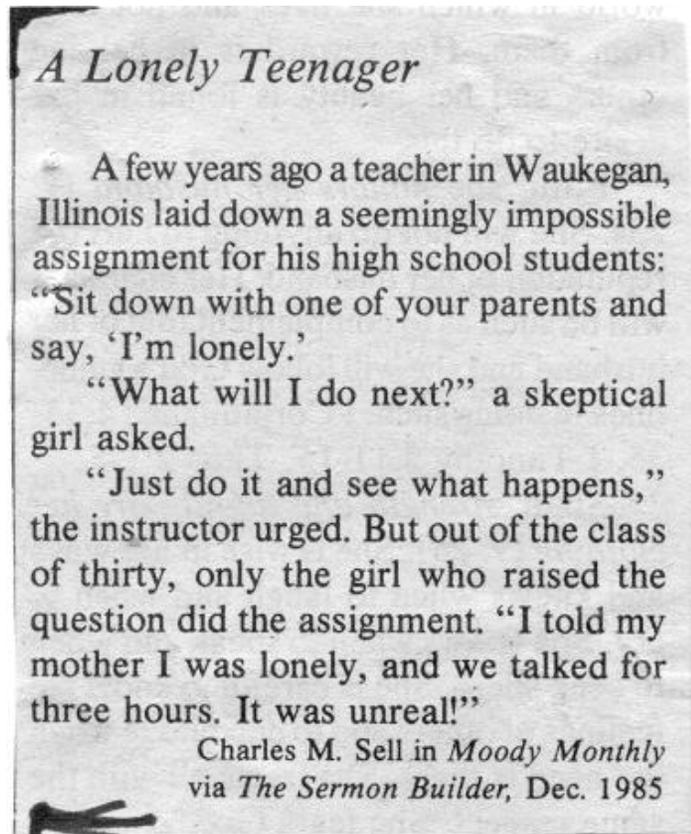
Jesus told God of his loneliness, but then he did the Father's will.

⁴ 1 Samuel 17: 18, 19 TEV

⁵ Verse 28

"The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." (John 8:29 NIV)

We ease loneliness by admitting it and making right decisions.



**Have you answered the question,
"What are you doing here?"**

If we choose not to serve God, the loneliness increases.

Can you think of a lonelier scene than appearing before God on Judgment Day and trying to excuse yourself for not obeying and serving Him now?

I challenge you read about Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion in **Luke 22, 23.**

Then read in **Galatians 5** about the life-choices he wants us to make.

Next week, the Lord willing, we shall talk about making right decisions

Follow Jesus and you'll find ease for most of your loneliness very soon.

Consider Jesus' promise:

"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14:23 NIV)

Heaven has no loneliness.

We shall be at home with our Creator and all of those who truly love Him.

Key to map of Elijah’s activities and travels

- 1) Birthplace, east of the Jordan River.
- 2) Samaria- Through Elijah, God foretold a terrible famine for this area controlled by Ahab and Jezebel.
- 3) During the famine and drought, Elijah drank from the brook, Cherith and ravens brought him food.
- 4) Mt. Carmel, where Elijah encountered Jezebel’s prophets of Baal (450) and Asherah (400).
- 5) Location of their defeat at brook Kishon.
- 6) Jezreel, where he ran from Mt. Carmel ahead of the rain he predicted after 3 ½ years of drought.
- 7) “Way of the Sea,” ancient highway through the area. Many scholars think Elijah traveled this way when he escaped to Beer-Sheba 8
- 8) Large red oval under JUDAH-Beer-Sheba
- 9) Ancient Philistine city of Ekron

Top arrow to Zarephath, home of the widow and her son for whom Elijah supplied oil during the famine.

The bottom arrow points toward the Sinai Peninsula (Mt. Horeb), traditional presumed site of the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses. A few scholars think that the real site was farther east, across the Gulf of Aqaba in ancient Midian. Considerable evidence supports this view.

10-13 areas where Elijah traveled with Elisha, his successor.

