

WHAT IF . . . ?

What If You Are Being Stalked?

1 Kings 19:1–14; Jeremiah 17:9–10



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Have you ever been stalked? If yes, most likely the experience was a nightmare you've never forgotten. If no, your chances of falling victim may be higher than you realize. Stalking is a serious problem.

What does a stalker do? The Web site of the Attorney General of Texas provides this description:

A stalker tries to control his or her victim through behavior or threats intended to intimidate and terrify. . . . Stalking can take the form of verbal threats or threats conveyed by the stalker's conduct, threatening mail, property damage, surveillance of the victim, or by following the victim.¹

Control. Intimidate. Threaten. Terrify. These are the tools of the stalker's trade. Ever-present yet rarely visible, these menacing individuals take sadistic delight in the hunt, pursuing tirelessly—like King Saul chasing David for twelve years (1 Samuel 18–26)—and plotting obsessively—like the Jewish leaders scheming in the shadows to kill Jesus (Matthew 26:3–4).

Jezebel hunted her prey, the prophet Elijah, with a treacherous vow: “May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you” (1 Kings 19:2). In this study, we'll open this case file and see Ahab listed as a stalker as well. We'll discover how Elijah responded when he was being stalked and learn how God tenderly cares for victims.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

What events sparked the fire in Jezebel's fury against Elijah? It all began with the sin of Jezebel and her husband, Ahab, king of Israel. What sins did this couple commit (1 Kings 16:29–34)?

Quotable

Stalking has been going on ever since there was a devil.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Searching the Scriptures Study Tools

The *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method includes using various study tools to dig deeper into the background of a text. A reliable commentary like John F. Walvoord's *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* is a great place to start. Read the discussion of these verses and record your findings. Another fine resource is the notes section in lumina.bible.org. Specifically, read “Constable’s Notes,” and reflect on the impact to the nation’s soul when, for the first time, Baal worship officially replaced Yahweh worship.

Read 1 Kings 17:1 to discover the discipline that God enacted in response to Ahab and Jezebel’s sin. For a detailed discussion of Baal worship, visit Bible History Online, www.bible-history.com. Click on “Amazing Facts” in the words surrounding King Tut’s mask, then “Baal Worship” in the Table of Contents on the right-hand side. Record the results of your research, and write down how God’s control of the weather proved His supremacy over Baal’s supposed domain.

The Stalking of Elijah

Instead of repenting under God’s discipline, Ahab blamed Elijah as the “troublemaker of Israel” (1 Kings 18:17). Blaming is a typical response of stalkers, who would rather rage at their victims than admit wrong. How did Ahab stalk Elijah (1 Kings 18:10)?



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For three years, as He turned up the heat on His disobedient people, God protected Elijah from Ahab. Finally, God told Elijah to announce an end to the drought, but not before a showdown between His man Elijah and 450 prophets of Baal. Read the dramatic story in 1 Kings 18:16–40. What was the people’s response and the fate of the false prophets?

The scene on Mount Carmel ended with heavenly raindrops refreshing the land and washing away the nation’s sin. When the curtain rose on the next scene, Jezebel thundered onto stage, vowing to kill Elijah: “May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you” (1 Kings 19:2). How did fearless Elijah, who stood up to hundreds of opponents on Mount Carmel, respond to the heat of Jezebel’s rage? He *wilted*.

Elijah’s Fearful Reaction

The prophet became “afraid and fled for his life” (1 Kings 19:3). The power of the stalker’s influence can be great—even the most courageous of Old Testament prophets broke under it! The issue here isn’t that Elijah acted to preserve his life. After all, in obedience to the angel’s bidding, Joseph fled to Egypt to protect baby Jesus from Herod’s death edict (Matthew 2:13). Elijah’s problem was that he let fear—instead of the Lord—call the shots. Let’s observe the fault lines that weakened Elijah’s faith, so we can learn from his example and be better prepared when attacks come our way.

Elijah Focused on the Horizontal

First, Elijah shifted his mental focus from God’s power to Jezebel’s bullying, from the vertical to the horizontal. Read 1 Kings 19:3–4 below, observing any evidence of that shift in the text. With your cursor or a marker, highlight the evidence you find and then comment on the impact of the shift. Take, for example, the word *afraid*. In the past, Elijah had urged others not to be afraid (1 Kings 17:13). This is the first time



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we see Elijah allowing fear to take control because he lost his focus on the Creator and Sustainer of all life. What impact did Elijah's letting fear take the reins have?

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died." (1 Kings 19:3–4)

Elijah Miscalculated the Situation

Compare Elijah's statements in 1 Kings 19:10 and 14 with the facts in 18:4 and 19:18. Misbeliefs and exaggerations fuel self-pity and despair. What strategy could Elijah have used to keep his mind on the truth that God is at work in ways we can't see?

Elijah Neglected His Personal Needs

Elijah had pushed himself to the brink of physical and emotional exhaustion, as evidenced by God's first-aid-style response to the prophet in 1 Kings 19:5–7. What principles about God's care of us and about self-care can you draw from this passage? Also, note God's provision of a companion in 19:19–21.




Bring It Home

Our God ministers tenderly to all victims, particularly those who have experienced the mental anguish of a stalker's intimidation. Chuck Swindoll helps us sum up our study with four reminders:

- *We're not immune.* Old Testament prophets weren't the only ones vulnerable to attack; any of us could be a victim of persecution—just as Jesus warned in His Sermon the Mount. But He also promised a special blessing and reward for those who are persecuted (Matthew 5:11–12).
- *We're not superhuman.* We need rest. We need refreshment. Beware the Elijah Complex that makes us think we don't need self-care.
- *We're not alone.* Don't think that going solo implies strength. True strength comes from admitting need and linking arms with others.
- *We're not in charge.* Submitting to God's sovereign plan gives peace instead of panic. Be wise. Be watchful. Take precautions. Install an alarm on your house, if you need to. But knowing God is in charge will keep panic at bay and help you sleep at night.

Which of these reminders hits close to home for you? How has fear impacted your life . . . your family . . . your circle of influence? Take a few minutes to reflect and write a prayer to the Lord about your fear and the action steps you'd like to take.


A FINAL PRAYER

Father, our enemy, the Adversary, prowls like a lion looking to devour me. He knows when I'm down and vulnerable. He sends enemies to terrify me. Lord, I need Your help. Help my thoughts not to run wild with fearful imaginations. Remind me of what is true: Your faithful presence and sovereign control. Come to my rescue, just as You came to Elijah's aid. I need You, Lord. I need You every hour! Amen.

Endnote

1. The Attorney General of Texas: Ken Paxton, "Information about Stalking," <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cvs/information-on-stalking> (accessed June 27, 2017).



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



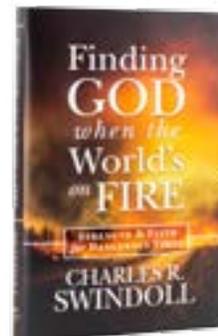
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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