

OUT OF
YOUR
CAVE



UNSTUCK

INTO
YOUR
CALL

Small Group
Discussion Guide

UNSTUCK

OUT OF YOUR CAVE
AND INTO YOUR CALL

Small Group
Discussion Guide

New Life Community Church
www.newlifechicago.org

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About this Study

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Getting Started Guide

Thanks for joining a small group and participating the Unstuck study. Our prayer is that this study would help you identify where you are stuck and lead you into a new season of your life. This discussion guide is designed to be used in a weekly small group setting and is based on the Unstuck Sunday message series.

To get started, use the companion DVD for this study or watch the videos online at www.newlifechicago.org/unstuck. Click on the videos page and choose the corresponding video for your session.

Next, have someone in the group read the opening story out loud or give everyone a few minutes to read on their own. Each session has five main components:

DISCUSS - This is an open-ended question designed to get the discussion started. Everyone is encouraged to participate. Then, take turns reading, asking, and answering the questions provided. Don't feel like you need to answer every question, but choose the ones that are best for your group.

ACTIVITY - This is an optional creative activity you can do during your group or individually during the week.


REFLECT - This is the application section to get people thinking about where they are at and where they need to go next. Invite each person to circle the number they feel most describes them.

PRAY - You are encouraged to close in prayer by having people pray for one another or one person pray for the entire group.

REMEMBER - These are weekly scripture verses to meditate on and challenge the group to memorize for next week.

If you have any questions, please contact your small group leader or email info@newlifechicago.org.

Visit www.newlifechicago.org/unstuck for additional resources.



Introduction

A Man, a Cave, and His God

Driving in Chicago takes skill and if you have been driving long enough you have encountered your share of Chicago traffic jams. It's what causes blood pressures to rise and that old tune of "Why do I live in this city!" to come out on repeat. No one enjoys being stuck. No one tolerates long lines (unless you're at Great America) and no one is happy when an airplane sits on the runway for over an hour.

Being stuck somewhere long enough can be draining and stress inducing, but being stuck spiritually causes symptoms we all want to wish away. You know the feeling. The gnawing of your soul. The purposelessness. The dissatisfaction. The apathy. The list can continue on but I think we all know that feeling. We stuff things away just to function or we decide it's just how things are. But what if there's something else?

What if that feeling you get watching your toddler day in and day out isn't just depression from lack of human contact? What if you're stuck? What if the rage that keeps crippling your spouse and kids isn't just an anger management issue? What if the abuse is more than just a long series of broken relationships? Is it speaking to something deeper?

The Prophet Elijah was a strong spiritual leader, yet he ended up stuck in a cave after a discouraging time in his life. He ran and hid after experiencing one of the greatest miracles in the Old Testament. He was depressed, discouraged, and depleted, yet his story is a powerful message of how God can free us to walk into the calling He always had in store for us. In 1 Kings chapter 19, it tells us the extraordinary story of a man, a cave, and his God. There is a prophetic word for you and I as we read Elijah's story in scripture and it can be the dose of life you are looking for. Get ready to begin a new season.



Session I

Break Out of Isolation

Watch Session I on the DVD or online.

I bet some of you have taken those random quizzes you find on the internet. You know the one that is supposed to affirm that you are a real Chicagoan but secretly you get a 60% even though you have lived in Chicago all of your life. Or the quiz that tells you what kind of Disney character you are most like. These quizzes can be fun but people take them over and over again and then press the “share” button. There is something about wanting people to know who we are.

Male or female we all desire to connect. Social media has created a unique way of doing that, but it can also be an imitation of true connection that leaves us wanting more. What if the popular quiz on Facebook was titled, “How alone do you really feel?” What percentage would you score? Would it tell you that you are most like Tom Hanks character in *Cast Away*?

Elijah probably would have ranked pretty high as he was hiding alone in a cave though he wasn’t always cowering in fear. Quite the opposite. One commentary describes him as one of the most distinctive and diversely talented individuals in the Bible. He was a prophet, preacher, political reformer, and miracle worker all rolled into one. He had an undivided passion to see Israel worship the One true God and rid the people from their idolatry. Even the meaning of his name declared his mission, “Yahweh is my God.” So what caused this incredible leader to run into isolation?

Probably a lot of the same things that drive us there—thinking God has abandoned us, discouragement with our present circumstances, fear, disappointment. All of these things can drive us into a pretty dark place, but God doesn’t want us to stay there. Let’s learn how God brought Elijah out of his cave.

DISCUSS

Loneliness is not due to the absence of people but to the lack of authentic connection with people. Do you agree? What are some obstacles in creating authentic connections with people?

Read I Kings 19:1-10

- Q Elijah traveled 100 miles to Beersheba and then stumbled for about 8 hours in a dry and rocky countryside. What caused him so desperately to seek to be alone?
- Q Have you experienced moments of isolation in your walk with God? Do you find any similarities with how Elijah was feeling or acting?
- Q God’s initial response was to ask Elijah a question, “What are you doing here Elijah?” Why do you think God chose to ask him this question?

ACTIVITY

Purpose: Learn how to break out of our isolation through intentional connections with people. Make a list of your close friends and people you interact with in your neighborhood, at work, and at church. Make a chart with 4 columns titled, “Close Friends, Neighborhood, Work, and Church.” Once you have finished writing, circle one person from each column. Try to make an intentional connection with those four people this week. It may look different for each person but it can be as simple as a hand written note, a cup of coffee, or an invitation to your home for dinner. Be ready to share next week about your experience.

- Q Read Hebrews 10:23-25. When we face a crisis we tend to hide from our greatest resource—our relationships. Do you remember a time someone encouraged you through their friendship? How did they help you persevere?

Read I Kings 19:11-18

Notice in these verses that Elijah didn’t find God in any of the awe-striking appearances. God spoke to him in a whisper and then asked him again, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” Sometimes we need to reassess who God has become to us. Sometimes our view of God has grown too small or too distant.

- Q Has your view of God ever wavered from the truth? When have you doubted His ability to rescue or provide?
- Q Read verse 18 again. How is the Lord helping Elijah here?
- Q Why is getting a “God perspective” important when we feel discouraged?

After Elijah’s encounter with God, God directed Elijah to go back. Elijah couldn’t stay in the cave; he had to make the difficult journey back through the desert. Don’t wait for someone to come to you or for your circumstance to change, make some deliberate steps to break out of the cave of isolation.

REFLECT

With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most?

1. I feel alone and stuck in life and would love to connect more with others.
2. I feel uncertain if I’m living in isolation but I can relate to Elijah’s experience.
3. I feel connected but I can take intentional steps to further build authentic relationships.

PRAY

If you have succumbed to the lie that you don’t matter that much to God or that He has abandoned you, pray with another group member for a fresh encounter with God that exposes you to His presence and His voice anew.

REMEMBER

Deuteronomy 31:6

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Ephesians 6:10

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Session 2

Rethink Your Thinking

Watch Session 2 on the DVD or online.

I was a pastor in my twenties and in over my head. I knew I needed help, so I called Jake, my former college roommate, and asked him to move to Chicago and join me. I knew that he had a calling on his life and a sincere passion for God. Jake was very gifted and eager to serve, but he struggled with the voices from his past. He grew up in a broken household with parents who fought through multiple divorces. The scars of dysfunction manifested in Jake in a hypersensitive conscience and a sense of inadequacy that bombarded him with guilt and accusations any time he stepped into new opportunities.

Jake started out with enthusiasm in his new ministry role. But soon he began to experience unhealthy guilt and chronic feelings of condemnation. Jake and I had long talks about his struggle but nothing seemed to help. After several months the pressure was more than he could bear. Unannounced, he packed up his grey Ford Escort and tried to escape Chicago. On his way out of the city he was struck with a sudden pain in his side that forced him to pull his car to the side of the road. He sensed God was trying to get his attention, but was determined to run anyway. He made his way onto the expressway and drove about forty-five minutes outside of Chicago when abruptly his car broke down. He managed to turn the car around and barely make it back to the city. The mechanic that looked at his engine commented, “It must have been God that kept this car running, because this engine is shot.” Jake returned to Chicago discouraged and disappointed.

Often what drives us to the paralyzing cave of isolation, frustration, and fear are the voices in our head that speak to us about our identity and destiny. The message becomes a script that we repeat to ourselves like a bad recording, over and over, until it becomes our new reality.

Jake's story is not so different from what Elijah experienced. Elijah tried to define his future by his present circumstances. When fear set in he ran. The Bible gives hope for those of us who are bombarded by fear. Let's discover how God broke through Elijah's fear.

DISCUSS

Have you ever thought, "If only I was thinner... If only I made more money... If only I had a better family support... If only I wasn't always sick?" If you can, share with the group how you think your situation would change if your circumstances were different?

Read 1 Kings 19:3-11

- Q Have you ever faced a situation or circumstance that triggered feelings of fear, doubt, or anger? Maybe your spouse or friend said something that caused you to recall a past hurt or fear. Perhaps you or someone you know have been fired from a job, been diagnosed with cancer, or lost a loved one. We all have those points in our lives that cause us to spiral into fear or anger. What triggered Elijah to run? Do you know of any triggers in your life that cause you to stop walking in faith?
- Q Verse 4 gives a dark picture of how Elijah was processing the events that he had just gone through. He had a lot of time to rehash some of the details. What or whom do you think Elijah was focusing on?
- Q As we read verse 10 we can quickly see that Elijah continued to have a pretty bleak vision for his future. This great prophet was plagued with cloudy vision. Fear can do that to us; it can blind us from the Truth. Are there people in your life that have faced some pretty bleak circumstances, but instead of caving into the fear they were able to see things supernaturally? What did you notice was different in their lives?

What we think has a powerful effect on what we do. We shouldn't allow fear-based messages to blare their broadcast in our minds. We can take steps to break the recording.

ACTIVITY

Purpose: To understand how our fear-based thinking can prevent us from walking into our calling. Every person that is stuck must answer the question that Elijah was confronted with in verse 9, "What are you doing

here?" Grab a piece of paper and holding it width wise, draw a straight line across it. See this line as your timeline and start to plot out your story. Include memorable events both good and bad. As you look at your personal timeline begin to ask yourself: What event has caused faulty thinking in my life (i.e. fear-based or victim-based thinking)? If you know, write down some of the distorted thoughts.

It takes time and discipline but you can restart your thinking by filling your life with grace-filled truth. Below are some Scriptures that you can write down on an index card and place on your dashboard or bathroom mirror. Feel free to jot down your own.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

2 Timothy 1:7

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Hebrews 4:16

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

1 John 5:18

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Isaiah 26:3-4, Psalm 26:2-3

- Q When have you felt discouraged by your inability to silence negative or fearful thoughts? According to these verses, what is God's solution?
- Q What does God's Word have the power to do?
- Q God asked Elijah a question not because he needed more information. God already had a plan in place. He wanted Elijah to search his heart. At times we can focus on our circumstances and lose sight of God's agenda. Are there areas in your life that you need to lean on God more?

REFLECT

With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1. I have a hard time keeping my circumstances from dictating my thinking.
2. I believe God can change my perspective but I have a hard time practicing the discipline of meditating on God's Word.
3. I have seen the power of meditating on the Word of God and its ability to renew my thoughts.

PRAY

God promises to give you strength and grace. Depend on him, and he will redeem you from your faulty thinking. Ask him for strength each time you're bombarded with distorted thoughts and allow the voice of God to be louder in your life.

REMEMBER

Hebrews 3:1

Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

If our thoughts are not being shaped by the truth, then they will soon be shaped by whatever message rings loudest.

#getunstuck

Session 3

Turn Up the God Volume

Watch Session 3 on the DVD or online.

“Can you hear me now?” Do you remember the Verizon commercials? If you have seen one of their commercials it showcases how wonderful Verizon's reception is. No matter where this guy went he had perfect reception. In our spiritual journey that's not always the case. We serve a God who desires to speak to us, but there are times we drown out the voice of God. We somehow find ourselves frustrated at God's distance or angry with His apparent inability to connect, but the truth is we get stuck because our hearing becomes impaired. It can be the ever-increasing demands in our workplace and home or the constant noise we fill our life with out of fear of what we will find in the still silence. Either way, our inability to hear God is not because we serve a mute God. The first question God asked Elijah was, “What are you doing here?” but the first action God asked Elijah to take was to “go out.” We cannot hear God's voice clearly or experience His presence personally until we step out of the insulation of our cave.

DISCUSS

Think of a situation that was either extremely loud or extremely quiet—a rock concert, a thunderstorm, the middle of a desert, or the bottom of a cave. Where were you and how would you describe that sound?

Read 1 Kings 19:10-13, James 4:8, Psalm 46:10

Can you imagine what that must have been like for Elijah? He was in a cave of despair and all of a sudden the mountains tore apart by a mighty wind and rocks were shattering all around him. Then the ground started shaking uncontrollably and he was probably bracing himself for balance. As if that wasn't enough, fire came with a mighty force.

Why the wind, earthquake, and fire? Why the divine theatrics? This dramatic display of power and supernatural fireworks was aimed at moving Elijah from the belly of the cave out to the entrance. This was God's way of repositioning Elijah for an encounter with His presence.

Sometimes in the darkness of our cave we need to be awakened by the dramatic sound of God before we can position ourselves for His presence. Scripture highlights the fact that God's presence was not in the earthquake, whirlwind, or fire. Often it is the extraordinary interruptions and dramatic wake-up calls that make us listen attentively.

- Q What did Elijah pull over his face? Does this remind you of another time in Scripture where a person or people hid when they heard His voice? How do you approach God when he speaks to you? Is it in reverence, fear, joy, or with confidence?
- Q Maybe it wasn't an earthquake or a fire like Elijah experienced, maybe it was, but have you experienced God repositioning you to hear him better? What was that experience like?
- Q When was the last time you heard God speak to you? Are there things blocking your spiritual hearing?

After the natural phenomena, the Lord was present to Elijah in a gentle whisper. In the midst of Elijah's pain God spoke to him softly. God wants to speak to you in your pain. He wants you to hear the hope he has for you. His healing word can begin to restore you into your calling.

ACTIVITY

Purpose: To give us an idea of how hard it can be to listen to a voice when there is chaos around us. Designate someone in the group to be a "listener." This person will have to be blindfolded and listen to directions from the group leader to get from one side of the room to the other. The rest of the group will try to distract the "listener" from hearing the directions by talking very loudly about their day or singing "Happy Birthday" in a very loud tone. If the group isn't comfortable or able to move, you can select a listener from the group and have the rest of the group discuss very loudly the events of their day while the group leader whispers an encouraging word to the listener.

Listening to one voice in the midst of a lot of white noise can be extremely difficult. Chaos and confusion will overwhelm us unless we learn how to silence the voices and hear only His whisper.

Read Hebrews 10:19-23, Ephesians 3:12, Ephesians 4:20-27

Paul reminds us in Ephesians 3 that in Christ we can approach God with freedom and confidence, but Paul also reminds us that we can give the devil a foothold in our lives that can breed anger and fear. Anger and fear are irrational emotional cousins that override our logical thinking and, if given the chance, will sabotage our faith as well.

- Q What comfort does Hebrews 10:19-23 give you?
- Q According to Ephesians 4:20-27, what are some actions we need to take since we are walking with Christ?
- Q What are some examples of fear-based or anger-filled messages that can hinder us from hearing God?

We cannot manufacture an encounter with God. We can, however, position ourselves for one. As long as we stay in the depths of the cave and listen to our fear or anger-filled mental recording, God's presence will simply pass us by. We need to turn down the white noise and turn up the God volume.

REFLECT

With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1. I have a hard time hearing the voice of God and I cannot pinpoint the areas in my life that are hindering his voice.
2. I have heard the voice of God but I have allowed fear and anger to keep me from enjoying it now.
3. I enjoy hearing the voice of God and treasure the daily conversation that we have.

PRAY

Pray for one another as you consider what may be blocking your spiritual ears from hearing God.

REMEMBER

Hebrews 4:15-16

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Isaiah 55:6-7

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Session 4

Re-envision Your Life Story

Watch Session 4 on the DVD or online.

We have all probably seen an elephant in a zoo or in pictures—they're huge! Its astonishing how someone can chain such an enormous animal with such a tiny shackle. Obviously an elephant is strong enough to break free, but an elephant stays in his chains because it becomes all he knows. As a baby elephant he wasn't strong enough to pry loose so as he grew and kept trying without success he finally believed that it was impossible and stopped trying. So here a gigantic animal that in seconds can be set free but stays put because he became convinced when he was little that his chains were stronger. You may have heard this illustration in a message at some point, but it still rings true, especially for us.

Live in the inner city long enough and functioning in survival mode becomes normal. What others would consider life-threatening is just another day. Stay in an abusive relationship for any amount of time and you start doubting your own worth. Encounter sexual abuse through childhood and you start seeing yourself as tainted. We begin to see our circumstances and abuse as unbreakable chains we are bound to live with. No matter how many times we try, we become convinced that it's impossible to walk free.

But Christ came to give liberty to the captives and release those who are oppressed. We serve a God who is bigger than the violence in our city. We serve a God who is able to bring healing from years of abuse. We serve a God who is fiercely in pursuit of making you whole, just like Him. You might not be able to see the full storyline and you might have a list of questions, but if we let go and allow God to re-envision our story we will be amazed at seeing His perspective. This is what God did for Elijah and He wants to do it for you.

Many of us have so much white noise in our life that we struggle to hear the clear voice of God.

#getunstuck

Read I Kings 19:15-18 & Genesis 15:1-6

Elijah and Abraham had similar stories. They were both men of faith, but were struggling to see themselves the way God did.

- Q What did God do to refresh Elijah's perspective? What did he do to refresh Abraham's perspective?
- Q Abraham and Elijah both convinced themselves that they were doomed, but they both had to make a difficult choice to take what God was saying as truth. Can you empathize with Abraham and Elijah's struggle? Is there something in your life you are having a hard time seeing from God's standpoint?
- Q What can we learn about God from the way He responded to both Elijah and Abraham?

ACTIVITY

Purpose: To give us a vision of the storyboard we are now seeing and begin to imagine what God might have for us in our future. Provide everyone with an unlined piece of paper and a stack of newspapers. Begin to cut out headlines, words or pictures that describe the storyboard of your life from your perspective. Share your collage with the group if you feel comfortable.

We all are living with a mental picture that can distort our God-given destiny. Now spend some time pasting headlines, words or pictures of the picture God has declared over you as we read in Scripture.

Elijah had drawn a mental picture of himself and his life story. In this storyboard every person in Israel had turned their backs on God and he was the only solitary faithful believer standing strong. He was convinced he stood with the world against him.

Dealing with distorted thinking is not simply a matter of rebooting our thinking, as we saw in the previous chapter. It's also a matter of re-envisioning our personal storyboard from God's perspective. That means we have to erase and repaint as God directs us. Notice how God masterfully begins to paint a whole new image in contrast to the image Elijah presented.

Re-read I Kings 19:15-18

In His response to Elijah, God addresses each distorted image Elijah has presented and carefully redrafts his storyboard.

Elijah: "I have done my part, but nothing is working out."

God: "Go back the way you came. You can face your problems."

Elijah: "I have reached out to people. They are all against me."

God: "There are 7,000 who have not bowed their knee."

Elijah: "I am all alone. No one is on my side."

God: "I have appointed you partners and a successor."

Elijah: "I have a dark future. Everyone is out to destroy me."

God: "You will succeed at overcoming all your enemies."

Read Isaiah 6:1-8, Exodus 33:12-23, Acts 9:1-9

We live in a God-shrinking culture where we reduce God to nothing more than a lucky charm. We pursue God only when we are in dire need or when it's convenient for us, but as we read in the Scriptures above, our life and call come into perspective when we catch a clear vision of God and His mission. Exposure to God's presence will stir within us a new awareness of who we are and what we need to do.

Francis Chan writes in his book *Crazy Love*, "The core problem isn't the fact that we're lukewarm, halfhearted, or stagnant Christians. The crux of it all is why we are this way, and it is because we have an inaccurate view of God. We see Him as a benevolent Being who is satisfied when people manage to fit Him into their lives in some small way. We forget that God never had an identity crisis. He knows that He's great and deserves to be the center of our lives."

- Q As Isaiah saw God more clearly what did he become aware of?
- Q What did Moses desire? What did Moses know that gave him confidence to lead?
- Q What are the questions that Paul (Saul) asked the Lord? Have you met Jesus Christ? If you have how has knowing Christ changed the vision for your life?
- Q What are the similarities between these three experiences?

REFLECT

With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1. I can picture the storyboard that God has written for me and I'm excited about the future.
2. I have no idea what God has in store for me, but I'm willing to let go and allow the Lord to paint a new picture for my life.
3. I have a hard time erasing the misleading images of my future built on the lies I have believed.

PRAY

Pray for one another as you consider visually the images that are defining your life. Take a moment and allow the truth of God's word to paint a new image for your life.

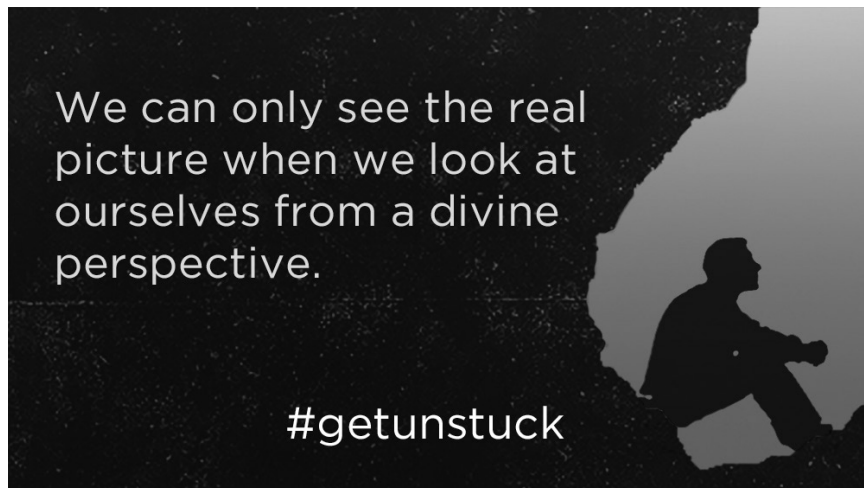
REMEMBER

2 Corinthians 4:18

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Romans 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.



Session 5

Walking Towards Your Unfinished Business

Watch Session 5 on the DVD or online.

Issue avoidance has become a common theme for us. If it is difficult, painful, or demanding, we avoid it as long as we can. Countless couples avoid dealing with the root issues of their marriage problems and end up in divorce court. Governments avoid dealing with real issues of debt until it becomes an economic crisis. Millions of Americans avoid dealing with the issues that lead to addictions until they need to go into rehab.

Elijah was tired of dealing with the stress and tension of his calling and hit a breaking point where he just ran. He reached a point of exhaustion and told himself, "All this work and sacrifice has not made a difference, and I will end up one more dead prophet." He became gripped with the fear of failure. Instead of facing his issues he ran and hid. He sat down under a broom tree and prayed, "I have had enough, Lord... Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (1 Kings 19:4).

A fresh encounter with God spun Elijah around. His back had been toward his problem but his encounter with the presence of God sent him head first toward his unresolved issue.

Read 1 Kings 19:15-18, Genesis 16:1-16

Do you remember what happened in the Desert of Damascus? This is the place where Elijah, on his way to the cave, spiraled into his suicidal, pity-induced depression. The Desert of Damascus represented the worst point of Elijah's life. It was his lowest moment and most desperate hour. Beyond the desert was Jezebel, the woman who had triggered his run to the cave in the first place. God sent Elijah back to the very same difficult circumstances from which he had run.

- Q What is your “Desert of Damascus?” What fears do you sense God calling you to face once again? Are you avoiding the painful journey back to deal with some past issues?
- Q The plan God had set for Elijah was a political coup that would finally destroy Jezebel’s reign. This plan would plant him face to face with his worst nightmare. Who is the “Jezebel” in your life? Are there family members or friends you are avoiding?
- Q Hagar found herself in a similar situation as Elijah. What are some of the similarities? In Hagar’s encounter, who does God reveal Himself to be? How does this give you the courage to deal with the unfinished business in your life?

ACTIVITY

Purpose: To help us identify the areas in our life we are avoiding to confront. As a group read this prayer found in Psalm 139:23-24 out loud: *Search me, God, and know my heart: test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Next take a sheet of paper and begin to write down the areas in your life you sense the Lord revealing are issues you need to confront. Maybe it’s an area of compromise, a lack of discipline in a specific area or a root of sin that has taken a strong hold of you. Being sensitive to the Spirit begin to evaluate your spiritual walk with God and identify any resistance or delayed obedience. When the group is finished assign a “sin bin” and crumble that sheet of paper. Begin to worship and allow God access to restore those areas in your life.

Read Exodus 4:18-31

Life consists of a continual series of transitions from one season to the next. Every new season is marked by borders that we must cross. Its at those transition times that unfinished issues surface the most. This is what happened to Moses in this passage. Moses had been reawakened by the call at the burning bush. He had been reluctant, insecure, and unconvinced, but with some divine prodding, Moses said yes to God. After a forty-year detour Moses was finally back on mission to fulfill his life’s call and liberate the people of Israel from four hundred years of slavery. Moses was on the brink of walking into his calling when he was confronted with some unfinished business.

- Q What issue of disobedience did God have to confront in Moses? Who ended up suffering from Moses’s avoidance?

- Q Delayed obedience is another form of disobedience. Are there steps of obedience you are resisting? Is it confessing a past sin that keeps you feeling stuck? Is it releasing forgiveness?
- Q Are you stuck at the border of a new season like Moses was? What are you afraid of? What is stopping you from stepping forward?

Anyone who gets serious about welcoming the presence of God will have a renewed passion for obedience and a clean slate. When we postpone obedience because it seems uncomfortable, we are only postponing the pain and increasing the problem. Eventually all of our unfinished business will surface. Maybe today is the day you can decide to deal with what’s keeping you stuck.

REFLECT

With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1. I have found freedom in pursuing holiness and I am ready for the new season God is calling me towards.
2. I have delayed obedience and avoided the areas in my life that God wants to confront but I’m choosing today to take some difficult steps of obedience.
3. I am reluctant to “go back” and deal with my past issues but I realize they are hindering me from moving forward.

PRAY

Pray that the Lord will show you if there are any issues or people you are avoiding and pray that God will give you strength to boldly deal with them as you move to your new season.

REMEMBER

Hebrews 12:1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Philippians 3:13-14

Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.



Session 6

Rediscover Your Boundaries

Watch Session 6 on the DVD or online.

Every Christian is called to a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Once we have come to Christ, then we are all called to live on mission with Him. There are not some who are called and some who are not. We are all called.

Ephesians 2:8-10: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

If you are walking in a relationship with God you are called. That means the mom who cringes as her kids plea to watch Frozen one more time is called. The janitor in the steel factory is called. The high school student fretting over what to tweet next is called. The grandfather singing his oldies is called. No matter what season you are in, if you have breath and have proclaimed Jesus as Lord then you are called to make an impact on this earth for Christ’s glory. People called into full-time ministry are not the only ones called to advance God’s Kingdom. Just in case it hasn’t been too clear... **YOU ARE CALLED.**

However we are not called to self-reliance. We are a body of believers and we each have been gifted to function in a specific role within the Church, not to do everything on our own.

Elijah was drained in part because he had failed to raise a team. He had taken on too much responsibility and he had not delegated. He had a solo, maverick, one-man-against-the-world syndrome. God had indeed called him to lead a spiritual counter resistance. He had chosen him to stand firm in the face of political, religious, and military opposition. But He had not chosen him to do it alone. God did not expect Elijah to take everything on himself.

DISCUSS

What is currently on your plate of responsibility? If you were to think carefully through each task which one energizes you with faith-filled excitement? Which one drains you?

Read 1 Kings 19:15-16, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Like many of us, Elijah had assumed responsibilities that God had never called him to handle. It took three leaders to successfully manage the job Elijah was trying to accomplish by himself. Elijah exited the cave with clear instructions to delegate responsibility for the political leadership of Syria (Aram) to Hazael and the political leadership of Israel to Nimshi. He was also told to delegate authority to a young leader named Elisha, who would succeed him in the spiritual leadership of Israel.

- Q Elijah had forgotten that he had fellow co-laborers to lean on, God had to remind him of Hazael and Nimshi. Are you feeling overwhelmed? Who are the people in your life you can share your load with?
- Q Elijah ended up in the cave of self-pity and isolation in part because he had taken on more than God had given him. Is taking on more than God has called you to a struggle for you?
- Q Knowing what we are not called to do is just as important as knowing what we are called to do. Regardless if you have a clear calling to a specific area of ministry, do you know what you are NOT called to do?
- Q How has God specifically wired or gifted you within the Body? How can knowing this keep you from burning out currently or in the future?

ACTIVITY

Purpose: To learn the areas that are overloading you and discover the boundaries of your call. Take a blank sheet of paper and list your various responsibilities. Next put a percentage next to each responsibility that describes the amount of energy it is taking from you. Translate those percentages into a simple pie chart so you can visually see the results. Then answer the two questions below.

1. Are the responsibilities that are taking most of your energy areas that you feel God has called you to? They may be challenging, but do they give you a sense of purpose?

2. From the responsibilities you have listed is there one you can delegate or let go of?

Read 2 Chronicles 14:6-13, 2 Chronicles 16:7-12

Gaining clarity about our call requires understanding what we are called to do and not called to do. But it also involves understanding how we are to fulfill our call. The image of a self-reliant, independent maverick who can pull himself up by his own bootstraps is applauded in our culture. From God's perspective, however, it is the weak and the broken who have learned to rely on God who are the real heroes. Self-reliance is a subtle cancer of the soul that slowly replaces our dependence on God with our dependence on our own ability and resources. Unlike other temptations, the more experience we gain and the more successful we become, the more lethal the pull of self-reliance.

- Q What do you notice in the life of King Asa when he first began his reign as king? What was his relationship with God like at the end of his life?
- Q How did King Asa respond to Hanani's rebuke? How do you respond when people correct you?
- Q Would you describe your heart as "completely yielded" to Christ? What areas in your life can you rely more fully on Christ?

REFLECT

With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1. I have a hard time delegating authority or surrendering control. I think it's more work to ask others for help.
2. I have been burnt out in the past and have come to realize how important it is to only do what I was created to do.
3. I have no idea what I am called to do or not to do, but I know I can't do this walk of faith alone.

PRAY

Releasing areas that God never called you to manage applies to everyone on a personal level. Many people try to control situations and even other people that they have no control over. Pray with one another as you surrender control over people or responsibilities that God has never asked you to carry and allow God to be Lord.

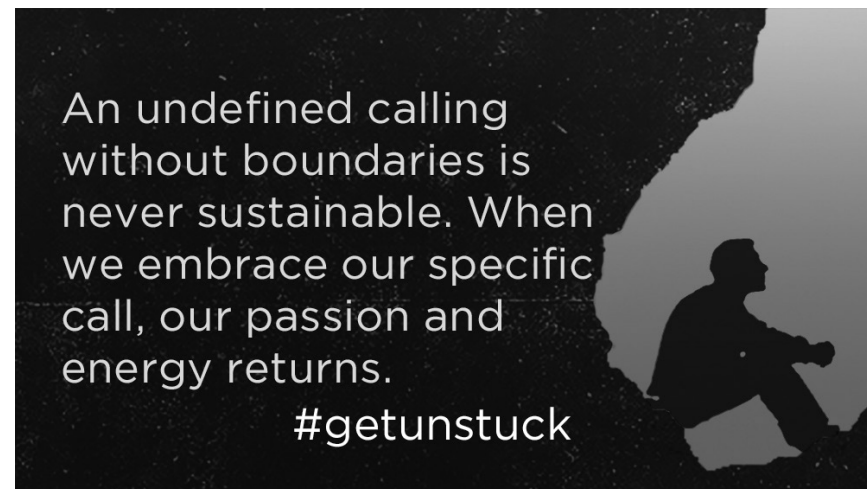
REMEMBER

Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 26:3-4

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.



An undefined calling without boundaries is never sustainable. When we embrace our specific call, our passion and energy returns.

#getunstuck



Session 7

Take the First Step

Watch Session 7 on the DVD or online.

In order to go skydiving, you have to sit and watch a tutorial on how to work a parachute and then sign pages and pages of waivers with the words, “In case of death...”. In skydiving you sit on a plane and for a brief moment you get to enjoy the view, but its short lived as you are suddenly rushed to the open door of a shaky plane. What happens next is just unexplainable—you are asked to let go and jump. They don’t let you think for a minute or give you words of encouragement. There is no time for a selfie. Fear sets in and it strangles your courage. Most people, given the option, would probably choose to turn back as they see the world 10,000 feet above the ground.

This is similar to what Elijah was facing. He had every excuse to stay in his cave, he was facing many uncertainties, the timing could have been better and more frightening is that once he stepped forward there was the challenge of facing all he had run from. What makes Elijah a great man of God is that he stepped forward in the right direction and went.

The first step out never comes without challenges. Crossing borders, stepping into new seasons, walking through open doors will always stretch our faith and challenge our comfort. The moment you step out of the cave into a new environment the adventure begins.

DISCUSS

What wild adventure would you want to go on? Is it an excursion trip, an extreme sport experience?

Read 1 Kings 19:15-21, Genesis 12:1-5, Matthew 28:16-20

When God calls Elijah out of his cave in 1 Kings 19:15, he says to him, “Go back the way you came.” He tells Elijah He has prepared colleagues,

a confidant, and a community for the prophet. Verse 19 records Elijah’s response: “So Elijah went from there.”

It’s a small phrase but it carries tremendous implications. This marks the point of action. The powerful encounter with the wind, earthquake, and fire plus the profound whisper of God was all leading up to this moment. Not only did Elijah have to choose to leave the cave behind, but he also had to choose to leave the cave in the right direction.

- Q Elijah had to “go” into the right direction. He could have gone deeper in the cave or detoured like Jonah. Where are you headed? Have you experienced taking a detour from God’s calling or choosing to go deeper in the cave?
- Q Do you think the command God gave Abraham to “go” was challenging? List some of the challenges and then read Hebrews 11:8.
- Q The verses in Matthew 28 mention that some doubted even after seeing him yet Jesus still commanded them to “go.” Stepping out and actually going can be terrifying. Are you afraid of stepping out of your cave? Do you doubt that taking a step forward will change anything?

The challenge is not simply to emerge from the cave, but to step out of the cave a changed person. Every new season requires a fresh sense of power and spiritual influence to succeed in. Elijah stepped boldly out of the cave toward the dreaded desert but with a new expectation. He had been changed by the cave.

You can walk full of hope that as challenging as your bold step may be it will help jump start the mundane and get you unstuck to run fully towards your mission.

ACTIVITY

Purpose: To take the first bold step out of our cave and into our calling! What bold steps do you need to take? Trace your shoe on a piece of paper and write down a bold step you will take in your relationships (spouse, immediate family, and friends) and a bold step you will take in your walk with God (join a ministry, get baptized, mentor someone, lead a small group, etc.). Share with the group as a support.

Turn the page for a few guidelines to help you take the first step into an exciting new season.

WHAT IS A BOLD STEP?

1. They are always difficult to take and usually involve facing a major fear. Let's be honest. If it were easy you would have taken this step a long time ago.
2. They are written down and shared with others. Accountability assures that we will follow through.
3. They are concrete. The best bold steps are the ones you know you have taken or have not taken. There is no ambiguity.
4. They have an expiration date. If our steps have no deadlines, we will be tempted to procrastinate. We can deceive ourselves into thinking we will eventually follow through while we put things off indefinitely. Remember, delayed obedience is ultimately disobedience.
5. They are the first step in a longer journey.

Read Luke 13:10-13, 1 Thessalonians 5:23

While her medical issue was undeniably physical, the root of her problem was spiritual. She had a spiritual problem that affected her soul and her body as well. Luke, the author of this gospel and the book of Acts, was also a doctor. And he uses interesting words to diagnose her condition. He doesn't use the word that would mean "illness, disease, or injury." Instead he uses the phrase "crippled by a spirit."

- Q What did Jesus ask this woman to do? Why was this an important step?
- Q How do you picture Luke 13:10-13 in your mind? Describe in your own words what you think it must have been like for this woman and for the crowd?
- Q In the verse in 1 Thessalonians we can see we are deeply connected in three parts: spirit, soul and body. Each one of these parts of a person can hold the others up but can also pull the others down. Have you seen this to be true in your life? Share a specific example.

Her journey to freedom hinged on her willingness to take the difficult step of responding to the promptings of Jesus. This is one of the most important details in this moving passage. And if you read it quickly you can miss it altogether. Jesus called her forward. Rarely does someone with a deformity of any kind want to step up to the public platform. Jesus is calling her out of the shadows of her own personal cave and into the spotlight. This is a difficult moment, but she responds

and takes the first painful step forward. She has to leave the comfort of her cave and take the risk of stepping into an uncertain future.

REFLECT

With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

1. I am ready to take my bold step and excited about what God has in store for my life.
2. I am hesitant to take my bold step but I'm praying that God will give me the faith to step forward.
3. I am not ready to take my bold step, I am not even sure what it is and I feel apathetic about my future.

PRAY

Pray that you can leave the season of being stuck behind and step out in boldness and expectation as you obey His voice.

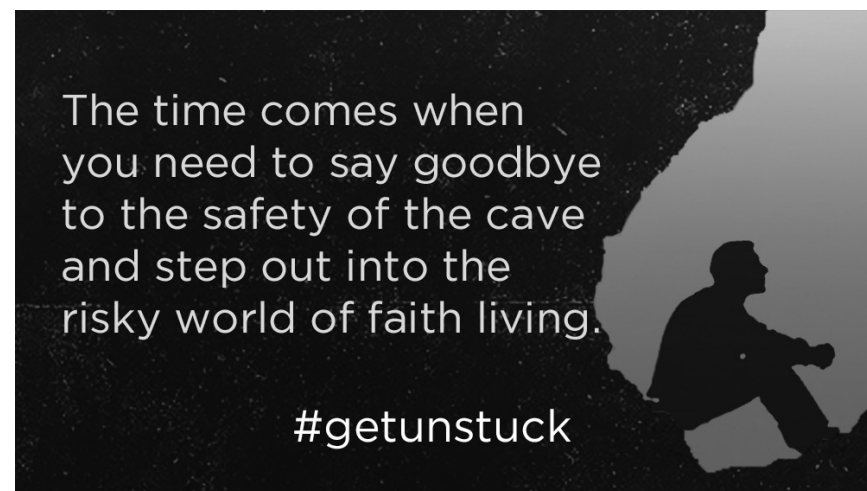
REMEMBER

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

2 Peter 1:3

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.



40 Day Reading Challenge

True change and transformation begins with knowing God and reading His Word. Use this reading plan over the next 40 days to go deeper and help you get unstuck. You can begin your day with God's Word, read during your lunch break, or spend some time reading before going to bed. It doesn't matter what time you read, but its important to make time everyday to read God's Word.

May God speak to you clearly through His Word.

May you experience a fresh encounter with Him each day.

And may God lead you into a new season unlike ever before.

Day 1	Deuteronomy 31:6	Day 21	Hebrews 11:1
Day 2	Joshua 1:9	Day 22	1 Peter 1:7-8
Day 3	Psalms 27:14	Day 23	Psalms 42
Day 4	Isaiah 43:5	Day 24	1 Corinthians 13:13
Day 5	Luke 12:32	Day 25	Lamentations 3:21-26
Day 6	Ephesians 6:10	Day 26	Romans 1:16
Day 7	Hebrews 13:5	Day 27	Isaiah 6:1-4
Day 8	Romans 12:2	Day 28	1 Timothy 6:11-12
Day 9	2 Corinthians 5:17	Day 29	Hebrews 12:1
Day 10	Colossians 3:10	Day 30	Isaiah 51:1
Day 11	Ephesians 4:22-24	Day 31	Matthew 6:25-33
Day 12	Ezekiel 36:26	Day 32	John 14:27
Day 13	John 15:19	Day 33	Romans 4:18-21
Day 14	Psalms 19:7-11	Day 34	Matthew 11:28
Day 15	Psalms 95:7-11	Day 35	Isaiah 55:1-3
Day 16	John 10:14-16	Day 36	Psalms 116
Day 17	Revelation 3:20	Day 37	Jeremiah 17:7-8
Day 18	Ezekiel 34:30-31	Day 38	Psalms 119:129-136
Day 19	2 Timothy 2:19	Day 39	Numbers 6:24-26
Day 20	2 Corinthians 5:7	Day 40	Ephesians 3:20-21

Visit www.newlifechicago.org/unstuck for more resources, videos, and downloads.

About this Study

One thing—more than any other—keeps us from a compelling life: we are **STUCK**. Some of us are stuck for short seasons of time. But others surrender to a life of being continually trapped and frustrated. The hang-ups of our past, fear of failure, victim mindsets, broken relationships, disappointment with ourselves—together with the lack of fresh encounters with God—have left many of us struggling and unable to move into our next season.

Unstuck is a wakeup call for all those who are stuck.

In this seven week study, you will identify the symptoms of a life that is stuck and discover a clear pathway to move to your next season. There are seven sticking points that drive us to the cave of stuck:

1. Isolated Living
2. Distorted Thinking
3. Impaired Hearing
4. Warped Identity
5. Neglected Issues
6. Blurred Calling
7. Deferred Beginnings

Organized around the most significant event of the prophet Elijah's life, his cave experience, Unstuck provides what you need to discover what is holding you back from starting a new chapter in life. This study will help you address your unfinished business, rediscover your boundaries, break out of isolation, and re-envision your life story to step out of your cave and into your call.



Mark Jobe is an author, radio host, pastor, and social entrepreneur in the city of Chicago. He is lead pastor of New Life Community Church, which has grown from a handful to several thousand people currently meeting at 21 locations throughout Chicagoland.

For more information and resources, visit pastormarkjobe.com or newlifechicago.org.