



## The Cutting Place

### Main Truth

The education of our faith is incomplete without the awareness of God's providence working through loss and emptiness that is then filled up by Him.

### Passage to Study

#### *1 Kings 17:1-7 (NLT)*

Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, "As surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives—the God whom I worship and serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years unless I give the word!"

Then the Lord said to Elijah, "Go to the east and hide by Kerith Brook at a place east of where it enters the Jordan River. Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I have commanded them to bring you food."

So Elijah did as the Lord had told him and camped beside Kerith Brook. The ravens brought him bread and meat each morning and evening, and he drank from the brook. But after a while the brook dried up, for there was no rainfall in the land.

### A Personal Story (Part 1)

Driving down Highway 285 on our way to Durango, we came to a wide-open expanse of road that stretched for miles on end. We were taking our third son to college, and my heart felt like a dead weight in my chest. I commented to my husband that this part of the drive felt like a representation of my life: lonely, no end in sight, no recognizable markers for me to get a sense of direction, and headed toward a painful destination.

The tears started flowing yet again and the parallels of taking yet another child to school and losing sight of who I was were sharp and vivid. After a few days of getting Colby settled into *his* new surroundings, we headed home. Because of car trouble we didn't get started back until 7 p.m., and it quickly became dark outside. Then the rain started to pour. Looking out into the vast blackness with only static on the radio and soft crying coming from me, Mike

and our youngest son, Max, we faced *our* new surroundings. We had lost our bearings, our hearts gripped with the grief of saying goodbye and facing so many unknowns. At journey's end, we walked into a house that was far too quiet, far too clean. We were drained in every way: physically, emotionally, mentally, and most of all, spiritually.

—Paula Valenta

## Discussion Questions

1. In 1 Kings 17:3, the Father tells Elijah to go and hide in the Kerith Ravine. God was calling Elijah to a place of hiddenness. There are times in our lives that God tells us to go and hide in our own “Kerith Ravine”: the Kerith Ravine of sickness, the Kerith Ravine of sorrow, the Kerith Ravine of solitude, etc. Maybe you are sitting on the banks of the ravine now or maybe you have just left but share what that has looked like in your own life.
2. Read Genesis 12:1, 4. What was Abraham's response to God's command? How easy do you think it was for Abraham to leave the “old country” and its familiar surroundings, its joys and pains, its happy and sad moments?
3. Read Hebrews 11:8–10. What was the one “tool” that Abraham used as he began his journey from the “old country” into the “new country”? What was his reward? How did his obedience impact future generations?
4. Henry Nouwen says this: “You know that what helped and guided you in the old country no longer works, but what else do you have to go by? You are being asked to trust that you will find what you need in the new country. *That requires the death of what has become precious to you: influence, success, affection and praise.*” What is God asking you to let die in your own life in order to make room for more of Him?

## Personal Story (Part 2)

It is now one year later and as I look back over the course of the journey, I see how the Father has sustained me, guided me, been my encouragement, my place of refuge. Last year at this time I couldn't get my bearings; I was being stripped of all that was familiar and that which I derived my identity from. I saw no end in sight and I feared my “Kerith Ravine.” But as I obeyed the Father's call to go into hiding and to drink deeply from His living water, I find myself refreshed and renewed.

Just like Elijah, I also marvel at His provision for me during this time, how it came from the most unlikely sources but was always on time and always just enough. My “ravens” weren't necessarily what I would have chosen to provide, but in His wisdom they were His and exactly perfect for the situation. I have grown in my dependence upon my Papa and I bask in the realization that He is madly, deeply, and passionately in love with me!

## Going Deeper

1. Reflect on a time that the Father provided for you in an unlikely way. What did that do to build your faith for the next time?

“If the Lord had led Elijah directly to Zarephath (1Kings 17:9), he would have missed something that helped make him a wiser prophet and better man—living by faith at Kerith. And whenever our earthly stream or any other outer resource has dried up, it has been allowed so we may learn that our hope and help are in God, who made heaven and earth.”

from *Streams in the Desert*

2. Ponder this excerpt from *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers (based on Hebrews 11:8): “Have you been asking God what He is going to do? He will never tell you. God does not tell you *what* His going to do-He reveals to you *who* He is.” In your current situation, do you believe in a miracle-working God, and will you “go out” in complete surrender to Him until you are not surprised one iota by anything He does? Ask Him to show you anything that holds you back from this “going out” kind of faith.