



*We seek the glory of this Christian life but shun the pain,
We bask in the sunshine and despise the rain.
On the peaks of Carmel is where we would stay,
But the canyons of Kerith reveal God's way."
The chariots of fire we seek to ride,
Follow the deserts in which we hide.
Rough stones are we devoid of shape and form,
'Til the lightening blast strikes and we emerge from the storm,
Rough and ready and fit to serve,
Our best for Christ is what He deserves*

The Cutting Place

So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

(1 Kings 17:5-6, NIV)

After his “fifteen minutes of fame” in King Ahab’s throne room, Elijah was led by God into the barren, desolate obscurity of the desert to a place called Kerith. The word “Kerith” means “the cutting place”, and that is exactly what it was for Elijah.

Alone and facing temperatures of up to 130 degrees Fahrenheit (55 Celsius) during the day time, Elijah endured six months of painful solitude. He drank from a vanishing stream and ate food provided by ravens, unclean birds for Jews. Ravens feasted on garbage and animals that had died in the desert and it was on this dreadful diet that Elijah depended during his lonely time in the wilderness.

Not a Holiday

I used to imagine Elijah's time at Kerith as some kind of hilarious holiday at the Hilton where all the prophet had to do was lounge around by the pool (the brook) and order drinks and meals from his waiters and waitresses dressed in black. The truth is that it was anything but that.

Kerith was for Elijah, a cutting place. A time in his life filled with loneliness, pain, and the spiritual awakening that takes place when we come to the end of ourselves. Let's be honest; we have a hard time separating our needs from our greeds. (Philippians 4:19) Like the apostle Paul, we need to learn to be content whatever the circumstances of our lives. *Whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or want I can do all things through him who gives me strength.* (Philippians 4:12, NIV)

Experiencing Drought, Experiencing God

Part of what it means to recognize and live in days of spiritual drought is to feel the heat, experience the thirst, and cry out to God. *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.* (Psalm 42:1, NIV) Only those who realize their intense spiritual thirst will seek the streams in the desert, the water from the rock, who is Christ.

I've said this before, but I need to say it again – Experiencing God in times of spiritual drought only comes when we recognize that we are in fact living in drought conditions. It's not easy and I don't like it any more than you, but the fact is we must taste the dust in our souls before we will cry out to God for the living water that He desperately wants to give us through his son, Jesus.

If you have been following the messages or reading these study guides, and have decided that you want more of God's presence in your life, chances are that you, like me, are beginning to feel the dry heat of drought. Do not despair! This is a time of testing and endurance. The cross always comes before the crown. This is the time to *be still and know* (the word means "experience in an intimate way) *that I am God.* (Psalm 46:10, NIV) Listen for the quiet, but sure word of God in your heart. Learn to live on the daily bread he provides. God really does, and will, *restore our souls.* (Psalm 23:3)

Think About It

1. Peter warns us not to be surprised at the fiery ordeal we are experiencing. (I Peter 4:12) Reread the poem at the beginning of this study and reflect on its meaning for your life.
2. Read Hebrews 12:1-2. If Jesus “despised” the shame of the cross but “endured for the joy that was set before him” what does this teach us about that path we must walk as disciples?
3. Ask God to connect you with someone who can encourage you during your time at “The Cutting Place”. But remember – Ultimately you must endure some times of lonely solitude as God prepares you and works out his plans in your life.