What is the real story? There are so many stories circulating around us. How can we know what is true and what is false?

You have probably heard news stories about the 5G cellphone network being installed in Syracuse. The 5G cellular network uses radio waves near the middle of the frequency spectrum, below the frequencies of visible light and x-rays. This part of the radio spectrum is close to the frequencies used by television broadcasts for 90 years. 5G is even safer than television broadcasts because 5G networks use radio waves closer to the middle of the spectrum.

5G transmissions are not harmful for humans and they carry more information than current networks. That is why the city of Syracuse has made plans to be one of the first cities in the United States to install a 5G network throughout the city. Other cities with 5G networks include New York City, Ann Arbor, MI, home to the University of Michigan, and San Jose, CA, in the heart of silicon valley. All of these cities are working with tech companies to install 5G networks because businesses and organizations thrive with better, faster communications.

That is probably why the Russian Television network has been spreading lies about 5G transmissions. It seems the Russian government does not want American businesses and cities to thrive, so they have told a false story that 5G transmissions cause health problems. This is false. There is no debate about the safety of 5G among people who know and understand the technology. But the Russian Television network is spreading a false story to try to convince Americans that 5G networks are harmful.

In 2016 and 2018 the Russian government fed thousands of lies to the American people in a successful effort to make Americans question the legitimacy of our democratic process and to divide the American people from each other. Now Russian Television is back at it again, feeding false narratives about 5G networks to the American people through Facebook postings and other social media platforms. We pay attention to these stories because we are concerned about health risks. We pay attention because it is difficult to tell the difference between the false story and the true story.

For us, the real story is often less dramatic. The real story usually does not read like the script of a thriller movie. For those of us who live in countries with well-functioning democratic institutions and freedom of the press, the real story often moves at a slower pace. The real story doesn’t involve a secret conspiracy by companies and governments.

The real story involves lots of people going to work every day and trying to do the right thing. The real story doesn’t give us quick, easy answers. The real story is about parents taking care of children and grown-up children taking care of their parents and grandparents. The real story requires us to use one the greatest gifts God has given us, which is our ability to think and reason and communicate.

Sometimes we think our life with God is going to be extremely dramatic, like the story of Jesus curing the demons from the man named Legion. There are times when we pray God would just give us a quick answer. There are times when we pray that God would quickly solve our problems or cure us.

In most cases our life with God is more like the story of Elijah from the 19th chapter of the book of Kings. Today’s episode begins right after the chapter where Elijah challenged a team of 850 false prophets to a sort of prophet’s duel. At the end of the day the false prophets are dead, and King Ahab and Queen Jezebel are hopping mad. Elijah flees from the northern kingdom, Israel, into the southern kingdom, Judah. Elijah travels into the desert to escape the soldiers Jezebel sends to capture him.

Elijah comes to a solitary broom tree, growing in the desert. It is the only sort of shade for miles around, so Elijah sits down. Elijah is pretty sure he has come to the end, so he says, “It is enough. Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.” Then Elijah falls asleep in the shade of the broom tree.

An angel comes to him in a dream and tells him to eat. “Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.” Elijah eats the food and drinks the water the angel provides for him. Then he walks further into the desert. He walks west, toward Egypt, and then south into the Sinai Peninsula.
This is brutal territory. The desert stretches for hundreds of miles in every direction. The Sinai Peninsula has many mountains. There are very few settlements.

Eventually Elijah arrives at the foot of Mount Sinai. The mountain is about 8,000 feet high, that is three thousand feet higher than the highest peaks in the Adirondacks. Elijah begins to climb the mountain. Partway up, somewhere near the top, Elijah comes to a cave. For the first time in many weeks, Elijah sleeps in the coolness and quiet and peace of the cave. Elijah is awakened from his sleep by the voice of the Lord. “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

Elijah answered, I have been very zealous for you, O God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.

God spoke to Elijah and said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." So Elijah gets up and prepares to go out of the cave to stand on the side of the mountain. But Elijah is stopped in his tracks by the sound of rushing wind. The wind was so strong that it was splitting the mountains that surrounded Mt. Sinai and breaking rocks in pieces. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind the ground began to shake. It was an earthquake! Elijah was afraid and lay down on the floor of the cave. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire. Elijah could hear the crackle of the flames and smell the smoke drifting into the cave. But the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire there was a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his blanket for protection and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Elijah answered, "I told you this before. I have been very zealous for you, O God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left. I fled into the desert. I came to this mountain. For the soldiers of Jezebel are seeking my life, to take it away."

Then the Lord said to Elijah, "Go, return back over the mountains and through the desert and travel north through Israel into the desert of Damascus."

So Elijah walks back across the desert and back over all of those mountains. Elijah walks back across the Kingdom of Judah, then all the way through Jezebel’s kingdom and into the wilderness of Syria.

We don’t hear all the details of Elijah’s journey forty days and forty nights through the desert and over the mountains to Mount Sinai. And we don’t hear any details of Elijah’s journey forty days back to the north, all the way to Syria. That’s because the details were mind numbingly boring. Another day of walking under the desert sun. Another day when the wind is blowing hard in Elijah’s face. The wind is driving particles of sand and dirt into Elijah’s nose and ears. Elijah is climbing over a mountain pass and down the other side. Elijah’s feet are sore because of the rocks. Elijah’s nose and forehead are red and burned from the sun. Elijah’s eyes are tired from squinting at the sun and looking for the way forward. Another day when Elijah is thirsty and hungry. Elijah is alone for forty days, for eighty days.

Elijah’s story is not so dramatic; it is more like the real story of life. The real story of life is often not told in sensational news stories. The real story is heard in the tiredness of her voice. The real story is told in the way she expertly prepares dinner without looking at a cookbook or the way he lays out a wall quickly and efficiently. The real story is seen in the limp in her walk or in the callouses on the soles of his feet.

Sometimes we feel alone. Sometimes we are tired. We keep moving forward.

If you ever feel like you don’t have any energy left in you, if you are ever so tired you don’t even want to eat, remember the story of Elijah. Look for that place of rest. Seek out the food that will nourish you for the journey.

If you have been following the way God has laid out for you and you feel discouraged, if you feel like you could just sit down under a tree and die, remember the story of Elijah. Listen for the voice of an angel. It might be the voice of a child or an old woman or an old friend or a new friend. Listen for a few words spoken to you by someone who is like an angel. Don’t give up.

If you ever feel like you have been travelling this road for many days or months or years, if think you have no idea of the way forward, remember the story of Elijah. Keep travelling on, through the wilderness of life. Keep listening for the voice of God.