

Elijah

God's man to a nation in crisis

When despair hits!

Lesson 7

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1 KINGS 19:1-3 KJV "AND AHAB TOLD JEZEBEL ALL THAT ELIJAH HAD DONE, AND WITHAL HOW HE HAD SLAIN ALL THE PROPHETS WITH THE SWORD. THEN JEZEBEL SENT A MESSENGER UNTO ELIJAH, SAYING, SO LET THE GODS DO TO ME, AND MORE ALSO, IF I MAKE NOT THY LIFE AS THE LIFE OF ONE OF THEM BY TO MORROW ABOUT THIS TIME. AND WHEN HE SAW THAT, HE AROSE, AND WENT FOR HIS LIFE, AND CAME TO BEER-SHEBA, WHICH BELONGETH TO JUDAH, AND LEFT HIS SERVANT THERE."

1 Kings 19:1-18

What happens when a person comes to the end of his hope? What does he hold on to? What stabilizes his life during those dark, lonesome hours?

This is the condition of many in America today. On the [upliftprogram.com](http://www.upliftprogram.com) website, it gives a list of statistics involving depression (http://www.upliftprogram.com/depression_stats.html). There are approximately 18.8 million Americans that suffer with a depressive disorder which is approximately 9.5% of the population. This means that 1 in 10 suffer from some type of depression. Depression can affect any age group, according to the stats 4% of preschoolers are clinically depressed. Among women the depression percentage is 30%. Depression will be the second largest killer after heart disease by 2020. Among those that are depressed, 15% will commit suicide. Depression and despair is common in our society.

Unfortunately, many Christians add on top of a person's depression by telling them to shake it off, have enough faith, or get over it. These Christians have never suffered depression or despair and do not realize the struggles that others have in dealing with depression.

Despair is a degree of depression that a person is overcome by a sense of futility or defeat and has a complete loss of hope.

Elijah was a great prophet of the Lord and the Lord used him to bring about a great victory over the prophets of Baal. Through this victory, Israel returned back to the true worship of Jehovah as the Lord. But, something happened right after the victory that put Elijah in a pit of despair and anguish.

I. Queen Jezebel's Threat

1 Kings 19:1-2 KJV "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

Not everyone was pleased with the victory

No matter how great a victory for the Lord is, there will always be ones who will be unhappy and upset that the victory occurred. No matter how great the church is going, there will always be those who are upset and speaking against what is happening. Opposition will always be present.

Psalms 34:19 KJV "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all."

2 Timothy 3:12 KJV "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Elijah was no different. On Mount Carmel, he had a great victory over the prophets of Baal. In this victory, the people of Israel saw the power of Jehovah and realized that Baal was a false god who had no power. Elijah executed all the false prophets.

Then, he went to the top of the mount and prayed that God would remove the curse from the land and send the rain in order to end the famine. God sent the rain.

King Ahab hurried back to Jezreel. As he arrived, he went straight to his wife, Queen Jezebel, and told her all that had transpired on the mount. When she heard that the prophets of Baal had been destroyed, she was filled with rage. What she had worshipped from a child had been destroyed and now she was going to seek revenge on the one who had caused this, Elijah. So,

she sent him a message telling him that by this time tomorrow she was going to do to him what he had done to her prophets.

The message was a curious thing. Why did she tell him what she was going to do and why did she just send the soldiers to capture him and bring him back to the palace so he could be executed? Why tell him what was going to happen? I believe that she sent him a message because she was seething with anger and hatred for Elijah

and Jehovah. She told him because she wanted to instill fear in his life. Fear causes individuals to do things that normally they would never do.

Elijah was a man of courage. It took courage to tell King Ahab that judgment was coming on the nation. It took courage to come back and confront King Ahab again especially since the king had been looking for him over the last three and half years in order to have him killed. It took courage to face the four

hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Ashtoreth on the mount, especially since all of Israel was undecided about who truly was the Lord. But, Elijah was a man of courage who allowed fear to take hold in his heart and sent him through a period of despair and depression.

II. Elijah's flight

1 Kings 19:3 KJV "And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there."



When Elijah received the message from Queen Jezebel, he ran for his life. He fled to the city of Beer-sheba, left his servant there, and went into the wilderness by himself. What happened that made the man of courage become a man of fear? What happened that carried a man from victory to defeat? What happened that brought a man from the mountaintop to the valley below?

A. A person can go from victory to defeat because fear has replaced trust

Why did Queen Jezebel send the message to Elijah? She wanted to instill fear in his life. Many times, fear can be the reason for despair. The person begins to look at what might happen to his life and fear wells up in his heart. There is a Sci-Fi movie, *Dune*, that I enjoyed watching. It had a wonderful quotation that is so true, "Fear is the mind killer." Fear kills the mind. Fear kills the heart. Fear kills the life.

There was an old tale about a man who picked up an old lady who was walking down the road. She was sitting beside him on the cart and he noticed that something was different about her. He asked her name and she said, "Cholera." He was so overcome that he asked her to get down. She told him that if he would take her to the next town, she promised that she would only kill two individuals. He asked her how could he be sure so she gave him a knife and told him that this was the only thing that could kill her. And, if she was not telling the truth, he could meet her just out of town and she would allow him to kill her. He agreed.

Within the next two days, thirty-two individuals died within the city. The man became so enraged that he went out of the city to find the old woman, Cholera. As he was about to kill her with the knife, she responded, "I have kept my word, I only killed two, the others died from fear."

Fear kills the person's heart and leads him to despair. One of the great tactics of the devil is to use fear to keep Christians

from doing what the Lord has called them to do. He uses fear to paralyze individuals.

Fear is the opposite of trust. When fear comes into one's life, the trust has been pushed aside. When fear comes into a relationship, trust has been pushed aside. When the Christian begins fearing what might happen, he pushes aside the love and sovereignty of the Lord.

The reason that Queen Jezebel wanted to instill fear in Elijah was because she realized that she could not kill him because of the Lord's protection. Otherwise she would have sent the soldiers to destroy him. So, fear was her only weapon against the prophet. If she could get him to fear, he would become powerless to do anything.

Elijah was so overcome with fear that he left his ministry and ran for his life.

B. A person can go from victory to defeat because his focus has changed.

Focus means that which a person fixes his eyes or life on. It is the center point of his life. It is the center point of his vision. A person can change his focus very easily. But, it takes great discipline to keep one's focus on the right things in life. Elijah went into despair because he allowed his focus to change. Consider the difference in his life and perspective from chapter eighteen and nineteen.

In chapter eighteen, Elijah had his eyes focused on doing the will of the Lord. He was focused on carrying the Lord's message to King Ahab. He was focused on doing being obedient to God's Word. He was focused on showing Israel who was the true Lord. He was focused on bring Israel to repentance. He was focused on seeing the curse removed from the nation.

In chapter nineteen, his focus changed from the Lord to himself. In chapter nineteen, he became focused on self-preservation. His focus shifted from the power of Jehovah to the treat of Jezebel. His focus

shifted from trusting in the Lord to the fear of what might happen. His focus shifted from trusting in Jehovah to running for his life.

The wrong focus in life can lead to depression and despair. Some individuals who are suffering from depression have all their focus on what is going to happen to their family and themselves. Their focus is in the wrong place.

Christ in his Sermon on the Mount spoke about the focus of one's life. Christ tells the Christian to put his focus on the Lord first and everything else will fall into its proper place.

Matthew 6:33 KJV "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Luke 17:33 KJV "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."

Elijah shifted his focus from the Lord to his own life. He shifted his focus away from the Lord, which allowed fear to come over his life.

C. A person can go from victory to defeat when he isolates himself.

1 Kings 19:4 KJV "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

Elijah ran for his life and when he arrived at Beer-sheba, he left his servant there. He went by himself, alone into the wilderness. Now, this was not the first time that Elijah was by himself in the wilderness, but it was probably the first time that he felt alone in the wilderness. Elijah felt that he was all by himself and no one was supporting him.

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In his prayer later, he tells the Lord that he is the only one who is still faithful to the Lord.

Elijah lost his perspective on his ministry. He felt that there was no one who was willing to stand with him and help him. He felt alone. Depression can creep on a person when they are by themselves. When they feel as if no one is supporting them, they can go into depression and despair.

Struggling with depression increases when one feels as if no one cares and no one is willing to help. How much individuals need each other's support and encouragement in times of need!

Galatians 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

D. A person can go from victory to defeat when he loses perspective.

1 Kings 19:4 KJV "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

Elijah lost perspective from the mountaintop to the valley below. He received the threat from Queen Jezebel. From that threat, he ran for his life. He ran all the way until he reached the juniper tree. At this point, he probably fell exhausted underneath the tree. From his fear, loneliness, and exhaustion, he lost perspective on life. His loss of perspective leads him down a path of despair. Underneath the tree, he cries out to the Lord asking the Lord to take his life. He wanted to die and get rid of the anguish of his heart and mind.

All of the despair and depression weighed heavy on his heart and life. It was a huge weight that was pressing down. He saw no hope of relief. He thought all was lost because he had lost perspective. He was no

longer reasonable. He was no longer looking at the power of God. He was no longer keeping things in focus.

Elijah was giving up!

III. God's Solution

1 Kings 19:5-8 KJV "And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God."

God provided for Elijah just what he needed in order to bring him back to where Elijah was supposed to be. God works in the lives of individuals in order to get them back to the place they should be. In the case of Israel, God sent a severe drought and famine in the land to bring them back. God prepared what was necessary to bring Elijah back.

A. God provided for the physical

1. God sent Elijah sleep

Elijah was exhausted from the events on Mount Carmel and from running from Queen Jezebel. Elijah's body needed rest and God sent him sleep in order to refresh his body. When a person is worn down and tired, he is more susceptible to despair and depression. The Lord gives us a pattern to follow. We are to get adequate sleep because our bodies and minds need the rest.

Psalms 127:2 It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his

beloved sleep.

2. God sent Elijah food

Elijah was given food prepared by an angel from the Lord. God sent His angel to provide Elijah with nourishment for his body. The meal that the angel prepared was sufficient to sustain Elijah for the journey that was ahead.

Elijah ate and then went on a forty-day journey into the wilderness to Mount Horeb. From Beer-sheba to Mount Horeb is approximately 200 miles. Mount Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai.

B. God provided for the spiritual

1. God sent Elijah to the right place to listen to His word.

God sent Elijah to the mount so Elijah would stop and listen to the Lord. When of the difficult things to do when one is in depression and despair is to stop and truly listen to what God is saying. Elijah had to be brought to the place he would listen.

a. God asked Elijah a simple question

1 Kings 19:9 KJV "And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?"

What an important question! God asks Elijah, "What are you doing here, the battle is not here but back there?"

b. God allows Elijah to vent

1 Kings 19:10 KJV "And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

Elijah's response is his excuse for not being in the place of battle. He begins by giving his history of being obedient to the

Lord especially since Israel has rejected the Lord. He places the blame on Israel for rejecting the Lord and killing the Lord's prophets. Then Elijah gives the excuse that he is alone in his service to the Lord. No one else according to Elijah is serving the Lord. He is all by himself and they want to kill him.

Elijah was having a classic pity party that so many are familiar with. He was looking at everything that was wrong and not looking at anything that was right. Elijah continued to dwell upon what was wrong until it carried him further into despair.

2. God sent Elijah to the right condition to listen

1 Kings 19:11-13 KJV "And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?"

God tells Elijah to go and stand at the front of the cave. As Elijah is standing there, before the Lord passes by, there was a great wind that crashes and breaks pieces of the mount, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind, there was a great earthquake but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire, there was a small stirring or breeze. The King James Version calls it a still, small voice. The still small voice was

a voice of calm stillness. When Elijah heard this, he wrapped his mantle around in face and went out. He knew the Lord was in the calm stillness.

Why was God not in the wind, earthquake, and fire? Elijah did not need the fierceness of God but the calmness of God upon his life.

God asks Elijah again, "What are you doing here?"

1 Kings 19:14 KJV "And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

Elijah repeats his answer to the Lord.

C. God provided the answer to Elijah's despair

1 Kings 19:15-18 KJV "And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

1. Re-commissioned Elijah

One of the things that so many individuals do in times of despair is they quit doing what they know they need to be doing. They quit working. They hide. They withdraw from others. God tells Elijah to go back to the place of the ministry and do what I have called you to do. The Lord

sends Elijah back.

2. Commanded Elijah

The Lord gives Elijah some very specific task that he was to perform on his way back. First, he was to anoint Hazael to be the new king of Syria. Second, he was to anoint Jehu to be the new King over Israel. Third, he was to anoint Elisha to be his successor.

3. Comforted Elijah

The Lord gave Elijah great comfort in knowing that judgment was coming on those that opposed the Lord. The sword was a sign of coming judgment on these individuals and the ones that escaped one sword would not escape the other sword. Those individuals who opposed the Lord would be dealt with.

4. Informed Elijah

The Lord informs Elijah that there are 7,000 men who have not served Baal. The Lord is telling Elijah that he is not alone. There is always a remnant that is serving the Lord. Regardless of how bleak it might seem, God has His remnant.

IV. Lessons

A. Overcoming depression by obedience

Did Elijah all of a sudden feel better and was immediately over his despair? Probably not! It took time for him to get back to where he was. He had to travel back out of the wilderness to the place of ministry. One of the best cures for depression and despair is to start doing things for the Lord, helping others, and encouraging others. Moping around is one of the worse things to do; getting out and helping others is one of the best things to do.

B. Overcoming fear by focusing on the Lord

When Elijah put his focus back on the Lord, it removed the fear from his heart. Fear takes our focus off the Lord and faith

puts it back on the Lord. Focus on His mercy, grace, plan, goodness, sovereignty, and power. It will help the Christian overcome the fear from the devil.

C. Overcoming despair by fellowshiping with other Christians

Often times, when an individual goes into despair, he isolates himself from the world. It is during these times that he needs the encouragement and comfort from other Christians. Christians must be supportive and not judgmental when dealing with a person who is suffering from depression and despair.

D. Overcoming failure by re-committing to the Lord

Elijah was re-commissioned into service by the Lord. The Lord sent him back to work in the ministry. When a Christian gets out of the Lord's work because of fear or depression, he needs to stop, repent, and rededicate his life to God's will.

Elijah's life shows the Christian that even a great man of faith can suffer from depression and fear. But, if one will listen to the Lord, He has the answer the Christian needs to hear. Dig deep into the Word of the Lord to find help when one is in the depths of the valley!

(Note: Caveat - this lesson does not address every aspect of depression and despair. There are many reasons for depression - some physical, emotional, psychological, mental, etc. When a person is dealing with severe depression, he needs to seek medical attention to determine if the illness is due to a medical condition.)
