

Monday, 2/17: This week's text 1 Kings 19:1-15

WHY WOULD ELIJAH BE AFRAID? (1 Kings 19:5)

Elijah had just experienced an exhilarating success. God used Elijah to 'defeat' Baal (the 'god' of Queen Jezebel) and 400 of Baal's priests in a dramatic showdown at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:16 to 46).

There should be no question as to God's blessing, protection and enabling power upon Elijah. YET, Elijah was afraid for his life. Crippling fear caused him to escape to the dessert wilderness ... eventually, stopping at Mt. Horeb (Mt. Sinai).

Can you relate? We as children of God --- God's blessed and anointed, while obviously blessed and cared for by God --- we somehow lose sight of God and become consumed with our natural FEARS, FAILURES, and PRESSURES that threaten to take our very lives from us.

This week's text (1 Kings 19:1-15) gives us the account of HOW God helped Elijah to REBOOT & REFRESH after his 'meltdown'.

Today's question might help us to see "why" and "how" Elijah lost it --- and perhaps, in looking at Elijah, we might see that the same things that almost derailed Elijah (even in the midst of God's blessing, power, and presence) may threaten to derail us.

1. Elijah was not thinking clearly.
2. Elijah went into isolation, cutting himself off from his friends and important relationships.
3. Elijah experienced a distracting post victory 'let-down'.
4. Elijah's body & spirit were exhausted and spent.
5. Elijah became consumed by self-pity.

CAN YOU RELATE?

We'll keep coming back to this throughout the week --- but as we close today, I encourage you **to PRAY:**

Dear God – I can relate to Elijah. First, I acknowledge YOU and thank YOU for your work in my life. Help me to remember and to see your presence in me and thru me. Second, I admit that I often lose sight of you and become consumed by the same things that distracted and consumed Elijah. SO, TODAY, I PRAY that you may help me to SEE YOU ... please help stop the FEAR in my life and help me to be renewed in your PRESENCE & POWER. Please lift me up with eagle's wings, I pray. AMEN.

Tuesday, 2/18: Primary text 1 Kings 19:1-15

We all need to 'PRACTICE' to improve at whatever we pursue --- cross-stitch, cooking, sports, even preaching & pastoring! In this series as we try to better MANAGE THE RAT RACE of life... we are learning that we MUST PRACTICE and DEVELOP OUR CAPACITY TO BELIEVE IN GOD AND TO EXERCISE OUR FAITH.

So far, we've considered:

1. **BELIEVING** IN GOD TO BE OUR TRUSTED AND CARING 'GOOD SHEPHERD'.
2. **EXAMINING** our DAYS SO THAT WE MIGHT BE BETTER AWARE OF WHAT MAY HAVE HELPED US TO DO GOOD and WHAT MAY HAVE TRIGGERED A BAD MOMENT or a TROUBLING BEHAVIOR IN THE COURSE OF OUR DAYS. For the athlete, this spiritual practice is a bit like watching game films --- analyzing our good and bad so that we might get better over-all. Dear God, please help us to see things clearly and to renew and refresh our commitment to do better and better over time. Amen.
3. **FASTING** --- When we FAST (or give up a routine habit or practice) even for a little while, we BECOME AWARE that a lot of things in life actually, work to CONTROL US or DISTRACT US from things that we might better be doing ... as Jesus helped Martha become aware of her consuming behaviors that DISTRACTED HER ABILITY TO FOCUS UPON JESUS ... so to, we are reminded thru the practice of fasting that we need to RESET our HABITS and always be OPEN TO TURNING OUR EYES UPON JESUS, especially when He may be talking to us.

This week, we add the SPIRITUAL PRACTICE of "**TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES**".

While this may not seem like a spiritual practice ... taking care of ourselves is very integral to our ability to be strong in our BODY, MIND, and SPIRIT. When we become mal-nourished, worn-out, or fail to care for our physical selves --- even our psyche --- we allow ourselves to become susceptible to natural and real parts of our humanity that if neglected, may trigger physical responses to our health and well-being that are very destructive AND may send us on a downward spiral that derails our spiritual power & strength!

This week we are considering 'why' and 'how' the great prophet, obviously blessed and cared for by GOD ALMIGHTY, became consumed by self-absorbed depression and fear **AND THEN HOW GOD HELPED ELIJAH TO OVERCOME** the fears and exhaustion that were natural to Elijah's humanity. In this, we can also apply this thinking and God's lessons to Elijah to our lives today.

We included a 2 panel insert of "HEALTHY CARE" Ideas in this week's Bulletin that notes 7 ideas of writer and speaker Dr. Rev. Junius Dotson's suggestions for establishing healthier lifestyles.

- Sleep 8 hours
- Drink plenty of water
- Spend time outside (if possible) --- walk and soak-up the sun.
- Fast FROM SUGAR
- Write a letter or note to YOUR BODY – thanking it for all that it allows and helps you to accomplish.
- Find a "buddy" or "friend" --- that you might share life with and help one another to stay physically strong and mentally fit.
- Cook your favorite healthy meal and have dinner with your friends & family.

Dear God, please help me to grow and develop in my physical capacities SO THAT I MIGHT BETTER ABLE withstand the world's 'insidious & natural' ways of wearing us down and wearing us out. THANK YOU GOD. IN JESUS NAME, AMEN

Wednesday, 2/19: The importance of rest & relationships

Continuing 1Kings 19:1-15 – Observing how God helped Elijah to get back in the game of life.

Elijah had just experienced a tremendous expenditure of energy --- physical, emotional, and spiritual (see 1 Kings 18). In this victory over the Canaanite god, Baal and the 400 priests of Baal, Elijah was exhausted and ready to collapse – his body and spirit needed REST. Yet, RELENTLESSLY, evil Queen Jezebel vowed to have Elijah killed within 24 hours!

Can you imagine? Your tank is already on empty. Empty emotionally, spiritually, and physically and then more bad news --- threatening news ...

There have been seasons when I have felt that life was RELENTLESS ... life just keeps coming bad news and tough things just keep coming ...

Elijah was ready to throw the towel in and give-up. And as we reviewed in Monday's devotional – Elijah was doing all the wrong things to help himself to RESET and RESTORE.

But God stepped in and began to provide life restoring care and attention. First God began to provide for Elijah's most basic needs --- rest & nourishment ... this helped ... but Elijah was self-consumed and determined to crawl into an isolated cave and hide.

God knew that Elijah's decisions were not helping to bring hope and life back to Elijah. SO, God, lovingly and caringly approached Elijah. In 1 Kings 19:9 we read that God asks Elijah --- “what are you doing here?”

I do not believe that this was a judgmental or critical --- but rather, God was asking, “Elijah – tell me what you are feeling? --- how are you doing?”

God gave Elijah space and permission to VENT --- sometimes we need to give one another the chance to 'vent'. It is ok to vent to God --- God cares for you and wants you to share your heart with Him.

And then ... God, (in my imagination) takes Elijah by the hand and leads Elijah outside the cave ... the wind came, an earthquake shook, fire came ... but God was not in those mighty manifestations of this world --- RATHER God came as a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:13).

When you are down and living in the cave of isolation --- LISTEN FOR GOD's voice --- it is a quiet voice, a caring voice and a reassuring voice ... God who ultimately controls the wind, the fire and the earthquakes of life says to you and me --- COME TO ME ...

Dear God, whether in the storms of my life or the hustle and bustle of the rat-race of life ... I want to hear your voice and feel your presence close to me ... Dear God, I COME TO YOU and accept your strength --- please hold me in the palm of your hand and lift me up with eagle's wings (Psalms 91; Isaiah 49:16 & Isaiah 40:31) In Jesus enabling and caring hand, AMEN.

Thursday, 2/20: Continuing to consider 1 Kings 19:1-15

As we shared the story of the retired race dog --- who gave up life because he realized that he was not chasing a real rabbit around the track but a fake rabbit ... I love the dog's quote, "...and it ain't even a real rabbit!"

Well we have all learned that there are a lot of 'fake rabbits' in this world and we need to be careful to not be DISTRACTED nor put all of our energies to changing things that don't matter ... BUT EVEN CONSIDERING ... THERE ARE A LOT OF WORSRTHY PURSUITS ... especially in terms of our faith, our families, our work, our communities, and so many others THAT WE DO GET WORN OUT ... and when we do ... we become very susceptible to exhaustion and even depression ...

This week we have been considering 1 Kings 19:1-15 and seeing that even the great prophet Elijah had bouts of depression and exhaustion ... and we see that Elijah's restoration began when he began to get the needed rest and nourishment that he needed ... it improved when he had relationships in place that could encourage him and he really began to strengthen and restore when he opened himself to God's whisper ... to God's call upon his life.

As we become rested and restored --- our spirits begin to RESET, we begin to have hope and energy again --- sometimes, at first, in small portions ... and as we continue to REORIENT again with God as our center and focus... we begin to REGAIN our focus and our capacity to live life and not be overwhelmed.

As an athlete needs to keep his or her eyes upon the coach and the coach's instruction --- or a music student needs to listen and practice according to the teacher's directions --- WE TOO NEED TO RECENTER, FOCUS, AND LIVE ACCORDING TO GOD'S DIRECTIONS FOR OUR LIVES.

Once Elijah stepped out of his cave of isolation and depression --- he began to open himself up again to the presence and work of God in him and through him.

God gives us things that we need to do every day --- 1) we need to THINK & REFLECT upon the nourishing **directions of God's instruction book** --- **God's playbook, THE BIBLE** ... 2) we need to **PRAY** -- to visit with God asking Him to form us and mold us to become more like Jesus --- asking Him for help in our day's activities, help for our families, and help for our jobs; 3) we need to **BREATH SPIRITUALLY** --- breathing out the bad in our lives and breathing in the breath of God (1 John 1:8-9-10); and 4) we need to **PRACTICE OUR FAITH** – LIVING & BEING LIKE JESUS IN THE COURSE OF OUR DAY --- helping to bring out the 'God flavors' in others and being a positive source of the light, the peace, the strength, and the courage of God in the context of our God-given lives, families and work.

These are some DAILY PRACTICES that will help increase our CAPACITY TO BECOME MORE LIKE JESUS and TO HELP OUR WORLD TO BECOME MORE LIKE THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN THAT WE PRAY WNE LOOK FORWARD.

Dear God, please breath into me Your Holy Spirit so that I may know You more ... hear Your voice in the midst of life AND rise up with eagle's wings ... protected by Your wings of love and care and strength. Amen.

Friday, 2/21: 1 Kings 19:1-15 Bottom-line:

DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED
DO NOT BE OVERWHELMED
DO NOT ACCEPT A BACK-SEAT ...

EAT RIGHT, SLEEP RIGHT ... & EXERCISE ... TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY< MIND & SOUL SO THAT WE MIGHT
"THRIVE" ... LIVING AS GOD INTENDED ...

Dear gracious and loving God, You are a GOD OF NEW BEGINNING, you created us to be whole, unique, and abundant, life-living children of God. Though TOO often we get TOO BUSY and TOO DISCONNECTED before we realize it, YOU are full of grace to help us and restore us. You bring us back to life – refresh our spirits and make us whole again. God, teach us again what it means to live lightly and freely, walking with you each and every day. Dear God, come and be present in our conversations and relationships. In Jesus name we pray, AMEN.

We closed the service with a rousing praise & worship song called, THRIVE by Casting Crowns. You may want to listen to it on YOU TUBE ...

"Thrive" by Casting Crowns:

Here in this worn and weary land
Where many a dream has died

Like a tree planted by the water
We never will run dry

So living water flowing through
God we thirst for more of You
Fill our hearts and flood our souls
With one desire

Just to know You and
To make You known
We lift Your name on High
Shine like the sun make darkness run and hide
We know we were made for so much more
Than ordinary lives
It's time for us to more than just survive
We were made to thrive

Into Your word we're digging deep
To know our Father's heart

Into the world we're reaching out
To show them who You are

So living water flowing through
God we thirst for more of You
Fill our hearts and flood our souls
With one desire

Just to know You and
To make You known
We lift Your name on High
Shine like the sun make darkness run and hide
We know we were made for so much more
Than ordinary lives
It's time for us to more than just survive
We were made to thrive

Joy Unspeakable, Faith Unsinkable, Love Unstoppable, Anything is possible
Joy Unspeakable, Faith Unsinkable, Love Unstoppable, Anything is possible
Joy Unspeakable, Faith Unsinkable, Love Unstoppable, Anything is possible
Joy Unspeakable, Faith Unsinkable, Love Unstoppable, Anything is possible

Just to know You and
To make You known
We lift Your name on High
Shine like the sun make darkness run and hide
We know we were made for so much more
Than ordinary lives
It's time for us to more than just survive
We were made to thrive

Hey!
We were made to Thrive