

Small Group Guide

28 Days of Prayer - Immanuel Baptist Church

Week 4 - September 8, 2024

Passage: 1 Kings 19:1-18

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Introduction/Background Building:

- Here's the scene. There is a corrupt and godless government. People are scared to talk about the Bible in public. The culture is worshipping pleasure, power, sex, and money. Everyone just does whatever they think is right.
- The scene is not America in 2024; it's Israel in the days of Elijah.
- Elijah was one of the greatest figures in the Bible. He shows up several times throughout the Bible, but 1 and 2 Kings give us the most information about him.
- Elijah lived in a day much like our own: everyone doing whatever they wanted to do, lawlessness, corrupt government, child sacrifice (abortion), persecution of God's people, worship of sex, power, and money.
- Why study Elijah? We study Elijah to learn about:
 - God's faithfulness to His people in a godless society.
 - How we can stay faithful to God in a darkening world.
 - How we can face discouragement, oppression, and depression through faith in God.
- These small group lessons complement other parts of Elijah's story, which we'll study in Sunday morning worship services, Wednesday night prayer services, and our weekly devotionals. You'll have to be a part of each of these incredible times of spiritual growth to get the full picture!
- Key verses for 28 Days of Prayer:
- James 5:16-18 NLT

16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a

righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

17 Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years!

18 Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain, and the earth began to yield its crops.

Last Week: At the showdown in Mt. Carmel, God sent fire down from heaven, proving to Israel and the prophets of Baal that He was and is the One True God. Elijah then prayed for rain to come to Israel, and a mighty rain came from God to break the three-and-a-half-year drought. Elijah had stood up to 450 false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Now, Wicked queen Jezebel was furious that Elijah had upstaged the prophets of Baal.

Bible Passage

1 Kings 19:1 NLT When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal. **2** So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: “May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them.”

3 Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. **4** Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died.”

5 Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, “Get up and eat!” **6** He looked around and there beside his head was some

bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again.

7 Then the angel of the Lord came again and touched him and said, “Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you.”

8 So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God

9 There he came to a cave, where he spent the night. But the Lord said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

10 Elijah replied, “I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.”

11 “Go out and stand before me on the mountain,” the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. **12** And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. **13** When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

And a voice said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

14 He replied again, “I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.”

15 Then the Lord told him, “Go back the same way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive there, anoint Hazael to be king of Aram. **16** Then anoint Jehu grandson of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from the town of Abel-meholah to replace you as my prophet. **17** Anyone who escapes from Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and those who escape Jehu will be killed by Elisha! **18** Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him!” NLT

Big Idea #1. Expect attacks when you’re following God.

19:1 NLT When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal. **2** So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: “May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them.”

For following God’s will and standing up to the false prophets, Elijah was served with a death warrant.

When you’re trying to follow God, don’t always expect that things will go great. Sometimes, you’ll be misunderstood, rejected, and even despised when God is working in you and through you.

- Have you ever experienced difficulties or even attacks for doing the right thing? How did you react?

As we’ll see in Elijah’s case, spiritual attacks can often lead to depression. We must be careful when spiritual attacks come our way; they make us susceptible to spiraling depression.

Big Idea #2. Sometimes, our greatest discouragements follow our greatest victories.

3 Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. **4** Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died.”

Elijah may have expected more of a respectful response from Ahab. Since fire miraculously came down from heaven and the drought was over, shouldn't everyone now turn to the one true God and celebrate his servant Elijah?

Instead, Elijah had to flee for his life. Instead of being a hero, he was an outlaw again. He went to Beersheba, left his servants, and began to isolate himself.

- What is it about hard times that make us want to isolate and shut ourselves off from other people? Is this response healthy or unhealthy? Why?

Sometimes, stress and depression come after our greatest victories. We go from emotional highs to emotional lows. Mountains to valleys. The toll isn't only placed on the soul and spirit; this pendulum swing also can put a lot of stress on our bodies.

God has given us physical limitations for a reason: to realize that we aren't Him. When we push ourselves to the limits over and over without time for rest and recovery, we become exhausted and more susceptible to depression and discouragement.

Elijah's fear undoubtedly contributed to his stress and depression. Fear is a powerful emotion. It will lead us to think irrational thoughts and do destructive things.

Opportunities for fear are all around us. Did you know that we consume 5x more information each day than people did 50 years ago? The information we consume often includes many fearful messages. In fact, we spent over 11 hours a day listening, watching, reading, and interacting with some form of media.

- What messages and influences in your life lead you to be afraid? What steps can you take to trade fear for faith in God?

In this case, Elijah's physical safety was threatened. This loss of security led him to negative, suicidal thoughts along with anger and depression.

Big Idea #3. God gives us gifts of grace to help us fight anxiety and depression.

- **The gift of pausing.**

5 Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping,

Sometimes, the best thing you can do is get some rest. More than one in three Americans sleep less than 7 hours a night, and it's said that a healthy adult needs somewhere between 7 and 9 hours each night on average.

Pausing to rest is a gift from God, because it helps us acknowledge our dependence on Him. There are actions God takes on our behalf when we rest and sleep, to show that He has the strength and ability that we often don't have.

I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me.
Psalm 3:5

Sleep and rest are not the “cure-all,” but they can be powerful tools to reset our minds, spirits, and bodies when we’re facing anxiety and depression.

- Have you ever paused, taken a nap, or gotten a good night’s sleep, and it helped you feel rejuvenated?
- How is physical rest linked to spiritual rest?
- **The gift of provision.**

Suddenly an angel touched him and told him, “Get up and eat!” 6 He looked around and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again.

Through a ministering angel, God met Elijah right where he was in his depression.

Like He had provided food from the ravens and water from the brook, God now provided Elijah with some Spudnuts and clean water. Just kidding! God provides our physical needs, which can help us get our minds and spirits right to serve Him.

Several studies have shown a link between poor diet and increased depression. We’d all do well to eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water. Instead of consuming junk, we need food and water that will give us real sustenance and energy.

The old cliché is correct, “You are what you eat!”
Your body is a temple! Don’t treat it like trash.

- **The gift of purpose.**

7 Then the angel of the Lord came again and touched him and said, “Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you.”

Now, God gave Elijah an assignment — a purpose in serving Him. There would be a journey for Elijah, and he would need physical sustenance to make it on the road ahead.

Elijah needed a purpose. The enemy wants you to feel useless. God wants you to have a purpose.

Quote to ponder: “Feelings of uselessness and hopelessness are not from God, but from the evil one, the devil, who wants to discourage you and thwart your effectiveness for the Lord.” Bill Bright

If you have breath in your lungs, you have a purpose. You can pray, you can share, you can give, you can encourage someone.

8 So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God

This journey took about 200 miles.

9 There he came to a cave, where he spent the night. But the Lord said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

10 Elijah replied, “I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too.”

Elijah was still struggling with depression and negative thoughts. Often times, our recovery and progress is not linear. Sometimes we have setbacks. Sometimes there's more progress that needs to be made.

- **The gift of God's presence.**

11 "Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. **12** And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. **13** When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

God gave Elijah a fresh awareness of His presence.

- How does knowing that God is with us help us during periods of depression, stress, and anxiety?
- How does God's presence minister to us when we feel lonely and isolated?

And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

14 He replied again, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

15 Then the Lord told him, "Go back the same way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive there, anoint Hazael to be king of Aram.

- **The gift of people.**

16 Then anoint Jehu grandson of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from the town of Abel-meholah to replace you as my prophet. **17** Anyone who escapes from Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and those who escape Jehu will be killed by Elisha! **18** Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him!” NLT

God gave Elijah a new friend and co-worker in the faith: Elisha! In addition to promising to punish the wicked, God promised to preserve 7,000 people who were faithful to Him. It's important that we surround ourselves with the people of God when we're experiencing hardships and difficulties.

- What is one thing you learned today that you can put into practice tomorrow?
- How does it help us to know that heroes of the faith like Elijah experienced discouragement, loneliness, and depression?
- How can you help someone going through a season of discouragement and depression?