

SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

— July 15, 2018 —

Pastor Leslie Smith

SERIES: Praise Your Way Through
SERMON: When You Cannot Find God
TEXT: 1 Kings 19:1-8

Central Message:

In many areas of life, great victories are often followed by times of doubt, discouragement, and depression. Emotional stress, physical fatigue, individual personalities, body chemistry, genetic makeup, and other factors can sometimes combine to bring on the "blues" or even deeper depression. Most often, these feelings are totally unrelated to our spiritual commitment. They are simply the result of being human.

People committed to God are not immune to being human. Whether positive or negative, emotions are part of that humanity. Our emotions are plugged into the biological and chemical parts of our bodies and so are often uncontrollable. That is why using our human emotions as a yardstick for our spiritual condition is hazardous. Feeling good and being happy are not always good measures of commitment to God. Likewise, feeling depressed, discouraged, anxious, doubtful, and like "I've had enough" are not necessarily signs of spiritual relapse.

When you are dealing with discouragement and cannot find God, you need to *reject faulty thinking.*

(1 Kings 19:1-3)

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“To Know God and To Make Him Known”

1 Kings 18 records the incredible story of Elijah on Mt. Carmel. He assembled Israel on the mountain and accused them of spiritual schizophrenia. They were “halting” — literally “limping” between two opinions. They could not decide whether to worship God or to worship Baal.

So Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal — 450 of them — to a theological shoot-out. “I’ll call on my God,” he says, “you call on Baal, and let’s see which one answers with fire from heaven. The one that does will be the God of Israel.”

Baal’s prophets accepted the challenge, set up their altar, and began crying to their god. But no fire falls.

“Maybe he can’t hear you,” Elijah says. Then he suggests that they shout louder. They do, but still no fire falls.

“Is he asleep?” Elijah taunts. “You had better wake him up.”

As a final appeal, Baal’s prophets slash themselves with knives, but that doesn’t work either. No fire comes. After all this, Elijah builds an altar to the Lord, digs a trench around it, and orders that water be poured over it. Twelve barrels of water in all are used until the sacrifice is soaked through and through, and the ditch around it is running over.

Then, Elijah prays a simple prayer and God sends fire to consume the sacrifice, the altar, and even the water.

With that turning point, the people worshiped the Lord and shouted, “The Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God.” Then, in obedience to Elijah’s command, they slaughtered Baal’s prophets. It was a high hour. Everyone knew God’s hand was upon Elijah.

Elijah is not permitted to relish the mountain-top experience long, however. As soon as queen Jezebel hears what happened she sends Elijah a message saying,

“You have killed all of my prophets; by this time tomorrow I am going to kill you also.”

When the prophet of God read her message, his heart sank and he began to run for his life. He ran all the way to Beersheba, the southern-most city in Judah. In the midst of his crisis of fear, Elijah failed to think. He had forgotten that God used him to destroy 450 prophets of Baal. He did not consider that if Jezebel really intended to kill him, she probably would not have sent him a message ahead of time. She was trying to scare him, plain and simple, and he took the bait.

When we find ourselves under attack by the adversary, we need to stop and think. Satan has already been defeated. Scripture calls him a “roaring lion”. He is just making noise. We need to trust that God is able to do more than we could ever ask or think.

When you are dealing with discouragement and you cannot find God, you need to remain intimately connected.

(1 Kings 19:3-4)

Beersheba was the end of civilization. Beyond it, there was nothing but a barren desert. He was getting as far away from the queen as possible. The mistake that he made is that he left his servant, perhaps because he didn't intend to come back, perhaps because he didn't want his servant to see what he was really like. Then, he went another day's journey into the wilderness alone. Have you ever gotten so depressed that you didn't want anyone to see just how down you were?

Psychologists call it “withdrawing.”

The enemy wants to divide and conquer. He knows that we are stronger when we are in the company of other believers. When you reach a low point in your life...when you are dealing with trials that are threatening to undo you, you should move toward and not away from those who care about you. Discouragement thrives in an environment of isolation and self-pity.

When you are dealing with discouragement and cannot find God, you need to take time for *rest and recuperation*.

(1 Kings 19:5-8)

When Elijah finally quit running, he sat down under a juniper tree and asked God to let him die. “I’ve had it, Lord,” he said, “take my life for I am no better than my ancestors” (1 Kings 19:4). They had been unsuccessful in stamping out apostasy in Israel and so had he. He felt like a failure.

Out of sheer physical exhaustion, Elijah fell asleep. He was psychologically wrung out and physically drained. The Lord let him sleep. After a time, the Lord sent an angel who prepared a meal for Elijah, awakened him, and gave him food to eat and water to drink. Then, he slept again. Once more, the angel awoke him and fed him in preparation for a journey to Mt. Horeb where he could get away from the people and pressures that were troubling him. Strengthened by the food, Elijah finally reached his destination, 150 miles to the south. This time, he had gone as far away from Jezebel as he could go and still be on the same continent.

Elijah’s depression wasn’t bound up in any one cause. Rather, it stemmed from a number of things. I want you to notice the three factors in his depression found in this experience.

The first is *fear* (1 Kings 19:3). Elijah, frightened by the threats of Jezebel, runs for his life. Fear is almost always a factor in depression. Many times, like Elijah, we become afraid of failure, of loneliness, of not getting a job completed, of not making it through school, of not having our marriage go the way we’d like.

Second, *failure* (1 Kings 19:4). Elijah held a negative opinion about himself. He felt he was no more successful in checking the nation’s apostasy than the prophets who had gone before him. It’s easy to think “I’m no good. I’m incompetent. God made a mistake when He made me.”

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Third, *fatigue* (1 Kings 19:5). Elijah was emotionally drained and physically exhausted. Mountain tops can leave us that way. He needed rest and relaxation. Depression is always related to or reflected in our physical condition.

If we are to praise our way through our adversity, we must resist faulty thinking when trouble comes, we must remain intimately connected to other believers, and, lest we become overcome with fatigue, we must take time for rest and recuperation.