

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 16, 2022 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



“When God’s Own Get Depressed”
1 Kings 19

“¹And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. ²Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” ³And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!” ⁵Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, “Arise and eat.” ⁶Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. ⁷And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.” ⁸So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. ⁹And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁰So he said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life. ¹¹Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces 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; ¹²and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. ¹³So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁴And he said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.” ¹⁵Then the LORD said to him: “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. ¹⁶Also you shall

anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. ¹⁷ It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. ¹⁸ Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”¹⁹ So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. ²⁰ And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?”²¹ So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen’s equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.” -1 King 19:1-21 (NKJV)

While many people like to stick with the New Testament when it comes to reading the Bible, I must confess that the Old Testament has a special place in my heart. I love reading the testimonies of faith heroes like Abraham, Moses, David, Esther, Joseph and more. Their lives are so inspiring and if we're honest, filled with enough drama and conflict to keep me on the edge of my seat. One of my all-time favorite testimonies in the Bible is that of the Prophet Elijah, that we have been looking at the last few weeks as we began our study on his life.

This man was on fire for God. Literally at his request the Lord answered with a consuming fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:36-38). Elijah was sent on mission from God to turn the Israelites hearts back to their One True God. When we first read of Elijah, the Israelites have been worshiping both the God of their ancestors, who is the One True Living God, and the false God Baal. Enough was enough. God sent Elijah to confront their wavering faith and lead them to make a decision.

7 Things To Know About Elijah in the Bible:

- (1) **Elijah was an ordinary man, just like us** - God uses the ordinary, like Elijah, to do extraordinary. James 5:17-18 reminded us that he was an ordinary man just like us. *“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.” - James 5:17-18ESV* Elijah, a biblical prophet is one of the most interesting characters in the Bible. His life was colorful. God used him during a really important time in Israel’s history to oppose a wicked king and to bring revival to those people. Like many other characters in the Bible, Elijah’s life was not without its challenges. His life was filled with turmoil. There were times when he was decisive and valiant, but there were also times when he was fearful and uncertain. He also demonstrated victory and defeat, trailed by recovery. He recognized the power of God, but he also knew the pits of depression. His life was devoted to the work of restoring true worship In Israel. Ultimately, Elijah urged the people of ancient Israel to turn from sin and to return to the true God and his message is just as important for us today. Elijah’s admonition that God’s people faithfully serve Him with their whole heart is just as relevant now as it was during his time on earth.
- (2) **Elijah was chosen by God** - God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Similar to many of the prophets of the Bible, Elijah didn’t seek to be one of God’s messengers. Instead, God chose him directly for the position. When he was called, Elijah didn’t hesitate to take on his mission, even though it appeared his life would be threatened by the wicked king. Elijah set out at once for the capital city of Samaria to deliver the announcement to King Ahab. Then God sent Elijah into hiding as the drought dried up the streams and withered the crops of the nation (1 Kings 17:7-15; 1 Kings 18:1). Elijah was chosen to confront the followers of Baal

simply because he had a relationship with God. In addition to confronting the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, he also performed many miracles: providing an endless supply of flour for a widow and raising a young boy from the dead.

- (3) **We don't know much about Elijah's past** - Elijah's name means "my God is the Lord." He came from Tishbeh in Gilead, but little is known of his family or birth. While many prophets of the Bible are introduced with information about family lineage, this wasn't the case with Elijah. This shows that his selection by God was divine. He came out of nowhere to do the extraordinary at time when he was so desperately needed. Only God can do that. While we don't know a great deal about his life, we do know a lot about his nature and character. Elijah was attentive to God's voice and walking in obedience to His Word. Through this, Elijah found encouragement, reward and victory. Like any human, he struggled with his own frailties, but he was still used mightily by God. Our Heavenly Father uses us for those same purposes.
- (4) **Prayer was Elijah's key strategy for his life and ministry** - Elijah prayed to God vehemently. His prayers were bold and he called on God to do the miraculous. His requests weren't small – He prayed for a drought in the land, prayed to raise the widow's son from the dead and called down a fire from heaven to consume the offering on Mount Carmel. The Bible tells us, "At the usual time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, 'O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am Your servant. Prove that I have done all that is at your command. Immediately the fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench!'" (1 Kings 18:36,38). We see through Elijah's life that prayer is truly powerful. His life reminds us that if we trust in God through prayer, it will make a significant impact.
- (5) **Elijah suffered with depression** - Depression is often triggered by life circumstances and can really pull you into the pit. There are numerous biblical references to depression. Scripture describes the struggles of people who suffered with depression even though they were faithful servants of God. These men did not suffer primarily because they were sinners. They suffered because they were human and were susceptible to severe pressures. Elijah grew depressed when he was rebuked while he was anticipating a moment of triumph. His lofty hopes were crushed; he became sick at heart. Up until this point, Elijah had been the epitome of spiritual courage. He now collapses, runs away when Israel most needs his leadership, possibly missing the chance for national repentance and turns suicidal. He suffered from spiritual depression – a specific kind of depression that is related to commitment to God. Elijah's depression, along with many other biblical characters, alerts us to the fact that being committed to God does not necessarily exempt us from being depressed.
- (6) **Elijah's life as a prophet and believer was threatened** - When the false prophets of Baal were dead, Elijah's life was threatened by Jezebel, the wicked wife of King Ahab. As Israel's queen, she brought the worship of her god Baal, influencing King Ahab to worship Baal and set up idols in Israel (1 Kings 16:31; 1 Kings 21:25-26). God's prophets who bring messages of warning are often hated and accused of being the cause of such suffering. Jezebel and the false prophets of Baal hated Elijah and they did everything in their power to catch him. In a moment of human weakness, Elijah was deeply discouraged. But it wasn't long before God reassured Elijah and sent him back to face King Ahab. Elijah was sent to deliver the message that Ahab and Jezebel would both die a humiliating death because of all the wicked deeds they refused to repent of (1 Kings 21:20-24).
- (7) **John the Baptist's ministry was marked by 'The Spirit and Power of Elijah'** - We can learn about the message of the final Elijah by studying the mission of John the Baptist. Gabriel brought a message from God that a prophet was coming to announce that Jesus was the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. John the Baptist was the prophet, and Jesus declared that John was

an Elijah-like figure, in addition to one who would come later (Matthew 11:14; Matthew 17:12). An angel declared of John's mission: "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:16-17). Ultimately, John the Baptist's ministry was marked by "the spirit and power of Elijah" fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi 4:5-6. James uses Elijah as an example of prayer in James 5:17-18. He says that Elijah "was a human being, even as we are: yet he prayed that it wouldn't rain and it didn't. Then he prayed that it would rain and it did. We see through this that the power of prayer is in God, not within our human nature.

Many people think that the prophets were morally or spiritually superior to us, and it's easy to think of Elijah in this way. But the truth is, he wasn't. Like us, Elijah needed correction, encouragement and the knowledge that other believers were standing against Baal too. Elijah wasn't exceptionally spiritual or superior. He was completely human. But what made Elijah extraordinary was his complete commitment to the Will of God. Elijah gave all his energy and heart so that the world would know the one true God. God uses the ordinary to do the extraordinary.



"You will break the bow if you keep it always bent!" ... So goes an ancient Greek saying. Perhaps it was because Elijah's "bent bow" that he finally broke under the strain. In 1 Kings 19, we look upon a disillusioned, downcast, and discouraged man. Let's discover why, as well as how; God dealt with His broken servant. From this biblical study we shall be able to understand how we can handle those days when we get "blue." This scriptural account revolves around four personalities: Ahab, Jezebel, Elijah, and Jehovah... let's look at each. But before we do that let's take a look at Christians and the subject of depression.

CHRISTIANS AND DEPRESSION

Christians should never suffer depression. That's a common attitude from some people and it is decidedly wrong. People who claim Christians should never suffer depression have failed to understand a basic truth, that it is not something the person chooses to do. It is not showing a lack of faith or that they are lacking in their spiritual life. Depression is often, quite simply, a medical condition like asthma or any other sickness. We don't tell the person who has asthma it is because they don't have enough faith or they are lacking in their spiritual life or if they prayed or believed more the asthma would go, we get them medical help. Why do we take a different attitude when it comes to depression?

Can I suggest the biggest problem is because people, especially those who have never suffered from it, don't understand the problem? It is not a spiritual failing on the person's part. Some people think faithful followers of God don't experience depression, but there are several people in the Bible who did, such as:

Biblical examples of those who suffered depression:

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| 1. Moses (Numbers 11:10-15) | 6. Saul (1 Samuel 16:14-2) |
| 2. King David (Psalm 6, 13, 38) | 7. Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:14,16) |
| 3. Hannah (1 Samuel 1:9-18) | 8. Jonah (Jonah 4:1-3) |
| 4. Elijah (1 Kings 19:1-18) | 9. Habakkuk (Habakkuk 1:1-3:19) |
| 5. Job (Job 3:1-26 and 6:1-7:21) | 10. Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:4, 2:1) |

Similarly, there have been many leaders, preachers, and missionaries in the history of the Church who have also struggled with bouts of depression. Some of the more notable examples are:

Christian leader examples of those who suffered depression:

1. **Martin Luther** (founder of the Protestant Reformation)
2. **David Brainerd** (missionary to Native Americans)
3. **Hudson Taylor** (Founder of the China Inland Mission)
4. **A.B. Simpson** (founder of the Christian Missionary Alliance)
5. **Adoniram Judson** (missionary to Burma)
6. **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** (19th century revival preacher)
7. **Mother Theresa** (missionary to the poor and destitute of India)

Statistics tell us that in America alone, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men will suffer from depression at some stage in their lives, and that nearly 151 million people struggle with this problem in any given year. What they need along with our prayers is support, encouragement, as well as practical help from Christians, the church and from God's Word.

Sometimes it is in the hard times, the depression and darkness that God speaks to us most clearly, even David found that out. Read some of his psalms **Psalm 6, 14, 25, 51, 77** are just a few examples. There are others. You will also see it in **1 Kings 19** where Elijah hid away from the world and his responsibilities in a depressed state, till God encouraged him and drew him out of it by speaking to him, by reassurance and providing practical help in the form of Elisha.

No one is immune to depression, not even the Christian. It usually hits us at surprising moments, yet there are times when we can almost predict it. Fighting it is never a pleasant experience. Some depressions are deep and complex – lasting for months...even years. On the other hand, some may last for shorter periods of time. Tragically, some result in devastating consequences. Some leave lasting scars on one's life.

FACING DEPRESSION AS A CHRISTIAN: BEWARE THESE MISCONCEPTIONS

Not only can depression make you question God or feel distant from Him, but it can also make navigating Christian community more difficult. Depression can be even more challenging for Christians because, unfortunately, there are misconceptions and stigmas associated with depression in many Christian communities. **When you or the people around you do not understand the reality of depression, it makes seeking help more difficult.** Depression can already distort your perception of reality or make you doubt your judgment. It's crucial to be able to recognize what is and is not true about depression. Many well-meaning people may actually give you bad advice because they don't understand depression. Here are 9 common misconception that Christians and Christian communities (churches) may have about depression along with their realities. See if these don't sharpen our focus on the subject of depression for the good of all, especially those believers around us who may affected by this very real and pressing trial that many find themselves in... perhaps even some of us.

9 Misconceptions Christians Have About Depressions Along with their Corresponding Realities:

(1) Misconception: Depression is not real.

Reality: Depression is a real illness that impacts the brain's ability to function as it should.

The idea that depression is not real is a very dangerous misconception that prevents many people from getting help.

(2) Misconception: Depression is a sin. Variation of this Misconception: Being depressed means you are failing to trust God. Being depressed means you are failing to be joyful in all things or to give thanks to God.

Reality: Depression is an illness, not a sin.

If you get a cold or suffer from back pain or any physical illness, does anyone ever tell you that you're being sinful or failing to trust God because you are in pain? It sounds unreasonable because it is. It's just as unreasonable to say suffering from depression or any other mental illness is a sin. God created a perfect world, but when evil entered, perfection was shattered and the world was never the same. We all suffer in some ways from the results of evil breaking into God's perfect creation. Illness, whether it be physical or mental, is one of the many ways we see how broken our world truly is. Yes, mental illness is often triggered by stressors or negative environmental factors, but that does not mean it is not real. Physical illness is also frequently triggered by stressors and negative environmental factors. Stress can cause ulcers and increase the risk of a heart attack, very serious illnesses that, like depression, need treatment, not condemnation.

(3) Misconception: Depression will go away if you pray hard enough or have enough faith.

Reality: Depression usually needs to be treated with more than prayer.

Again, depression is a serious illness. As with any illness, someone with depression should seek professional medical treatment. While God is capable of divinely healing mental or physical illness, He does not always intervene in that way. He provides other ways to heal. God gave people like doctors and mental health professionals the understanding and skills to help those who are suffering. Because chronic stress and trauma can cause physical and chemical changes in the body and brain, they can trigger or worsen depression. Therapy or

counseling can be a crucial part of treatment for many people suffering from depression. Being able to process trauma and come up with strategies to reduce stressors and cope with difficulties can help people heal from depression. Though there is often an environmental and emotional component to depression, the underlying issue is usually biological. This is one reason two people may be going through the same or similar situations and one may develop depression while the other does not. Depression, as with all things involving the brain, is complex, and not even the most advanced researchers fully understand exactly what causes it. Doctors have found many biological factors that cause or contribute to depression, including genetics, parts of the brain not functioning as they should, problems with neurotransmitters and neurons (nerve cells), and certain medical conditions. Sometimes medications help correct or lessen these issues and so treat depression. Just as people with high blood pressure take medication to help their circulatory systems function better, you may need to seek out medication to help your brain function better. There is no shame in needing medication for depression if you are a Christian.

- (4) **Misconception: Depression is a punishment from God. Variation:** If you feel depressed, it's because you have unconfessed sin.

Reality: *Depression is not the fault of the person who is suffering. It is a difficult trial that can refine someone's faith, but it's not a punishment for sin.*

Even in Jesus' day, people were eager to ascribe blame for illness and disability, but He challenged their assumptions. We see this in John 9:1-3, "¹Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. ²And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' ³Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.'" The assumption that depression or any mental illness is a punishment for sin is just as faulty as the disciples' assumption that the man's physical blindness was a result of sin.

- (5) **Misconception: Depression is just an excuse for laziness or not doing your Christian duty.**

Variation: You are letting God and your church down if you are too depressed to serve or minister.

Reality: *God loves you however much you do to serve Him.*

People who are depressed are already dealing with enough without also being shamed for not doing "enough." Churches often rally around people going through physical illness, bringing them meals and showing them grace. Sadly, mental illness is often met with judgment instead of compassion and support. Not only is this unhelpful, it's unbiblical. Depressed or not, your relationship with God is more important than doing or serving. We see this in Jesus' interaction with two sisters named Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42, "³⁸Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. ³⁹And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.' ⁴¹And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. ⁴²But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.'"

God is more concerned with your heart and obedience than how much you serve at church or how many times you can share your testimony. Your service for God is an expression of the

change He has brought about in your life rather than a strategy for winning His favor. But no matter what anyone says, having a relationship with God is not about what you can do for God. He's already done everything through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, so once you have a relationship with God, you cannot lose it by failing to do religious things. **People who are depressed are already dealing with enough without also being shamed for not doing "enough."**

Depression can make it very difficult to accomplish the tasks of day-to-day life, including ministry. You may be in a season in your life when you need to focus on seeking healing from your mental illness and let some other commitments go. That's okay. Even if you cannot serve in your normal roles at church or minister in any way, God still loves you. No one should try to guilt or shame you for not being able to do what you would normally do as your Christian service. You should be allowed to serve when you are able, trusting God to provide you with opportunities to share your faith even when you're depressed.

The reality is that God will probably give you many opportunities to serve and minister at a time when your depression is not at its worst. He will give you a new, powerful testimony about His faithfulness during suffering, like He did with me. You can use your story to serve others who are in the midst of suffering. But even if you can never do anything else "for God" again, He still loves you and would not leave you or forsake you.

- (6) Misconception: People with depression are unstable and cannot be trusted with church leadership or responsibilities. Variation:** Depression is an indication of unconfessed sin or weak faith, so people with depression are not fit for leadership.
Reality: *Depression and other mental illnesses do not disqualify people from leadership or church roles. Experiencing depression can give people compassion or perspective in a way that actually makes them excellent leaders. (i.e. Spurgeon,)*

Some people may need to step back from certain roles during times of deep depression, but others who struggle with depression are perfectly capable of serving and even leading in ministry activities. **Radical dependence on God is crucial not only for surviving depression but also for ministry and leadership.**

This is especially true when people are seeking treatment or have depression that is well controlled. Though depression, like many medical conditions, may be a lifelong struggle, people often learn to cope well with resources like [8counseling](#) and medication.

Suffering is a universal experience, so church leaders need to be well-equipped to care for people who are going through hardship. When you've walked with God through something as difficult as depression, it gives you a greater ability to walk with others through difficult times. Not only can depression increase a person's level of compassion and empathy, it can also provide a new perspective on life that equips them for Christian leadership. Often when a person is depressed or dealing with depression, their prayer life increases. Radical dependence on God is crucial not only for surviving depression but also for ministry and leadership. Depression also gave me eternal perspective. Eternal perspective is understanding that God and eternal things matter so much more than our present reality.

- (7) Misconception: It's shameful to discuss mental illness openly.**

Reality: Church community should be a safe environment for people to discuss mental health without judgment.

Sadly, some Christians can be very judgmental about mental illness, but that is not a biblical response. Mental illness is not something you should be made to feel ashamed of or fear sharing with your church community. **Depression and mental illness should receive as kind and gentle a response from Christians, as they do from Jesus.**

Jesus made it clear He was not pleased with people who put on a show of being very religious and moral and who judged others. A group of religious leaders called the Pharisees were the epitome of religious people who act like they have it all together and judge others who do not. Jesus often called the Pharisees out for their hypocrisy. In contrast, Jesus was gentle and kind with people who were struggling and even sinning but who were open to God changing their lives. The Christian community should never be a place where people feel they need to hide and cover up what they are really going through. In a genuine Christian community, people can share all of their struggles and ask for prayer without fear of shame or judgment. They can testify about how God is working through whatever is happening in their lives. Depression and mental illness should receive as kind and gentle a response from Christians, as they do from Jesus.

- (8) Misconception: You can always tell if someone's depressed by outward appearances or actions.**

Reality: You cannot always tell that someone is depressed from how they look or act.

Many people with depression are so skilled at hiding their condition that you would never know from the outside. You may have heard someone say something along the lines of, "But you do not look depressed." I'm not sure what exactly people think depression should look like, but depression can look a lot of different ways. **You can wish you no longer existed but look fine to the people around you.** This is especially true for someone struggling with bipolar disorder, which includes high moods, called manic episodes, alternating with deep, severe depression. Sadly, I've known those, had them in my church and even had a family member who I believe suffered from bipolar disorder die from suicide. He was very outgoing and fun to be around much of the time. I remember meeting so many people at funerals for these who were stunned and confused. I heard comments like, "He's the last person I would ever have guessed would be suicidal," or, "But she was always so happy." You cannot assume someone is okay based on external appearances.

- (9) Misconception: It's okay to talk about another person's depression or struggles with mental illness as long as they don't know.** **Variation:** Sharing someone's struggles with mental illness without their knowledge lets other people know they need to be sensitive.

Reality: When people share their mental health concerns, those should be respected and kept in confidence. It is gossip to talk about others' mental health behind their backs.

Talking about someone else's personal issues when they have not given you permission is never a good idea. But it can be especially painful when you are sharing someone's struggles with mental illness. Whether you think you are having a serious conversation about a real issue or you are just sharing gossip, using specific examples from the life of a person you know is a breach of their trust. Prayers and prayer requests for others should be respectful, not thinly veiled opportunities for gossip or judgment.

AHAB... THE HENPECKED HUSBAND (1 Kings 19:1)

¹And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword.” Ahab wasn’t his own man. We see this when he came to his wife, and told her everything “Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword.” Observe two things about Ahab... the henpecked husband.

2 Things to Observe About Ahab:

1. He **fell apart** under pressure and **leaned** on Jezebel to get him through – Why? Because he was so overdependent on his wife.
2. He **looked** to his **wife** to do his job – This king had a “child-mother” arrangement with his spouse, more than a “husband-wife” relationship.

JEZEBEL... THE DOMINEERING WIFE (1 Kings 19:2)

²Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” Having listened to her husband’s report, she usurped his role and “sent a messenger to Elijah,” threatening his life (see 1 Kings 21:1-13) Three things depict her style of operation...

3 Things that Illustrate Jezebel’s Style of Operation:

1. She quickly took **matters** into her own **hands**
2. She did **Ahab’s job** her way
3. She relied on the **flesh** when her husband was under **pressure**

She was a master of intimidation!

ELIJAH... THE DEFEATED PROPHET (1 Kings 19:3-4)

.” ³And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!” Though we would expect that Elijah would have stood up to her, he succumbed to Jezebel’s intimidation and “ran for his life.” Five conclusions can be drawn as to why his discouragement and fear occurred, causing this unexpected response.

5 Reasons Behind Elijah’s Discouragement and Depression:

1. He did not think **realistically** or **clearly** – Here’s what he did instead...
 - He failed to consider the source of the intimidation, an unbelieving, vicious woman.
 - He failed to see beyond the threat – It is likely that her threat was, in fact, a bluff.
 - He failed to call upon the Lord immediately
2. He **separated** himself from a **strengthening relationship** – Elijah left his servant at Beersheba and traveled a day’s journey into the wilderness, where he sat alone under a juniper tree.
3. He was **caught** in the aftermath of great **victory** – Often this is particularly vulnerable moment.
4. He was **physically exhausted** and **emotionally spent** – God servants are not exempt from fatigue, you and me included. Elijah had been moving from one demanding challenge to

another and was worn out. On phrase in particular indicates his despair, *“It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!”*

5. **He submitted to the beast of self-pity** – Who said that he had to be better than his fathers? No one. Was anyone setting his standards for him, establishing his goals? No. He had established his own unrealistically high goals.

JEHOVAH... THE FAITHFUL GOD (1 Kings 19:5-21)

God responded to his hand-selected prophet in three ways. Where we, no doubt, would have rebuked Elijah, God reached down to provide care for him. Watch closely how God reached out to Elijah, just as He desires to do with us today.

3 Ways God Responded to Elijah in His Time of Discouragement & Depression:

1. **God allowed Elijah rest and refreshment (vv.5-8)** – Elijah simply needed to be quiet – to think, relax, sleep, and eat nourishing food. Fatigue had resulted in depression and he needed time to recover.
2. **God communicated with Elijah wisely (vv.9-17)** – In the wake of his God-given time of refreshment, Elijah traveled from the wilderness to Horeb, a four-day journey. After finding a cave in which to lodge, a dialogue began between the prophet and his God. Note the gentle progression in their conversation...

The Lord: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (v.9). The question was not harsh, but tender.

Elijah: “I have been very zealous for the Lord... and I alone am left: and they see my life...” (v.10).

The Lord: “Go forth, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” A wind strong enough to break rocks began to blow across the mountain, followed by an earthquake and then a fire. The prophet retreated into the cave for protection, but was coaxed out again as a “gentle blowing” came by – a pleasant breeze (vv.11-13). Again came the question, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (v.13).

Elijah: “... I alone am left; and they seek my life...” (v.14). The response was the same as before.

The Lord: “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Syria, and Jehu... king over Israel; and Elisha... as prophet in your place” (emphasis added)

3. **God gave Elijah a close personal friend (vv.19-21)** – Elijah wasn’t alone, though he may have felt that way. Not only did God leave seven thousand in Israel who refused Baal-worship (v.18), but he also raised up Elisha who “ministered” to Elijah. God gave him a gift: a man to love him, to understand him, and to encourage him. How good God was to Elijah.

When this series of events tracked Elijah’s life, including a famine that he himself had prophesied, and a confrontation on Mt. Carmel where he defied 450 prophets of Baal. After seeking out a solitary retreat next to a juniper tree, his reward was a threat on his life – issued by Jezebel. His words were like Moses’ in verse 4, *“While he (Elijah) himself went a day’s journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, Lord,’ he said. ‘Take my life...’”* Again we have an exhausted, discouraged, depressed man of God. Why?

5 Important Reminders in Elijah's Time of Depression:

- (1) **Physically – exhausted and fearful (v.3)** In fear for his life, Elijah had just run approximately 30 miles. Not only was he weary from running, but also from relating to the cultic prophets on Carmel. He had missed sleep and meals... he was worn out.
- (2) **Emotionally – used and abused (v.10)** Whereas Moses struggled with an inferiority complex, Elijah suffered from a martyr's complex. Note his words in verse 10, *"And he said, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord God hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.'"* He felt all alone, like there was no one else by him. Not so. God soon reminded him of that, saying that he was joined by 7,000 others in Israel who had refused to bow to Baal.
- (3) **Spiritually – shrinking and shriveling faith (v.3)** His fear was an indication that his eyes were not on God, but on the enemy. Jezebel was anxious to take his life, and it seemed all were against him – Jezebel, the world, even God.
- (4) **How God handled him** – God didn't rebuke Elijah. Instead, God fed His servant and allowed him to sleep (vv.5-8). The food which the heavenly men delivered to him was so adequate that it kept his strength sustained for 40 days, until he reached Mt. Horeb. Not only was he well fed and well rested, but God also supplied him with a friend – Elisha (vv.19-21).
- (5) **What God says to us – (vv.11-13) God is at work, behind the scenes even when we don't see Him** The 3 phenomena, wind, earthquake, and fire, announced the imminent arrival of the Lord. The Lord's self-revelation to Elijah came in a faint whispering voice (v.12). The lesson for Elijah was that Almighty God was quietly, sometimes imperceptibly, doing His work in our lives and we can trust and rest in Him.

TIMELY CAUTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Our occurrence that happens all too often in our daily lives is that we fall in love with the gift(s) God give us, rather than falling in love with Him.

"The universe shudders in horror that we have this infinitely valuable, infinitely deep, infinitely rich, infinitely wise, infinitely loving God, and instead of pursuing him with steadfast passion and enthralled fury — instead of loving him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; instead of attributing to him glory and honor and praise and power and wisdom and strength — we just try to take his toys and run. It is still idolatry to want God for his benefits but not for himself." – Matt Chandler

Elijah's focus was properly established, but that's not always true for us. This substitution can occur in a variety of ways, and we must guard against it. For example...

3 Warnings and Encouragements to Consider:

1. **Scripture...** When we are directed to a timely passage in our time of need do we focus our love on the Bible/God's Word rather than on God Himself?
2. **Friendship...** When we are giving a friend/a help who fulfils our life in a time of need do we focus our love on the friend rather than on the God that supplied the friend?
3. **Occupation...** When we are given a job/work that provides for us prosperity and our needs do we focus our love on our wealth rather than on God who supplied the job?

At least five significant lessons emerge from this study which, if applied can help us to not only win over depression and discouragement, but to actually grow in their midst.

5 Lessons for Growing through Depression:

- 1. Realize that depression is not a sin, it is a symptom –**
- 2. Maintain a consistent program of rest and relaxation –** You may have to delegate some of your work load to do this.
- 3. Guard against those subtle complexes (inferiority, martyr, and superiority) that can lead to depression –** Keep your eyes on the Lord and away from yourself.
- 4. Remember that God is for you, not against you –** It is not His design to make your life miserable, but meaningful.
- 5. Don't forget, Satan and his demons may bring depression –** It's one of his sharpest darts.

“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him my Savior and my God.” –Psalm 42:5