

1 Kings 19:1-9

February 5, 2023



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Give a high point and a low point from this week.

(Tip: These don't have to be serious. A high point could be chicken nuggets for lunch and a low point could be, well, chicken nuggets for lunch!)

Have you experienced highs and lows in your relationship with God? What are the highs like? The lows?

We've been reading about some really high highs Elijah had with God working through him. But in chapter 19, he hit a really low low. His story helps us see God in our stories. Sometimes things happen that make us feel tired, depressed, and alone. In those moments, God has not abandoned us. He loves us and cares for us.

DISCUSSION

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 KINGS 19:1-9.

What emotions did Elijah experience in this passage?

Can you relate? Have you ever experienced some of those feelings? If you're comfortable, share that experience.

How did God work in Elijah's depression?

How does that give hope for how God might be working in your life?

Why is it important for people to know they are not alone in depression?

What are some ways our emotions, though important, may not always tell us the truth? How might they fail to tell us the truth about ourselves? About God?

How might we seek to be a group that continually reminds one another that we are not abandoned by God or one another?

What steps might God be calling you to take to try to get to the heart of the things you are feeling? How might this group be a support in that?

APPLICATION

Finish the following sentence: When I am depressed, I need to remember

What is one practical way you can demonstrate trust in Jesus in times of struggle and sorrow?

PRAYER

Thank God for being present even when circumstances may tempt you to believe otherwise. Acknowledge that He knows your situation and is working to make everything for your good and His glory. Pray that you would be alert for times when you are physically, mentally, and emotionally spent.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage as we continue our study of the life of Elijah.

February 12, 2023 --- 1 Kings 19:9-18

COMMENTARY

19:1. Once King Ahab arrived in Jezreel, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done. He recounted Elijah's proposal, the failure of Baal to respond to the prayers of his prophets, God's incredible display of power, the people's response, and the slaughter of all the prophets of Baal. Jezebel could look outside and see Elijah's prophecy of rain also had come true.

19:2. Hearing Ahab's account, Jezebel viewed Elijah's action as a vicious attack on her god Baal, something she refused to tolerate. She sent a messenger to Elijah, vowing he would die as had the prophets of Baal. As Elijah ran to Jezreel (18:46), he must have been overjoyed at God's great victory over Baal. The people had recognized the Lord as Victor and had acclaimed Him as their God

(18:39). Surely Ahab also had been convinced that Baal did not exist and should not be worshiped. Elijah probably expected to return to Jezreel as a victorious prophet. Jezebel's message crushed his joyful celebration.

19:3. Elijah responded to Jezebel's threat with fear and ran for his life. Elijah's flight might have indicated a lack of strength to continue the fight against Baalism and Jezebel or a lack of faith in God's ability to protect him from Jezebel. His victory had turned into defeat.

Many characters in the Bible experienced fear, including Abraham (Gen. 26:7), Jacob (32:11), Joshua (Jos. 8:1), and Peter (Gal. 2:12). We also face fear and sometimes, as Elijah, we seek to escape from frightening situations. When we allow threats to intimidate our faith, we cannot see how God can help us; fear then can overwhelm us.

Elijah traveled south through Israel and Judah and arrived at Beersheba (bee ehr SHEE buh), the southernmost boundary of Judah. There Elijah left his servant, probably the same young man who had reported to Elijah on the status of the gathering rain clouds (1 Kings 18:43-44). Elijah's dismissal of his servant indicated his intention to abandon his prophetic ministry. He would no longer need a servant.

19:4. Alone, Elijah traveled another day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, a small shrub, and sought shelter in its meager shade. Elijah prayed that he might die. He had had enough of standing alone for God. He had grown tired of facing one enemy of God after another. He believed his service for God had been in vain. He, as his ancestors, had failed to lead Israel to a permanent commitment to the Lord. In his depressed state, death seemed the best alternative.

Sometimes we may think biblical figures did not experience the same problems we do. James's statement that Elijah was like us emphasizes Elijah's humanity (Jas. 5:17). It shows, however, that God can use us ordinary people in wonderful ways as he used Elijah. Abraham, Moses, David, and Elijah were not superhuman. They wrestled with temptation, experienced failure, felt fear, and struggled with depression, even as all of us do at times.

19:5. The past three years in Elijah's life had been trying and exhausting. As a known opponent of Baal, he topped Ahab and Jezebel's list of troublemakers (1 Kings 18:17). Although God had miraculously provided nourishment for him (17:6,15-16), he had watched his people suffer through the drought and still not repent and trust in the Lord. God's impressive victory on Mount Carmel had filled Elijah with joy and confidence, but that evaporated with Jezebel's threat. Within a short time, he had journeyed approximately 100 miles, passing beyond the boundary of Judah and into the wilderness.

Physical, mental, and spiritual exhaustion finally caught up with Elijah. He lay down under the shrub's shade and fell asleep. Believers are not immune to exhaustion and depression. Sometimes we exhaust ourselves through Christian service, spending all our time ministering to others without spending enough time with God and at rest. At other times the demands and stresses of life can take their toll. With no physical energy to face or complete tasks, we can despair of ever getting them done. With no mental energy, we cannot think clearly and can become discouraged when we cannot make sound decisions. With no spiritual energy, we lose sight of our divine source of strength.

In Elijah's time of need, God provided for him. God sent an angel who touched Elijah and told him to get up and eat. As God miraculously had cared for Elijah earlier (17:6,15-16), so He did again.

19:6-8. Elijah roused from his sleep and saw a freshly baked cake of bread and a jar of water. God provided the basic necessities for His servant. Elijah did not awaken to find a multicourse meal, a freshly drawn bath, and a warm bed. Elijah awoke to find hope. In the last few days, Jezebel's threat and the apparent ineffectiveness of his ministry had overwhelmed and depressed him. Now he realized God had not given up on him. The food and water brought hope but did not cure his exhaustion or depression. After eating and drinking, he lay down again.

19:9. God, who had spoken to Moses and Israel at Horeb centuries before, spoke to Elijah. He asked Elijah what he was doing at Horeb. While we might think God spoke to Elijah in a stern accusing manner, He probably did not. God knew what Elijah had been through. Out of His great compassion, God encouraged Elijah to tell Him exactly what he was thinking. Of course, God knew