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**Message Series: 40 Days | Seek. Ask. Fast.****Message Title: 40 Days of Renewal****Scripture: 1 Kings 19:1-18**

Life is demanding, and the life of faith is a lifelong journey up mountains and through dark valleys. Often, we find ourselves exhausted even as we fulfill our responsibilities and faithfully follow Jesus. Today, we journey with Elijah the prophet through the wilderness to the mountain of the Lord. We all need renewal. We all need rejuvenation from life's constant weight.

The Lord promises in Jeremiah 29:13, *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."* Throughout this 40 Day series, together as a church, we are committing to three actions:

Seek: intentional attention. To seek is to choose to direct our attention toward God deliberately.

Ask: prayerful dependence. To ask is to pray with trust, naming our need before a good Father.

Fast: sacred subtraction. To fast is to remove something good so we can make room for something greater.

Literary Context of 1 Kings 17-18

- Elijah's prophetic voice interrupts the narrative of the kings of Israel and Judah. Elijah told King Ahab that God said the sky would not produce rain for a few years.
- The Lord protected Elijah from Ahab, commanding him to go to the wilderness, where the Lord fed him bread and meat by ravens, just as the people of God ate manna and quail in the wilderness.
- One day, the Lord told Elijah to present himself to King Ahab. When they finally met, Ahab accused Elijah of troubling Israel by causing the three-year drought. But Elijah called out King Ahab for being the troubler of Israel by not obeying the commands of Yahweh.
- Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a showdown on Mt. Carmel to see whose god would answer with fire. Yahweh revealed his authority and presence in an all-consuming fire that licked up the water and devoured the sacrifice. Elijah expected Yahweh to show up, and Yahweh grabbed the attention of the people of Israel with his presence. To conclude the showdown, Elijah zealously slaughtered the 450 prophets of Baal.

The Exhausted Prophet: 1 Kings 19:1-8

- From the top of the victorious Mt. Carmel, Elijah descends to Jezreel, where Jezebel threatens to kill him. Elijah's fear and depression drove him to isolate himself from others, and he walked into the disorienting wilderness of his own making. Elijah was depressed and suicidal. Elijah's tunnel vision focused on his own situation, and fear prevented him from seeing reality beyond his current situation.
- Although Elijah had given up on himself, Yahweh had not given up on Elijah. An angel woke Elijah up out of his defeated sleep and opened Elijah's eyes to bread and water.
- In today's fast-paced world, many people turn to various coping mechanisms to temporarily escape the weight of exhaustion, stress, and daily pressures. These can feel like quick fixes, providing a

momentary distraction or numbing effect. Whether it's binge watching, endless scrolling, overeating, overconsumption of substances, pornography, retail therapy, or endless gaming, these coping mechanism numbs us and prolong our search for meaning, intimacy, and satisfaction.

The Encounterd Prophet: 1 Kings 19:9-18

- Elijah journeyed for forty days and ascended the sacred Mt. Sinai (Mt. Horeb). On this mountain, generations before, Moses spent 40 days on the mountain receiving the commandments to give to the people of Israel. Elijah's generation had wandered from the commandments, and now Elijah, too, was wandering in the wilderness back to Mt. Sinai.
- The Lord asks Elijah, "What are you doing here?" The question does not condemn Elijah; it invites him to recognize his emotional, spiritual, and physical exhaustion.
- Wind, earthquake, and fire shattered the silence of the mountain, but God revealed himself in an unexpected, gentle whisper. The silence of Yawheh contrasts with the thunder of the wind, the earthquake, and the fire. Whatever Elijah heard in the gentle whisper or the still, small voice caught his attention.
- The gentle whisper offered satisfaction and nourishment. The voice of the Lord, God's word, sustained Elijah on his journey back from Mt. Sinai to find Elisha.

From this story of Elijah, we learn many things about renewal.

1. Renewal is a journey. If you feel exhausted, your exhaustion likely occurred overnight, so renewal will take time to journey with the Lord as Elijah journeyed to Mt. Sinai.
2. Renewal begins with proximity to the Lord. Elijah traveled to a physical place where God was. Perhaps you have a place where you meet God.
3. Renewal includes rest and physical health. In our exhaustion, sometimes what we need is rest and food.
4. Renewal comes from the living voice of the Lord. The Lord longs to speak to us, but sometimes we are so busy with all of our responsibilities that we neglect to stop to listen to the Lord.
5. Renewal responds to the gentle invitation for awareness. "What are you doing here?" is a question for all of us.
6. Renewal revives and redirects. When the Lord renewed Elijah through his voice, he redirected and recommissioned him for more work. Renewal clarifies our passions and desires to serve the Lord and accomplish his work in our sphere of influence.

In Matthew 11:28, Jesus said, *"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."*

This week, pursue renewal from the Lord.

SEEK: Intentionally go somewhere this week to get away from the noise of life.

ASK: Pray for the Lord for renewal and restoration. Expect him to speak to you through his word.

FAST: Remove your typical coping mechanisms and turn to the Lord for satisfaction.