

God's Remedy for Depression

1 Kings 19

Intro

Let me begin to say that there is a difference between transitory sadness/depression and a life-threatening illness of severe depression. Last week we looked at the different kinds of depression that need medical screening and care. Like:

- Major Depression
- Chronic Depression (Dysthymia)
- Bipolar Depression
- Seasonal Depression
- Psychotic Depression
- Postpartum Depression

We must also remember that some cases of depression are caused, at least in part, by genetic and physiological factors. This is why I strongly encourage anyone who thinks they may be depressed to see their doctor for a medical screening and interview to determine if this is the case in their situation. All the counselling in the world will not alleviate depression if it is caused by physiological factors.

Each person is different and some will have unique symptoms, but here are some of the more common symptoms of depression:

- Depressed mood
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness and hopelessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usually-enjoyed activities
- Change in weight or appetite
- Sleep disturbances
- Decreased energy or fatigue (without significant physical exertion)
- Thoughts of death or suicide.
- Poor concentration and difficulty in making decisions

If you or someone you know who has had any of these symptoms for more than a week or two, contact your doctor or have them contact their physician. Please get proper help.

This morning I want to continue to talk about depression in general terms. It often happens to people who on the average are healthy but may go through an episode of depression. It happened to a biblical character named Elijah. Last week we looked at Elijah's depression and talked about 4 areas on how to deal with depression. Just to refresh our minds they were as follows:

- 1) Dwell on the Facts not Your Feelings
- 2) Stop the Comparison Game
- 3) Don't Take False Blame
- 4) Don't Exaggerate the Negative

APPLYING GOD’S REMEDY FOR DEPRESSION

Today I want to focus now on God’s remedy for Elijah’s depression. In this passage of 1 Kings 19 we learn about 4 things on how God helped Elijah to deal with his depression.

1. Take Care of Your Needs

1 Kings 19:5-8 we read, *Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” 6 He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.*

7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” 8 So he got up and ate and drank.

First thing we notice is that God sends an angel to make sure that Elijah eats and drinks and has good rest. When a person is physically tired, mentally drained and not eating right it makes them prone to depression. Here we see how God tenderly takes care of Elijah. He didn’t condemn him by scolding him as a coward. Instead God gave him nourishment and rest. God was restoring Elijah physically through an angel. The angel made him a cake of bread baked over hot coals. I wonder if that’s where we get angel food cake from?! Just kidding!

Perhaps you need to watch your diet, get a good night’s rest and exercise. Physical health has a profound influence on your emotions and mood.

Last month’s issue of *Psychology Today* (May, 2016) had an interesting article on magnesium and how it affects our health. They found that magnesium deficiency contributes to depression. Our lifestyles contribute to the decrease of magnesium levels in our bodies such as excess alcohol, salt, coffee, sugar, phosphoric acid (in pop), chronic stress, and antibiotics. Magnesium is sometimes referred to as the stress antidote, and one of the most powerful relaxation minerals that exists. It is found in seaweed, greens, and beans.

Proper nutrition has a strong correlation with our mental and mood health.

2. Hand Over Your Frustrations to God

When Elijah was restored through food, drink and rest, he traveled for forty days. We read in 1 Kings 19:8-10, *So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 9 There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the Lord came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” 10 He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”*

Here we find Elijah pouring out his frustrations and feelings. God wanted him to open his heart and vent his emotions. Notice that God doesn’t criticize nor condemn him – He listened to Elijah. To open up your heart and feelings is a catharsis – it’s like a cleansing and releasing a burden.

1 Peter 5:7 says, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

In the passage of 1 Kings 19 we find that Elijah had pent up emotions. In verse 3 he was afraid; in verse 4 he felt guilty; in verse 10 he felt angry that he worked hard for nothing. He felt lonely to the point of despair and worried that people were trying to kill him. When you combine these feelings of fear, guilt, anger, frustration, loneliness and anxiety, you are going to feel depressed.

God let Elijah pour out all those feelings. When you get depressed that’s exactly what you need to do – cast all your anxiety and feeling on God because He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

3. A Fresh Awareness of God

The next thing we learn from Elijah’s situation is that he needed a fresh new experience with God. In 1 Kings 19:11-13 we read, *The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.*

This is a wonderful impressive show that God puts on for Elijah - the powerful wind, the earthquake and fire but God didn’t speak through any of those to Elijah. What got the prophet’s attention was the still small voice – the gentle whisper. God doesn’t always shout to get your attention. To hear someone's whisper, you need to be near the person. God doesn't want a long-distance relationship; he wants a close, intimate one. He desires to have communion and fellowship with us.

If you’re feeling depressed go to a quiet serene place like the lake, the forest, the park or somewhere in the countryside. Take your Bible and get alone with God. Let yourself feel His tangible presence. There is no greater remedy than having communion and fellowship with the Lord.

4. Get a New Direction for Your Life

In 1 Kings 19:15 we read, The Lord said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus.” God gives Elijah a new assignment and get him back to work. Another remedy for depression is to get a new direction for your life. One of the best ways to get overcome depression is to quit sitting around in self-pity. At times you need to get your focus off yourself and look at the needs of others. Start helping others and get involved in some ministry where you are giving out and God is working through you.

Stop navel-gazing, that self-indulgent or excessive contemplation of oneself. If you continue looking at yourself you will get discouraged and go into a pity party.

Get a new direction in your life where you are involved in helping others. Pray that God will give you a new purpose and direction.

Applying God's Remedy for depression:

- 1. Take Care of Your Needs**
- 2. Hand Over Your Frustrations to God**
- 3. A Fresh Awareness of God**
- 4. Get a New Direction for Your Life**

Conclusion

Christ wants to bring emotional healing in your life. He wants to lift you out of your depression. He can transform you and give you a new direction for your life. You don't have to go through life being manipulated by your emotions and thoughts. The more you draw closer to Christ and experience His love and joy the more you will be free from depression.

Give your life to Christ because without Him we have no power to change. Ask Him to give you strength, a new purpose and a new meaning in your life.

Here is a powerful truth: you need something greater to live for than just yourself. If you only live for yourself you will get depressed at times. You need something greater that draws you out of yourself and that is a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "*apart from me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5). But in Christ we can do all things through him who gives us strength (Phil. 4:13).