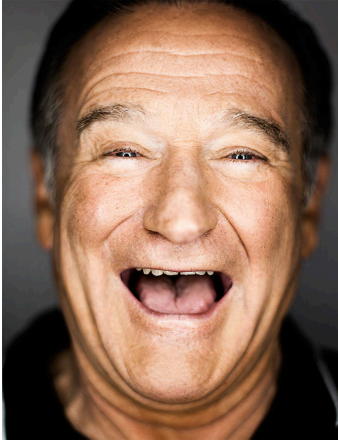




bigIdea small group discussion



Robin Williams normally doesn't fail to make people laugh. But the world was crying on August 11th, 2014 to hear that the legendary comedian and performer Robin Williams had committed Suicide.

In public, Robin Williams shared only the joy he found in life, never the sorrow. He was the same man in private, shielding even longtime friends from the darkness of depression that finally enveloped him.

“I can honestly say I never saw him in the down times,” said comedian David Steinberg, who was friends with Williams for more than 30 years and toured with him for six months last year in a two-man show. “I read about it, heard about it, but that down time he kept to himself.”

Almost half of all Americans experience mental illness at some time in their lives, and almost a third are afflicted in any one year. But for a Christian, is it possible to obey God, be in the will of God, and yet struggle emotionally with depression?

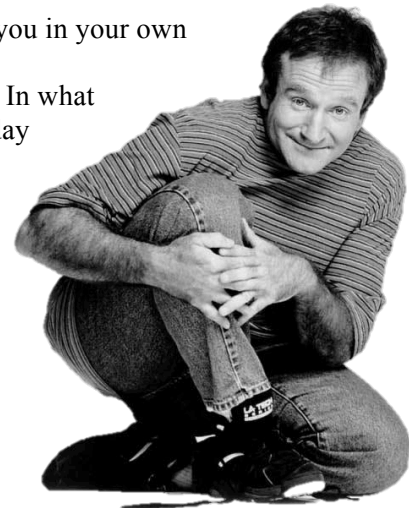
BIG IDEA: God offers hope in the midst of depression and anxiety.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What types of things tend to get you down the most?
2. Describe one of the loneliest moments of your life. How did you make it through such a difficult time?
3. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 19:1-3.* Elijah has just stood alone against insurmountable odds (He stood alone amongst thousands and against 450 prophets of Baal). Why do you think Elijah is suddenly afraid?
4. How does fear sometimes create depression? What types of fears have a grip on your life?
5. Physically, what has Elijah just been through in 1 Kings 18:42, 46?

Elijah hikes back up Mt. Carmel, which is a four-mile hike each way. Elijah went up, came down, killed some dudes, now he's going back up. He has clocked in to about 12 miles right now so far in this day. Then, in verse 46, he runs back down Carmel. This will be his fourth time, clocking now a total of 16 miles. Once he gets to the bottom, he sprints at top speed another 14 miles just to get back to Jezreel, passing the chariots of King Ahab (don't forget, in his spare time, he repairs an altar and slaughters a bull). In 1 Kings 19:1, Elijah runs yet again. Only this time it would be over 60 miles that he runs south to Beersheba, smack dab in the middle of nowhere.

6. If you had ran or walked 90 miles, how would you be feeling?
7. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 19:3-5.* Immediately following a great victory, Elijah became depressed. This story illustrates four common contributors to depression: *Elijah wore himself out, shut people out, focused on the negative and forgot the faithfulness of God.* Of these four, which one is your most common challenge in you own life?
8. How does God respond to Elijah's depression? How do you think He responds to you in your own down moments?
9. One of the most common factors that leads to depression is wearing ourselves out. In what areas of your life are you exhausted? What are some things you can do starting today to help relieve that exhaustion?
10. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 19:5-8.* The most spiritual thing we can do is rest. While that sounds so easy, why is it so hard for most of us to rest? What are some things you can do to have more rest in your life?
11. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 19:9-10.* What strikes you as unusual about God's question to Elijah in the cave?



12. Elijah honestly believed he was the only faithful one left. God replaced this lie with the truth: there were actually 7,000 others who still were faithful. Can you name a similar lie that you believed to be true? How did God reveal His truth to you?
13. Describe a situation where it felt like you were the only believer?
14. What important lesson did Elijah learn about how God chooses to speak to people?
15. Why do you think God revealed Himself to Elijah when the prophet was discouraged?
16. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 19:11-12.* God spoke to Elijah with a gentle whisper. Describe a time when God spoke to you with a gentle whisper. What did He say to you?
17. Why do you think God tends to respond with a gentle whisper instead of a big, dramatic action?
18. Think about that situation where you've been waiting for God to show up. How might it look if He reveals Himself in a gentle way in this area? How might your perspective need to change?
19. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 19:13-16.* God encouraged Elijah to eat and rest, to believe truth instead of lies, to listen to His voice and to get back to doing what prophets do. At this season in your life, which of these areas resonate with you most? Why?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. What did Elijah pray when he had fled to a lonely place? (19:3-5)
2. How did God miraculously care for Elijah in the desert? (19:6-9)
3. What did God say to Elijah when the prophet had taken refuge in a cave? (19:9)
4. How did Elijah express his despair about his circumstances? (19:10)
5. What did God command Elijah to do? (19:11)
6. What disturbances of nature did Elijah witness from inside the cave? (19:11-13)
7. What question did God repeat in the "gentle whisper"? (9:13)
8. What was Elijah's reply after seeing the demonstrations of God's power? (19:14)
9. What "marching orders" did Elijah receive from God? (19:15-17)

MOVING FORWARD

God encouraged Elijah in the middle of his exhaustion. What would it look like for you to invite God's encouragement and strength into your own situation? What does it take for your group to be a place where it is okay to express exhaustion and disillusionment? How can your group encourage one another this week?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week we saw how God brought Elijah out of a time of depression. It's likely we all know someone that is currently struggling with a difficult situation or may be battling depression. This person could be someone in your own group or just an acquaintance. Take what you have learned and put it into action by doing something this week to help that person through their difficult time. One idea is to use God's example of telling Elijah to rest by doing something for that person that would allow them some rest. You might also consider carrying out this task with your entire group. Here are some ideas you might want to consider in carrying out your task:

- Prepare some meals and take them to their house.
- Offer to help with housework, run errands or help with yard work.
- Help meet a financial need that person may have.
- Take that person out to dinner and a movie. Give them an evening of fun and fellowship.
- Help babysit their children to allow that person some time to rest.
- Send that person some letters, cards or emails from the members of your group letting them know you are thinking of them and praying for them.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. Then he went on alone into the desert, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life!" 1 Kings 19:3-4

