

How to Use Sermon Resources

- **READ AHEAD TOGETHER** - MCG's should use the Devotional at the end of this resource as a reading plan for the week leading up to your meeting.
- **SIT UNDER THE WORD** - This resource is filled with scripture references. Read them aloud, together before you answer any questions.
- **APPLY TRUTH** - The goal is deep discussion and application, not necessarily to complete this resource. Don't squash a good discussion. If you get into something important along the way that's fine.

Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer [2 mins]

Use the Overview [5 mins]

- Cover any key points for people who missed parts or all of the sermon

Scripture Deep Dive [30-40 mins]

- Opening Question
- Read the scripture for each question then ask the question. Some have multiple scriptures.

Practical Applications [10 mins]

- This section is optional but there for you should you need a final thought or something to challenge your group with.

Close in Prayer

- In this extended prayer time, ask others to pray as they feel led, pray in a circle, pray over one another, pray to your left, or pray for someone specific. Whatever seems best.

Split Time (if applicable)

- Men with men, women with women
- Share in a circle. "What's one thing you want to celebrate? What do you need prayer and accountability for?"
- After everyone shares, pray in a circle for the person to your left/right.

SERMON OVERVIEW

“What are you doing here?” - 1 Kings 19:1-18

Sermon Summary: This sermon examines 1 Kings 19, where the prophet Elijah experiences spiritual depression immediately after his greatest victory on Mount Carmel. Despite witnessing God send fire from heaven and defeating 450 prophets of Baal, Elijah flees in fear from Jezebel's threats and asks God to take his life. The message explores how spiritual depression involves loss of hope, joy, purpose, and meaning while living detached from God's promises. The sermon emphasizes that depression often follows mountaintop experiences and that God doesn't abandon us in our darkest valleys. Instead, He comes near, speaks in whispers, and gently leads us forward. The path out of depression involves doing the next right thing, seeking the Lord who is seeking us, moving forward on mission, and replacing lies with God's truth. The sermon concludes with the reminder that while biblical heroes like Elijah are flawed, Jesus is the one true hero who demonstrated God's ultimate love through the cross.

Key Points:

- Spiritual depression involves loss of hope, purpose, joy, and meaning while living detached from God's promises
- Depression can follow immediately after spiritual victories and mountaintop experiences
- The path into depression includes rehearsing negative narratives, fixating on hopelessness, forgetting God's past faithfulness, focusing on self and circumstances, and believing lies
- God doesn't abandon us in depression but comes near and seeks us out
- The path out of depression involves: doing the next right thing (even small steps like eating and resting), seeking the Lord who is seeking you, moving forward on mission by serving others, and replacing lies with God's truth
- God speaks in a whisper, requiring us to be close and quiet enough to hear Him
- We need to stop believing lies about ourselves and replace them with biblical truth about God's love and our value
- Depression rarely ends in isolation; people need others to walk alongside them through darkness

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Kings 19:1-18 (primary passage)
- Exodus 19:17-19 (Moses at Mount Sinai)
- Reference to 1 Kings 17-18 (Elijah's previous miracles and Mount Carmel victory)

Stories:

- The account of Elijah fleeing from Jezebel after his victory on Mount Carmel, hiding under a broom tree, and asking God to take his life
- God providing bread and water through an angel to sustain Elijah for his 40-day journey to Mount Horeb
- God revealing Himself to Elijah not in wind, earthquake, or fire, but in a gentle whisper at the cave
- God correcting Elijah's belief that he was alone by revealing 7,000 faithful Israelites who hadn't bowed to Baal
- A pastor's story about a man who came to him after wrecking his life, who identified 20 times over seven years when God spoke to him in still small moments calling him to repentance, but he refused to listen

Scripture Deep Dive

Opening Question:

Have you ever experienced a time in your life when a spiritual high was followed by a significant low, or have you seen this happen in someone else's life? How did that affect your faith and trust in God's promises?

The Path into Depression

1. 1 Kings 19:9-10, 14 - Elijah repeatedly expresses feeling alone and zealous for God despite Israel's unfaithfulness. What narrative does Elijah keep repeating to God, and why do you think he chooses these specific points to dwell on? Reflect on John 14:27. How does this verse offer a contrast to Elijah's mindset?
2. 1 Kings 19:10, 14 - Elijah claims he is the only one left serving God. How might focusing on his own narrative have led Elijah to spiral deeper into depression? In Romans 12:2, Paul talks about renewing the mind. How might this verse provide a solution to counteract Elijah's negative thought patterns?

The Path out of Depression:

3. 1 Kings 19:5-8 - The angel provides Elijah with food and rest. What does this suggest about the role of physical care in recovering from spiritual and emotional struggles? Reference 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 to discuss how caring for our bodies is connected to honoring God.
4. 1 Kings 19:11-13 - God speaks to Elijah in a gentle whisper, not through dramatic signs. In what ways can this challenge our expectations of how God communicates with us? Consider Psalm 46:10 and how being still might help us hear God more clearly.

Additional Questions for Deeper Study:

5. 1 Kings 19:15-18 - God gives Elijah a mission, showing there is still work to be done and revealing that Elijah is not alone. How can participating in God's mission help someone move out of a state of despair? Compare this with Ephesians 2:10 and the concept of being created for good works.
6. Reflecting on 1 Kings 19:18, where God mentions preserving a remnant of faithful people, how can recognizing God's ongoing work in the world offer hope and perspective in personal struggles? Discuss this in the context of Romans 11:2-5, where Paul mentions a similar situation with Elijah.

Practical Applications:

1. How can Elijah's experience of alternating between high spiritual moments and deep lows shape our understanding of maintaining spiritual resilience in our daily lives?

Suggested Answer: Elijah's experience teaches us that high spiritual moments do not exempt us from future struggles. Maintaining resilience involves continually trusting God between highs and lows, seeking His presence, and remembering His past faithfulness, just as we should remind ourselves of moments where God has been faithful in our lives as a way to sustain faith during difficult times.

2. Given Elijah's initial response to Jezebel's threat, what steps can we take to ensure we respond to fear or discouragement with faith rather than avoidance or despair?

Suggested Answer: Practical steps include cultivating a habit of prayer and seeking God's guidance immediately when faced with fear, immersing ourselves in Scripture to remind us of God's promises, and reaching out to trusted community members for support and perspective when we feel overwhelmed.

3. How can recognizing the need for physical care, such as rest and nutrition, influence our spiritual and emotional health, especially during stressful periods?

Suggested Answer: Recognizing the need for physical care aligns with the holistic view of health. When we care for our bodies, we're better equipped to tackle spiritual and emotional challenges. Implementing a routine that includes sufficient rest, balanced nutrition, and physical activity can lead to more mental clarity and spiritual sensitivity.

4. What practical steps can we take to tune into God's 'gentle whisper' in our busy lives, and why is it important to make time for these practices?

Suggested Answer: Practical steps include setting aside regular quiet times without distractions to be still and listen for God's voice, engaging in reflective prayer or meditation, and disconnecting from digital devices. Such practices are important because they help us listen for God's guidance, providing peace and direction in a noisy world.

5. In what ways can we shift our focus from inward thinking to actively engaging in God's mission, even when we feel inadequate or overwhelmed?

Suggested Answer: We can begin by identifying small, manageable acts of service or kindness that align with God's mission, which shifts our focus outward. Volunteering in local ministries or support groups, offering help to those in need, or simply being intentional in our daily interactions can help reinforce that our purpose transcends our struggles, reflecting Christ's servanthood.

5 Day Devotional

Day 1: 1 Kings 19:1-4, Matthew 11:28-30

Devotional: Elijah's confrontation with Jezebel's threat highlights how quickly fear can follow victory. Despite experiencing God's powerful work on Mount Carmel, Elijah's human frailty is evident as he flees for his life. In these moments of vulnerability, we must remember Jesus' promise of rest for the weary, acknowledging that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Reflection Question: In what areas of your life are you feeling overwhelmed and in need of rest? Offer a prayer asking God to carry your burdens and grant you His peace.

Day 2: 1 Kings 19:5-8, Psalm 23:1-3

Devotional: God's provision for Elijah through rest and nourishment underlines His care for our physical well-being. Just as a shepherd leads his sheep to green pastures and quiet waters, God knows when we need physical replenishment to renew our spirits. Let this reminder encourage you to honor your body's needs as part of experiencing God's holistic care.

Prayer Suggestion: Thank God for His provision in every aspect of your life. Ask Him to help you recognize when you need to pause and allow Him to restore your soul.

Day 3: 1 Kings 19:9-10, Romans 8:31-32

Devotional: In the cave, Elijah voices his feelings of isolation and zeal to God. Even when our perspective becomes skewed by loneliness or perceived failure, we can find assurance in knowing God is always for us. Just as God sought Elijah in his cave of despair, God's love reaches out to us, inviting us to trust in His unwavering presence and support.

Reflection Question: Are there areas in your life where you've felt alone or abandoned? Reflect on God's promises and thank Him for being with you in every situation.

Day 4: 1 Kings 19:11-14, John 10:27-28

Devotional Message: God's gentle whisper to Elijah suggests that divine communication often comes through subtle, quiet moments. Like a shepherd's voice that His sheep recognize, God invites us into a dynamic relationship where we learn to hear and discern His guidance amidst life's chaos. His whispers remind us that we are known and protected, even when storms surround us.

Prayer Suggestion: Ask God to open your heart and ears to His whispers, enabling you to recognize His voice in your daily life.

Day 5: 1 Kings 19:15-18, Ephesians 2:10

Devotional Message: God reaffirms Elijah's mission and reveals that he is not alone; there are others who have remained faithful. This divine commissioning emphasizes that God's plans involve and include us, calling us to participate in His ongoing work. Understanding that we are part of a larger community of faith offers immense encouragement and purpose.

Reflection Question: How can you actively participate in God's mission where you are right now? Reflect on the community and opportunities God has placed around you.