



## Parkway Fellowship

6 TRUTHS YOU CAN COUNT ON • MY MASK GOES ON FIRST • 1 KINGS 19:1-11 •  
10/18/2020

### MAIN POINT

God's people experience times of spiritual, physical, and mental exhaustion, but God can restore strength and hope.

### INTRODUCTION

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

**In what situations or relationships do you tend to push your own needs to the back so that you can meet the needs of others?**

**What are some ways you seek to give priority to your own spiritual, physical, and emotional needs, or "put your own mask on first," as it was put in this week's sermon message?**

**Do you think there are certain times in life when you just can't give attention to your own personal well-being? Explain.**

King Ahab, influenced by his evil wife Jezebel, had led Israel into idolatry. Yet just before the events of chapter 19, the power of God had come upon the prophet Elijah in amazing ways. In a contest with the false prophets of Baal, Elijah demonstrated God's superiority, resulting in the execution of a great number of false prophets. After a long drought, God sent rain in response to Elijah's prayers. Finally, Elijah was empowered by God's Spirit to outrun the king's chariots. Elijah experienced what we could call a "mountaintop" experience, followed suddenly by a "valley" experience in which he felt tired, depressed, and alone. God's power had been on display for evil people to see, yet they did not bend their knees to God or to His prophet. The temptation to feel alone, afraid, depressed, and that his efforts were in vain must have been overwhelming for Elijah. He may have even wondered if God's purposes had failed. During this "valley" experience, Elijah chose to run away.

# UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MARK 12:30-31.

**Which part of verse 31 do you tend to focus on when you read or recall this command? Why?**

**What does it mean, biblically, to love yourself?**

**Why is it true that self-care is not selfish? Can it be? How can you tell the difference?**

| 1 KINGS 19:1-11.

**What did Jezebel say that she would do to Elijah? How did Elijah respond to her threat?**

**Put yourself in Elijah's place and complete this sentence: "I ran because \_\_\_\_ and I was feeling \_\_\_\_\_."**

**How should the people of God deal with loneliness and depression? What are some of the complexities that accompany this issue?**

Elijah's faith may have crumbled due to his physical, spiritual, and emotional exhaustion. When we push ourselves to the extreme, we often need time to rest and recharge in all three areas. Jesus, though fully God, was also fully man, and had to spend time resting and retreating. Jesus needed physical and spiritual refreshing in order to have the strength and mental posture to continue ministering to people while training His disciples. We are no different—we need times of rest so we do not fall victim to the temptations that often come our way when we are exhausted. If we are not careful, we will make poor choices when we are in the middle of a "valley" experience, and those experiences often take place when we are tired, feel alone, and are in need of a fresh touch from God.

**How might God use loneliness and depression to speak into our lives? What can we learn about God and ourselves when we are depressed?**

**When you experience a "valley" circumstance, what helps you recover? What do you need the most?**

**What is significant about the angel's presence, message, and provision?**

Elijah was in a deep depression. He had journeyed out of Judean territory and into the deeper desert. The broom tree under which he rested provided shade and its roots could be used for food if necessary. The Lord had compassion on Elijah and sent an angelic messenger to wake him from his deep sleep. Not only did Elijah's body need rest, but also it needed fuel. God miraculously provided water and bread for the prophet to eat; afterward, Elijah needed even more rest and recovery.

**What is significant about the "40 days and nights"? What is important about Elijah's retreating to Mount Horeb? For what might he have been hoping?**

Elijah ran into the desert—the same place where his ancestors received the covenant. Mount Horeb (also called Mount Sinai) was an extremely important place to the Hebrew people. It was at Mount Horeb that Moses received the Ten Commandments and the place where God's presence was experienced by His people. Elijah went back to this important landmark and would have his personal faith renewed by God's presence, too.

**Do you have a life experience that is specifically tied to a place where God worked? How can it be helpful to put yourself in a physical place to encounter the presence of God?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Have you ever experienced a time in your life when you felt you were incapable of loving others because you were unhealthy, whether physically or spiritually? Explain.**

**What commitments are you going to make so that you can love your neighbor to the fullest by loving yourself?**

**Share a time when you encountered God's presence.**

## PRAYER

Thank God for being present even when circumstances may tempt you to believe otherwise. Acknowledge that your love for others is sometimes limited by your lack of love and care for yourself. Ask Him to alert you to the times when you are physically, mentally, and emotionally spent. Commit to seek God's presence daily so that you can love Him and also other people to the fullest.

## COMMENTARY

## | 1 KINGS 19:1-13

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. 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.

19:10. Elijah held nothing back. He told the Lord he had been very zealous for Him. By contrast, the Israelites had rejected God's covenant, destroyed altars dedicated to the worship of God, and killed God's prophets. Elijah thought he alone remained of all God's prophets, and Jezebel had

turned her full attention to killing him too. As Elijah reflected on his ministry, he could see nothing but a great investment of time and commitment for God that had produced little results.

19:11-13. God first reveals His presence to Elijah in His greatness and power, but He did not speak from that position. The Lord instead spoke to Elijah in a soft whisper, showing Himself to be a God who communicates via a still, small voice as well as powerful displays.