



Suicide, Anxiety, & Depression

(The Gospel changes everything)

Part 3

The other side of the anxiety coin is **fear**. Anxiety and fear are so closely tied together that it may be hard to differentiate between the two at times. However, fear is an irrational, unpleasant response to something that is dangerous, painful, threatening, or stressful. As we discussed last time, we often have a fight, flight, or freeze response to fear-based anxiety. Fear, whether rational or irrational, is common to mankind. Scientists who study the brain and human reactions cannot agree whether it is a ***psychological*** construct or whether it's a trackable, traceable, and repeatable ***biological*** reaction. It seems even animals experience and respond to fear. Ever been afraid of heights? Does a spider or roach throw you into a fit of fear? Ever been claustrophobic? Ever get nervous speaking in front of crowds? These are just a few fears that are common to man. It's estimated that about **9%** of the American population has paralyzing phobias. ***Agoraphobia*** is often described as the fear of ***everything***, but in truth, it is the fear of any situation where you feel trapped, helpless, or embarrassed, where escape is difficult. These phobias can become ***mental*** disorders known as anxiety or panic disorders. Fear seems to be at the base of the disturbing trend of students and young adults who have a ***social anxiety disorder***. Some of the warning signs include nausea, being unable to breathe, dizziness, loss of motor skills/function, and loss of the sense of reality. Even some of our great heroes of faith experienced fear, and one of the best examples is the prophet Elijah.

Let's see how Elijah encountered fear, and how God rescued him from it.

Fear: 1 Kings 19:1-18. "Elijah's got nowhere to run!"

- Look back at **1 Kings 17:1-6, 10-16**. Elijah prays and the dew and the rain cease; he is fed by ravens, and exclaims, ***"Do not be afraid!"*** to a widow and her son about to die.
- Fast forward (3+ years later) to **1 Kings 18:36-40**, Elijah is victorious over the prophets of Baal, as God answers by fire and consumes the soaked-sacrifice on Mt. Carmel.
- Elijah stood up for God when he was surrounded by enemies (450 prophets of Baal, King Ahab, and Jezebel), and God used his faith and actions to ***"turn their hearts (Israel's) back again."***
- On top of that, Elijah prayed and a **3 ½ year drought** (James 5:17, Luke 4:25) and famine ceased. God poured down rain in Israel once again. Elijah is ***untouchable!!!***

- Then comes **chapter 19:2** as Queen Jezebel exclaims, *“May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life (Elijah) like one of them (prophets of Baal).”*
- **Verse 3** states Elijah was overcome by fear and ran for his life; *“Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.”* How could a man with a “direct-line” to God experience anything but boldness? How could a man who had such faith to pray and ask God to start and stop rain, and also pray and ask God to call down fire from heaven, be afraid of anyone?
- **Verse 4** recounts a familiar cry; *“He (Elijah) came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die.”* Likely, the greatest (or 2nd greatest-Moses) prophet of the Old Testament is asking God to take his life. Sound familiar (Job & Moses)?
- Hear Elijah’s fearful words in 4b-5; *“I have had enough! Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors. Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.”* It seems that in the moment Elijah has forgotten that none of what has previously happened was because of his efforts, but God’s. He forgot God was in control.
- Elijah didn’t stop the rain from falling or make it rain again. Elijah didn’t make a widow’s flour and oil continue for 3+ years. Elijah didn’t raise her son from the dead. Elijah didn’t send fire from heaven and consume a water-soaked sacrifice. Elijah didn’t gain the victory over 450 prophets of Baal. Elijah was totally dependent upon God to do all those things, yet in his pride and unmet expectations, he demanded that God end his life.
- His response to fear was flight, and then, like so many of us when we are down and depressed, all he wants to do is sleep and disappear.
- God woke Elijah up with an angel (vs. 5b-6) and provided him with food and drink. However, Elijah falls back to sleep in his depression. A second time, the angel wakes him and tells him to eat, then God sends Elijah on a **40**-day journey.
- Once Elijah had journeyed for **40** days, he was still afraid that he was all alone in **verse 10**; *“I have been very zealous for the Lord Almighty. The Israelites have rejected Your covenant, broken down Your altars, and put Your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only the one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”*
- Elijah twice repeats a familiar question, ‘Why do bad things happen to good people?’ I did what was right; others did not. Why have You let this happen to me, God?
- **Verse 18** states that after a powerful wind, an earthquake, and a fire, came a gentle whisper. God speaks audibly to Elijah: *“Yet I reserve 7,000 in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal, and whose mouths have not kissed him.”*
- Elijah was not alone; there were thousands that God had preserved for His glory and purposes. The results were not up to Elijah, and they are not up to us either!
- **Chapter 19** gives us a familiar story, as God gives Elijah a helper, whose name was Elisha. He will eventually become Elijah’s replacement as God’s prophet to Israel. Elijah wouldn’t taste death; in **2 Kings 2:9-12**, he is taken to heaven by a chariot of fire.
- Elijah’s nemesis’s Ahab & Jezebel, would both die gruesome deaths; Ahab was killed while disguised in battle, and Jezebel was betrayed by eunuchs and thrown to her death.

Fear is a natural human inclination, but fear doesn’t have to be our natural response. The bible is full of *“fear not”* verses/ and promises. Our fearful inclination to hardships or disaster is actually a weak spot in our faith. We are showing that we desire to be in absolute control, and that our standards aren’t being met by God. Yet, if we claim Jesus as Savior and Lord, then whatever comes into our lives is allowed there by Him. There is peace in knowing that we are not in control, and that the results aren’t up to us. Can you rest in Him?



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