

Small Group Guide: Soul Care - Learning from Elijah

Week 3: Reloading After Burnout

Overview

This week's sermon concluded our three-part series on Soul Care, drawing lessons from the life of Elijah. We explored the gap between expected outcomes and personal experience, the reality of depression and burnout in the life of a faithful servant, and how God gently restores those who have hit their lowest point. We also examined the lie of isolation and the call to reload as a church community.

Key Takeaways

- Elijah was a man just like us. His faith did not exempt him from fear, depression, anxiety, or loneliness.
- The gap between what we expect and what we experience can be one of the most disorienting places in our spiritual lives.
- God's response to Elijah's burnout was not condemnation. It was rest, nourishment, companionship, and a gentle whisper.
- The lie that fueled Elijah's depression was "I am the only one left." Isolation and the feeling of being alone can distort our perception of reality.
- God does not abandon the burned-out servant. He restores, redirects, and re-commissions.
- The church is called to reload together. None of us are meant to carry the mission alone.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Begin with this question to help group members ease into the conversation.

1. Have you ever worked toward a goal for a long time only to feel let down when you reached it? What did that experience feel like?

Digging into the Text

These questions draw directly from the passages covered in the sermon: 1 Kings 18:44-19:18.

2. When Jezebel threatened Elijah's life, he ran even though he had just witnessed one of the greatest demonstrations of God's power in the entire Old Testament. Why do you think a major spiritual victory did not protect him from fear and despair? What does that tell us about the nature of emotional and spiritual burnout?
3. The sermon described Elijah's journey to Beersheba and beyond as a picture of resignation. He left the promised land, left his servant behind, and walked into the wilderness alone. What do you think Elijah was searching for? Have you ever found yourself retracing old steps looking for meaning when life felt pointless?

4. God's response to Elijah under the broom tree was not a rebuke. He sent an angel who let Elijah sleep, provided food and water, and simply said "get up and eat." What does God's gentleness in this moment reveal about how He views people who are emotionally and spiritually depleted?
5. When God asked Elijah "What are you doing here?" He was not scolding him. He was drawing him out. Why is it important for someone who is struggling to be able to put words to what they are feeling? Who in your life plays that role for you?
6. Elijah said "I am the only one left" twice, and God did not correct him the first time. God waited until Elijah was ready to hear it. What does that tell us about how God counsels and corrects people who are hurting?
7. The lie at the center of Elijah's depression was "I am the only one left." God revealed that there were 7,000 faithful people in Israel that Elijah did not know about. Have you ever believed a lie about being alone in your faith, your struggles, or your calling? What helped you see through that lie?
8. God's response to Elijah's burnout was not retirement. It was redirection. He gave Elijah three specific assignments and a companion in Elisha. What does it mean to you that God re-commissions burned-out servants rather than replacing them?

Personal Reflection Questions

These questions invite group members to apply the sermon to their own lives. Encourage honesty and remind the group that what is shared stays in the room.

9. The sermon outlined several warning signs of depression that were visible in Elijah's behavior, including isolation, losing interest in responsibilities, impulsive choices, and negative self-talk. Have you ever recognized any of these signs in yourself or someone you love? How did you or they respond?
10. The pastor shared openly about his own season of anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation over the past several months. What does it mean to you that a pastor would share something like that from the pulpit? How does that kind of vulnerability affect the culture of a church?
11. Where in your own life have you been tempted to say "I am the only one left" or "what is the point of all this?" What would it look like to push back against that lie with truth?
12. God met Elijah's physical and emotional needs before addressing his spiritual and missional needs. What does that order tell us about how we should care for ourselves and for others who are struggling?

Community and Mission Questions

These questions connect the sermon's themes to the life of the local church.

13. The sermon ended with a call to reload as a church community. What does it mean to you personally to be "all in" for the mission of the church? What has held you back in the past?
14. Elijah needed a companion. The angel was simply present with him. Who in this group or in your life needs you to simply show up and sit with them right now, without fixing anything or offering solutions?
15. The pastor described the church as a body where each part does its work, drawing from Ephesians 4. What is one specific way you believe God has gifted you to contribute to the body? Is that gift currently being used?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice this week.

- **Check in on someone.** Think of one person in your life who may be showing signs of isolation or burnout. Reach out to them this week, not to fix anything, but simply to be present.

- **Name the lie.** If you have been living under a lie similar to Elijah's, write it down. Then write down what you know to be true based on Scripture and the people God has placed in your life.
- **Take care of your body.** If you have been neglecting sleep, meals, or rest, make one concrete change this week. Remember that God met Elijah's physical needs before sending him back on mission.
- **Talk to someone.** If you identified with the symptoms of depression or suicidal ideation discussed in the sermon, take a step this week. Tell a trusted person in your life what you are experiencing and make an appointment with your doctor.
- **Sign up.** If your church has a ministry fair or small group opportunities available, take a step toward getting involved. Do not let the lie of "I will be doing this alone" keep you on the sidelines.
- **Pray for revival.** Spend time this week praying specifically for your church, your community, and the people around you who do not yet know Jesus. Ask God to use you as part of the answer to that prayer.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together. Consider praying specifically for:

- Any group members who are in a season of burnout, depression, or anxiety
- The mission and ministries of your local church
- The courage to push back against the lie of isolation
- Revival in your community and in the hearts of those you love

A Note for Group Leaders

This session touches on sensitive topics including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Create a safe environment by reminding your group at the start of the discussion that what is shared stays within the group. If a group member discloses that they are currently struggling with suicidal thoughts, take that seriously. Encourage them to speak with a trusted person and a medical professional, and follow up with them personally after the meeting. You do not need to have all the answers. Your presence and care matter more than your solutions.